

## Trump's Discourse on Iran Nuclear Deal: A Critical Study

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### Abstract

The current study, which was conducted in line with the conventions of Critical Discourse Analysis, attempts to bring forth the underlying concepts, concerning the social activities of the U. S. withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal in the discourse of the American president Donald Trump (2017). The study was centered on discussing how power is established and re-established in the discourse under investigation; in addition, Trump's identity and ideology were also foci of the discussion of this study. The data sampling of this study was selected from "Trump's speech on Iran Nuclear Deal" delivered on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018. To realize the objectives of the study to fruition, three theoretical insights were advocated: Fairclough's (1989) "Relational

Values"; Van Dijk's (1990) "Discourse, Power, and Access", and van Dijk's (2014) "Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA". The study came up with certain conclusions: I.

there was interconnectedness between Trump's narcissism and his utilization of personal pronouns, II. personal pronouns were manipulated in the discourse, under investigation, as a means of shaping and reshaping social structures, III. some of the lexical items utilized in the given discourse were potential enough to display Trump's attitude of hostility and aggressiveness towards Iran, an attitude that was structured by his socio-cognitive background on the Iranian politics after 1979, and IV. conditional constructions were employed by Trump to configure hypothetical realities on the Iranian

nuclear deal and the Iranian political system.

**Keywords:** Trump, CDA, power, ideology, identity, Iran nuclear deal

خطاب ترامب حول الاتفاقية النووية الإيرانية:  
دراسة نقدية

علي عبد الحميد فارس الأسدي

### المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة التي تتبنى معايير التحليل النقدي للخطاب الى كشف جوانب من السياسات المتعلقة بانسحاب الولايات المتحدة من الاتفاق النووي الإيراني كما جاء في خطاب الرئيس الأمريكي دونالد ترامب في عام 2017. ركزت الدراسة على كيفية تشكيل مفهوم القوة في هذا الخطاب. كذلك سعت الدراسة الى تسليط الضوء على مفهومي الهوية والاد يولوجية الكامنتان في البنية العميقة لهذا الخطاب الذي القاه الرئيس الأمريكي في الثامن من ايار في عام 2017. أختار الباحث ثلاثة اطر نظرية لكي يستطيع من تحقيق اهداف الدراسة. الاطر النظرية هي: "القيم العلاقاتية" لفيركلف (في) 1989، "الخطاب، القوة، والاجتياز" لفاندايك (في) 1990، و"الطريقة الاجتماعية الادراكية" لفاندايك (في) عام 2014. توصلت الدراسة الى بعض النتائج منها: ا. هناك ارتباط بين نرجسية ترامب واستخدامه للضمائر الشخصية ب. لقد تم توظيف الضمائر الشخصية في هذه الدراسة من اجل بناء واعادة بناء بنى اجتماعية معينة ج. كشفت بعض المفردات المستخدمة من قبل ترامب موقفه العدائي لايران وهو موقفا راسخا في بناهه الادراكية والاجتماعية منذ عام 1979 د. عبرت الجمل الشرطية المستخدمة من قبل ترامب عن الواقع الافتراضي حول امكانيات ايران النووية ونظامها السياسي

الكلمات الرئيسية: ترامب، التحليل النقدي

للخطاب، القوة، الايديولوجية، الهوية،  
الاتفاقية النووية الايرانية

**1. Introduction** Political discourse analysis is a field of knowledge that is concerned with the study of political communication in society, whether through spoken or written text.

The goal of analyzing political discourse is to understand how political discourse works, and how to fulfill its functions, which are often linked to the legitimization and retention of power. This type of analysis may include an analysis of particular linguistic features, language influences and performances, and the recipient's responses to a specific view or proposal (Chilton, 2004).

For a profound understanding of a given discourse, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) is found to be an important tool to achieve this goal. It is an advanced method in the study of discourse that deals with language as a form of social practice, and studies how text and speech contribute to the creation of social and political power. CDA has become one of the methods of analysis in the social sciences and humanities since Norman Fairclough

wrote his book 'Language and Power' in 1989.

Fairclough found that any piece of language analysis is neither homogeneous nor uniform and does not confine itself to a particular technique. He (1989, 1995) was the first to develop CDA: an approach that relies on many subjects in social and human sciences and is linked to the study of many social theories to study the ideologies and authoritarian ties contained in a discourse. The link between language and social status comes from being the only framework for ideological expression, and from being an important battleground for power.

CDA has been viewed differently. Wood and Kroger (2000) define it as a tool used to unfold the linguistic and semiotic aspects of social problems and processes which are attributed in a given text. They further add that CDA "serves as a framework of sociolinguistics in the process of developing its methods and tools to analyze discourse, which are distorted by power and ideology" (2000:20).

Fairclough and Wodak (1996) both perceive language as a pure social

practice. They believe that the relationship between language and society is reciprocal in the sense that they affect each other interchangeably. Thus, to them, language is an inevitable tool that helps to produce and organize social relations in a society.

Accordingly, it is one of the most effective realities in the context of social existence and its sustainability.

van Dijk (1993) seeks to discover how social power, inequality, and dominance are registered by social and political discourse. He supports Wodak and Fairclough's aforementioned approaches as they all believe in the mutual relationship between language and society. However, he (2014) adds that this relationship extends to reach the social cognition which he defines as "the system of mental representations and processes of group members". In other words, Van Dijk thinks that discourse and social structure are framed by the social cognition of text producers which may be replete with different ideologies implemented in the very text.

In this study, the researcher aims at recognizing the identity, authority, and ideological representation(s) of the relational values of the implementation of the inclusive pronouns, or the pronouns of positive self-presentation (*I, We, Us*), the exclusive pronouns, or the pronouns of negative other presentation (*They, Them*), and lexical items (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 2004). Conditional constructions, as part of grammatical issues (Fairclough, 1995: 110), were examined in the current study under the umbrella of “Iran Nuclear Deal”, delivered by the American president, Trump” on May 8, 2018, to demonstrate Trump’s underlying beliefs and tenets concerning the Iranian government and the Iranian nuclear potentials.

Conditional clauses, as defined by Gruyter (2001:551), are sentences that convey factual implications or hypothetical situations and their consequences. The dependent clause which expresses the condition is called the protasis, and the main clause which indicates the consequence is called the apodosis. Conditional clauses are of several

types depending on the forms of verbs used in the protasis and apodosis regarding their tense and mood. Predictive conditional construction concerns about a situation that is based on a hypothetical event. The consequent statement can be about the future, present, or past time. One of the important features of conditionals is their potential in operating in two domains associated directly with the ability of humans to operate on two different levels: the everyday reality and the propositional reality which is comprehended by means of our imagination.

The study limits itself to investigate the realization of the aforementioned grammatical issues to find their contributions to the revelation of Trump’s identity, ideology, and power while he seeks to persuade the American public to withdraw out of the “Iran Nuclear Deal”.

CDA, as seen by Fairclough (2010), is engaged in the ways by which a message is passed on via words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, texts, and the exterior world. The current study aims to highlight the use of language, as a

medium of political compromises and gives-and-takes, by Trump to produce and reproduce certain contents and motives that are interconnected to alterations reverberating sociopolitical relationships and identities. The concrete correlation between social and cultural backgrounds paves the way for the conceptualization of language use and identity. Identity, which is a socio-cultural construct, has its profound impacts on the construction and reconstruction of the social acts and behaviors of people. In other words, it is an intrinsic dynamic production of the social, historical, and political contexts of the experiences of an individual (Edwards, 2009). It is worth mentioning that our membership in social groups is the main criterion for determining the shape of our identities. Our membership is based on gender, social class, religion, race, and geographical region. Joseph (2004) states that national boundaries can define membership in regional groups. Against such backdrop, identities as easterners or westerners and northerners or southerners are assumed. Moreover, the establishment

of identities with others is demarcated by role-relationship. Hence, positions such as president, citizens, allies, ministers, secretaries, party members, democrats, republicans, etc. are regularly associated with the state and government. Preece (2019), on his part, believes that the development of our social and political identities are interrelated with the values, beliefs, and attitudes of our various group memberships.

The current study also tries to shed light the potentials of language use in absorbing a variety of ideologies whether political, religious, regional, social, racial, etc. In his book *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995), Fairclough views that social acts and actions are concomitant byproducts of ideologies that are almost hidden in discourse. According to van Dijk (1998) and Fairclough (1995), political discourses, which are both discursive and ideological, and political ideologies are interconnected to such a degree that each one creates the other. In other words, political ideologies are shaped and developed by political discourses and they, meanwhile, produce and



reproduce different forms of political discourse.

## 2. Aims of the Study

The study endeavors to realize the following objectives:

1. examining how power is shaped in the discourse of Trump on the withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal, and
2. disclosing how grammatical features, as personal pronouns, conditional constructions, and lexical items can manifest the power, identity, and ideology of Trump.

To reach these objectives, the following theoretical underpinnings have been advocated: Fairclough's (1989) "Relational Values"; van Dijk's (1990) "Discourse, Power, and Access", and van Dijk's (2014) "Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA".

## 3. Research Hypotheses:

The present study tries to verify the following hypotheses:

1. grammatical aspects and lexical items are effective devices to reveal Trump's power, identity, as well as his implied political attitudes towards the Iranian political order, and
2. Trump's political stances toward the Iranian

government are overwhelmingly informed by the subsequently politics of the U. S. A.

## 4. Literature Review

This section presents some related literature regarding the inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns adopted systematically by politicians while delivering their speeches. Interestingly, these speeches are not set arbitrarily; rather there should be some particular events that urged them to deliver a speech. Bramely (2001) conducted a study on the use of pronouns, in some selected political interviews, to examine their potential construction of 'self' and 'others'. The study reinforced the claim that there were multi-facets of inclusive and exclusive pronouns. Therefore, they should be thought of contextually so as to disclose their interactional function in terms of identity and ideology. The study stressed that pronouns could be employed to construct and/ or reconstruct different interpretations of 'self' and 'others'. The work also revealed that the personal pronouns used in the examined interviews were utilized to

either strengthen or weaken the relation between the addressers and the addressees. Additionally, the researcher maintained that politicians may take advantage of personal pronouns so as to have essential understanding into their proposals on the part of their audience.

Al-Faki (2014) explored some contemporary African leaders' political speeches. His study aimed to show how specific linguistic tools like inclusive and exclusive pronouns, rhetorical choices, modal auxiliaries, and analogies could be used to manipulate the minds of the recipients, coming up thoughts, and soften truths. The results arrived at pinpointed that pronouns could be extended to unveil the speaker's ideology and their political stance. Moreover, they could also be used to forge oneness between politicians and others, to evoke solidarity, and to persuade the audience with their argument.

Ghazani (2016) looked into some persuasive strategies in some selected American inaugural presidential addresses, namely of George W. Bush and Barak

Obama. On the pragmatic level, the researcher adopted Searle's Speech Act Theory where sentences were used as one unit of analysis. He further linked the discourses of the two selected presidents with the social process(es) to uncover the ideology of their texts. The researcher adopted Fairclough's (1989) premises to distinguish between the nature of the inclusive and exclusive pronouns. The findings of his study showed that different speech acts can be present in a single utterance to pave the way for the occurrence of other speech acts. Moreover, both presidents frequently implemented inclusive pronouns so as to underpin their belongingness to their nation. Obama was proven to be more inclusive in his discourse than Bush. As to the exclusive pronouns, both presidents employed these pronouns to persuade their potential voters. However, Bush used the exclusive 'we' repeatedly to address and criticize his counterparts indirectly, without showing to whom he was referring to by the use of the very pronoun. Obama followed the same pattern, but to show compassion

and to stress his integrity to the Republicans and all social classes.

Al-Manaseer and Shaban (2018) investigated the use of deixis which was adopted to show power and ideology in two messages of Abu-Bakr Al-Baghdadi (the leader of ISIS). In their work, they followed Halliday's (1985-1994) metafunctions for the sake of analyzing the linguistic forms found in the given messages. In addition, they based their CDA analysis on van Dijk's (2004-2008) and Fairclough's (1989, 1995, 2003) theoretical insights to reveal the manifestation of power relations in the aforementioned messages. The conducted study found that personal pronouns could be tackled to serve the purpose of clarification and to demonstrate ideology and power relations. The study also revealed that personal pronouns were found to be symmetric in nature. Besides, the results showed that the ideologies of Al-Baghdadi are based on power relations between Almighty God and Al-Baghdadi, Al-Baghdadi and nonMuslims, and Al-Baghdadi and Muslims. Finally, the researchers found out that radical Islamic

discourse, which could help establish an unlimited identity, plays an active role in the huge propaganda for the ISIS recruitment campaign as regards influenced and isolated Muslims to join the 'Jihad'.

### 5. Theoretical Framework

This section is dedicated to reviewing the theoretical models deployed in this work: Fairclough's (1989), van Dijk's (1990), and van Dijk's (2014). They all collaborate to help understand how the selected speech of Trump is subsumed under the umbrella of CDA. Fairclough's (1989) "Language and Power" introduces fundamental key concepts about CDA which are particularly manifested in discourse, ideology, and social practice. Fairclough sees language as a social practice rather than a linguistic phenomenon cut off from society. Hence, language has to be studied as both spoken and written discourses. He further adds that 'text' should be looked upon as that process of communicating whereby the text is only a part.

Fairclough (1989, 1992, and 2003) developed three interrelated dimensional frameworks in that each



communication action encompasses: text, discursive practice, and social practice. Correspondingly, he initiated three analytical stages for CDA: description, interpretation, and explanation. Since discourse is marked as a kind of social practice, it requires a personification of social structure. This explains that discourse is a configuration of context, interaction, and text; the process of

‘production’ and ‘interpretation’ heavily relies on context, while ‘text’ is the result of an interaction lying at the bottom of any given analysis.

Fairclough (1989:26) views **Description** (text) as “the stage which is concerned with formal properties of text”. This means that linguistic features like ‘*Vocabulary*’ (word choice), ‘*Grammar*’ (grammatical features: process and participant predomination), and ‘*Textual structures*’ (the structure of the discourse) are apt to be analyzed systematically so that a text can be understood clearly, and its prominences will be shown plainly.

**Interpretation** (discursive practice) is identified by Fairclough (1989:26) as to be “concerned with the

relationship between text and interaction with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a recourse in the process of interpretation”. At this stage, the discourse, production of discourse, and consumption of discourse are joined together to later interpret the text. Furthermore, discourse at this stage is not seen as a solo text; however, it is a discursive practice that is set apart from the analysis of the linguistic features and involves a greater attention to intertextuality and speech act. These factors are worthy to be explored altogether to bound the text with its context.

As far as **Explanation** (social practice) is concerned, Fairclough (1989: 26) defines it as being “concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determinants of the process of production and interpretation, and their social affairs”. This stage corresponds to the cultural, historical, and social analysis of a text and interprets the discursive dimensions of social practice. In this vein, power and ideology are excessively accounted for to promote

the relationship between the social and cultural contexts as well as the text production and consumption.

### 5.1 Concepts of Power

That Trump's authority is to be highlighted as an objective in the current study, van Dijk's (1990) "Discourse, Power, and Access" was advocated to call attention to the nature of the relationship between power and dominance. van Dijk classifies power into certain dimensions (1990:84):

1. power is a property of relations between social groups, institutions, or organizations; hence, only social power, and not individual power, is considered here;

2. social power is defined in terms of the control exercised by one group or organization; (or its members) over the actions and/or the minds of (the members of) another group, thus limiting the freedom of action of the others, or influencing their knowledge, attitudes or ideologies;

3. power of a specific group or institution may be 'distributed', and may be restricted to a specific social

domain or scope, such as that of politics, the media, law and order, education, or corporate business, thus resulting in different 'centers' of power and elite groups that control such centers;

4. dominance is here understood as a form of social power abuse, that is, as a legally or morally illegitimate exercise of control over others in one's interests, often resulting in social inequality;

5. power is based on privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, jobs, status, or indeed, preferential access to public discourse and communication;

6. social power and dominance are often organized and institutionalized, to allow more effective control, and to enable routine forms of power reproduction; and

7. dominance is seldom absolute; it is often gradual and may be met by more or less resistance or counter-power by dominated groups (1996: 254).

Politically, the power of a state means the effectiveness of that state and its weight in the international field resulting from its ability to use the

available sources of power to impose its will, achieve its national goals and interests, and influence the will of other countries (Chilton, 2004). Moreover, the power of the state in this sense is determined in the light of two elements: the sources of power and then the process of managing and employing those sources. Therefore, any of the sources of power do not acquire weight and impact once it exists but is related to conscious intervention to convert the available power sources into effective energy and effective weapons (Fairclough: 1989).

Social power, as an inseparable target of CDA, comes to be an actor used to describe the relationship between discourse and social power. From a philosophical point of view, Foucault (1978) understands power as having the inextricable linkage to discourse. Discourse, in the same way, is tied to power and knowledge and cannot be separated from. Earlier, Foucault (1972:57) shows how power can work through a

given discourse in the sense “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of

knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and

constitute at the same time power relations”. van Dijk (1993:469) defines power under the umbrella of control. He states “groups have control (more or less) power if they can (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups”. He further proposes two types of control: ‘action’ and ‘cognition’. Action is the restriction of the behavior and actions of a group of people. Cognition; however, is to influence the minds of a group of people. The former is mainly centered on the use of physical coercion while the latter means the use of strategies such as persuasion and manipulation to change the minds and attitudes of others.

Weber (1980:28, as cited in Wodak and Meyer (2009:9) defines power as “the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others”. This gradually brings to the surface the abuse of power. van Dijk (2009) maintains that the excessive use of power, in a way that a dominating group controls

others, results in creating domination and, henceforth, in a reshaping of discourse which is the concern of CDA analysts. In other words, the domination of one group over the other groups designates a chance for social disstratification and inequality.

Hodge and Kress (1988:3) comment that the asymmetrical power distribution in society may lead to:

divisions in the social fabric between rulers and ruled, exploiters, and exploited. In order to sustain these structures of domination, the dominant groups attempt to represent the world in forms that reflect their own interests, the interests of their power. But they also need to sustain the bonds of solidarity that are conditions for their dominance. Moreover, the immoderate practice of power and control is viewed by Hoge and Kress (1988) as that threat of force manipulated by individuals or states to gain compliance from another force; it may include physical, social, emotional, political, or economic means.

Power is to be differentiated from hegemony since the latter takes place when the accomplishment of power is realized and accepted by the

consensus of individuals or groups in society rather than by force (Fairclough, 2003). It is worth noting that the notion of hegemony is first spelled out by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, who developed his theory in the 1920s-1930s. He ascertains that hegemony is not indexed through economic and/or physical coercion; however, it is by ideology as well.

Baker and Ellece (2011) claimed that the dominated people may not be aware of being controlled that way; they may be subconsciously convinced that their life is found by natural consensus or the same people may benefit from or take advantage of their position. In the same vein, van Dijk (1997a:17) believes "hegemonic power makes people act as if it were natural, normal, or simply a consensus". For Fairclough, hegemony is the economic, political, and ideological integration in a society that resembles the domineering power over the general public.

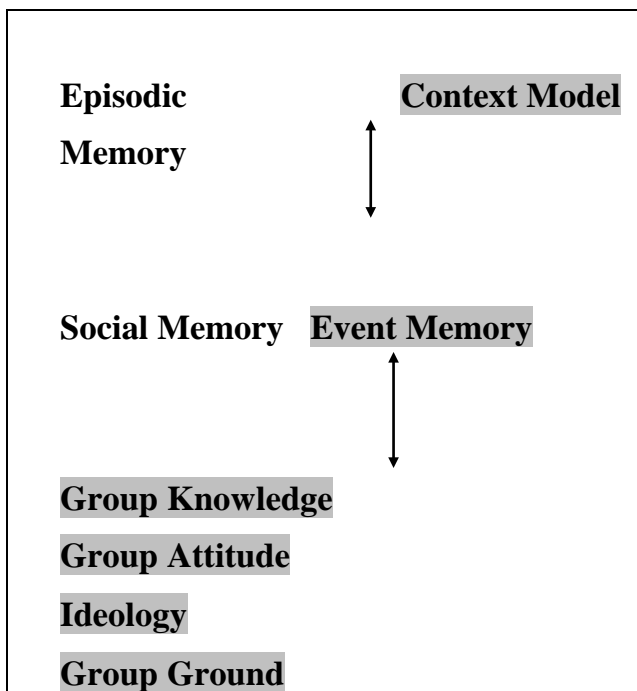
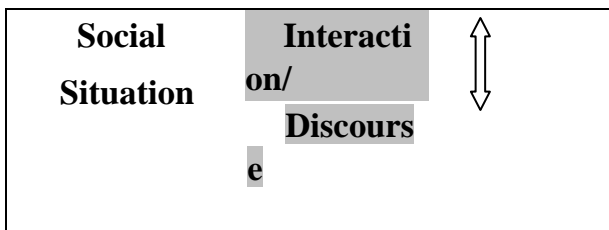
### 5. 2 van Dijk’s Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA and Trump’s Ideologies

Hypothesizing that Trump’s political stances toward the Iranian government are overwhelmingly informed by the subsequent politics of the U. S.

A., the researcher advocated van Dijk’s Socio-cognitive Approach so as to highlight how far Trump’s ideas on Iran have been grounded on the social or collective memory of the American society.

Figure 1: van Dijk’s (2014) Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA

Trump’s attitude towards Iran is also described and analyzed via van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). van Dijk (2014) sees that discourse, as a sociocognitive process, is shaped and reshaped in terms of two cognitive memories: the episodic memory and social memory. Episodic memory refers to the memory of events occurring every day such as contextual setting (when, where), emotions, persons (who), things (what), and why knowledge is explicitly stated. van Dijk (2014) believes that episodic memory involves the past experiences that are collected at a particular time and place. Recollection is one of the main concepts of episodic memory. The retrieval of contextual information relating to a specific event or experience, that has already occurred, is evoked employing this process. The category of explicit memory, which is one of the two divisions of episodic memory, is made up as a result of the connection of semantic memory to episodic memory. The other division is implicit.





Social memory, according to van Dijk (2014), explores the correlation between social identity and historical identity. In terms of this memory, one can answer the questions as to how and why individuals of diverse personal backgrounds think of themselves as members of a shared group. Social memory is also called collective memory as it is structured and passed on by a small and large number of groups. Nations, generations, and communities are examples of these groups. Collective memory, meanwhile, refers to the shared collection of memories and knowledge that is related to the identity of a group. Against such a background, it is significant to distinguish between the process of knowing and the process of remembering. Knowing is semantic and it is more factual. Remembering, on the contrary, is episodic since it is a feeling that is related to the past.

The way that context data is structured and maintained is called a context model; it is defined by Van Dijk (2006: 163) as mental constructs. Such constructs work as an interface between situational or societal

structures and discourse structures. In other words, they come between the knowledge of the speaker, which remains implicit and typically presupposed as well as have indirect influences on discourse production and understanding, and the environment of the text and talk. Thus, they directly interface in the mental processes of discourse production and comprehension since they subjectively stand for relevant aspects of situations and society.

The research design is based on the hypothesis that the American long-term aggressive attitude towards Iran can be seen as a group ground or a group attitude of the American political community. Based on van Dijk's (2014) "Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA", it is the social memory and the episodic memory which underlie

Trump's withdrawal from Iran nuclear agreement.

The three aforementioned theoretical moves of the current study were correlated to shape the analytical framework of the given discourse, as shown in the following figure:

Fairclough (1988) Three Stages of Discourse	Van Dijk (1999) Dimensions of Power	Van Dijk (2001) Cognitive Approach
1 Descript	1 Social power	1 Social
2 Interpret	2 social power. 3 specific	2 Episodic
3 Explanat	Dominance as a social power power as access social dominance as a power dominad	3 social

Figur. Analytical Proposed

## 6. Methodology

The current work is an attempt to draw attention to the interrelationship between discourse, power, identity, and ideology. The research design of this study is qualitative following the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis as a method of analysis. It is qualitative since it is specifically designed to identify the attitudes and opinions of a small group of people (Creswell, 2003).

As a CDA study, the unit of analysis involves words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and the whole text in correlation to the external world. In more specific words, this work seeks to decipher the meaning of words, phrases, and clauses as the basic elements that the sentence is composed of. Not only this, but it also goes beyond the boundaries of the sentence to consider the whole text in connection to the exterior world.

## 6.1 Rationale for the Speech Selection

Examining how language use is assimilated in different social contexts is the basic job of discourse analysis (Coulthard (1977; Stubbs 1983). Against such a theoretical background, choosing a speech delivered to touch upon such a critical and controversial issue as the Iranian nuclear deal was the main yardstick of data collection in the current study. Hence, the sampling of the study is selected from

Trump’s “speech on the Iran nuclear deal” which was delivered on May 8, 2018, in Washington. The essential message of this speech, which had a disputable impact on the whole world, was to announce the withdrawal of the U.S. from the given deal.

A group of world powers (P5 + 1) representing the permanent members of the

United Nations Security Council which are the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, China + Germany, and the European Union signed an agreement in 2015 with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This agreement, which was

announced on July 14, 2015, in Vienna, came to be known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the P5 + 1 and EU. On the subject of this agreement, the capacity, level, and stockpile of Iran's enrichment would be limited for specified durations only. The European Union and the United States would reciprocally terminate economic and financial sanctions against Iran (Ritter and Hersh, 2018).

### 6.2 Data Collection

The data used in this study was concerned with a speech in video form delivered by Trump. The video centered on the potential war between two opposing countries: the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The video was downloaded from the BBC official webpage with their transcripts that helped the researcher pinpoint almost every single detail related to the focal points of the current study. BBC was selected because it is the most recognizable platform that is viewed around the world. The virtue of this selection was due to the date (May 2019) when the military and political escalation between Iran and the U.S.A. reached

their highest levels. The transcript is available at [nytime.com/2018/05/08/us/politics/trump-speechiran-deal-html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/us/politics/trump-speechiran-deal-html).

### 6.3 Approach to Analysis

After the intended videos was downloaded from YouTube and the BBC web page, the researcher allocated enough time to keenly watch, listen, and observe the grammatical items specified for this study, namely the inclusive pronouns (I, We, Us) and the exclusive pronouns (They, Them), lexemes of pejorative connotations, and conditional constructions. Grammatical items and lexical items, according to Fairclough, (1989: 110) are significant linguistic devices that can be employed by

CDA practitioners to highlight various social actions as power, identity, and ideology. The interconnection between the discourse, understudy, and the social world was critically analyzed in this study. The study went further to show how that interconnection has contributed to constructing Trump's power, identity, and ideology.

### 6.3 Data Analysis

Having a general sense of information, classifying and coding the units of information, and identifying and labeling themes are fundamentals of qualitative inquiries according to Creswell (2003: 185). Against such background, the researcher went through the selected speech of Trump so as to have a general sense of the information. Units of information such as pronouns, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that represent meaning were classified and coded. Themes were identified and labeled. Moreover, codes were used to shed light on Trump's identity, power, and ideology.

## 7. Results and Discussion

Examples, from the given speech, were discussed and analyzed based on the role that the lexical items (words of pejorative connotations), and the grammatical aspects, such as personal pronouns, and conditional constructions can play in achieving the aforementioned objectives of the study.

### 7.1 Personal Pronouns as Marks of Narcissism

1. *Today I want to update the world on our efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.*

In the example above the U.S. President uses the personal pronoun "I" to emphasize his power that Iran nuclear weapons must be dismantled. Using this pronoun may mark Trump's excessive self-focus which is thought to be the core of narcissism, an important psychological phenomenon that involves interpersonal consequences (Pennaker & Mehl, 2014). There is a strong correlation between narcissism and the total use of person singular pronouns. They believe that first singular pronouns, which are key to understanding the relationships between speakers, objects, and other people, are an indicator of narcissist people. The investigations, done on a variety of communication contexts involving identity-related, personal and impersonal, private and public, and stream-of-consciousness tasks, showed significant correlation between narcissism and the use of first-person singular pronouns. Narcissism, which is formed via

excessive self-focus, can, henceforth, be defined as a psychological phenomenon implying interpersonal consequences (Pennebaker and Mehl, 2015).

The verb “want” is employed by the speaker to stress the idea that Iran could not challenge him by acquiring a nuclear weapon. Trump appears to be highly engaged in

Iran’s nuclear capabilities. That “I want to update..... weapon” echoes the American unlimited sovereignty and domination as it could have its will on any other state.

2. *I announced last October that the Iran deal must either be renegotiated or terminated.*

Notably, the speaker employs the pronoun “I” in “I announced..... or terminated” to shed much light on the point that the Iran deal was obstructed by him as a president of the U.S. The speaker, as the top official of the U.S government, is assumed to manipulate the first person collecting pronoun “We” or the name of the country “the U.S” so as to state, as it is usually done by politicians, that the decision of the withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal was unanimously taken on by the

American government. He, on the contrary, utilizes the first person singular pronoun “I” to attract the attention of his addressees toward his person as powerful and efficient more than toward the government he presides over. According to Raskin & Shaw (1988), the narcissist individuals tend to use the first person singular pronouns more than the first person plural pronouns. It is noteworthy that the given personal singular pronoun involves a sustained effort, on the part of the speaker, to maintain a grandiose self-view. As regards the example above, it can be interpreted that both the pronoun

“I” and the modal auxiliary “must” were used by the speaker to resound his decisiveness that the U.S withdrawal from the Iran deal is beyond any dispute. Having rejected such a deal, which has earlier been agreed upon by the U.S. government, can be considered as blatant illegal violation. It may confirm the inconsistency of Trump on the subject of law and morality which could eventually distort the image of the U.S. in the eyes of the world population.



3. *Three months later, on January 12<sup>th</sup>, I repeated these conditions.*

To maintain his inflated self-view, Trump uses the first person singular pronoun “I” in the context above to show an overall rejection of the Iran deal. Using this pronoun recurrently in the speech reveals the high sense of the speaker’s grandiosity. Firestone (2017) sees that to be grandiose often carries an exaggerated sense of self-enchantment.

The sentence “I repeated these conditions”, in the example above, can be perceived as an indicator of the American dominance over other states. Trump, via this sentence”, tries to project himself as a hegemonic leader who is capable enough to set up and enforce rules on other states. The given sentence is also a message to his audience that he is a president of a superpower who could exercise his hegemony to create a system that complies with his ideologies. Having used this sentence, Trump tries to push Iran on an unsustainable path. He intends to reshape the order, on the basis of which the deal was signed, in terms of his own views. Looking into the meaning of the given sentence, it

can be realized that he embraces the approach of intimidation to arrive at his targets. Schake (2009) states that the dominant position of the U.S. in the world has allowed it to impose its will on other states and governments following different types of strategies.

The use of the first singular pronouns (**I**) in the examples above stresses narcissism in the discourse under investigation. The pronoun “Us”, to signify the whole Americans, or the name of the country “the U.S.” can be used in such a presidential address instead of “I” and “me” so as narcissism can sound lighter in the character of the given speaker. According to (Pennebaker and Mehl, 2015), narcissists are almost embrace the belief that they are better than anyone else. They consider themselves special; therefore, they look upon the people around them as being automatically in compliance with their every wish or whim.

## 7.2 Personal Pronouns as Tools of Shaping Social Structures (Alliances)

4. *In theory, the so-called “Iran deal” was supposed to protect the United States and **our allies** from the lunacy of an Iranian nuclear bomb, a weapon that will only*

*endanger the survival of the Iranian regime.*

The use of the personal pronoun “our” intensifies the concept of ingroupness in Trump’s discourse, which is the social representations (Van Dijk, 1998) of a group.

The noun phrase “our allies” underlies the system of beliefs that the U.S shares with its allies. They are all anti-Iranian nuclear capabilities. Such a common ground is acted on as the foundation of their cognition. Employing the noun phrase “our allies”, the speaker aims to create solidarity with the American allies. He tends to coordinate joint attention and motivation with them. What is significant in this regard is that the United States and European allies, which are France, Germany, and England, were members of the given deal, have not shown the same attitude that the U.S. has; they have not withdrawn from this deal. Nevertheless, they have not disapproved of Trump’s attitude. A point that reinforces the American dominance over these states.

5. *Today, we have definitive proof that this Iranian promise was a*

*lie. Last week, Israel published intelligence document- long concealed by Iran- conclusively showing the Iranian regime and its history of pursuing nuclear weapons.*

In the above example, the pronoun “we” is employed to imply the concept of ingroupness. It does not signify all American politicians or American citizens since the “Iran deal” was approved off and signed by the Democrats. The “We” above involves only those politicians or citizens who embrace Trump’s ideologies or the Trumpists. It is then important to note that the first-person plural pronouns “we”, in the example above, which is usually used to denote integrity and ingroupness, is employed by Trump to address only those who share his attitude against Iran.

6. *Over the past few months, we have engaged extensively with our allies and partners around the world, including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. We have also consulted with our friends from across the Middle East. We are unified in our understanding of the threat in our conviction that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon.*

In the above example, Trump uses the pronouns “We” and “Our” three times to emphasize his integration with the American allies specifically the U.K., France, and Germany. That “We have engaged extensively with our allies”, “We have also consulted with our friends from across the Middle East”, and “We are unified in our understanding of the threat in our conviction that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon” reveals Trump’s maximizing pressure on the U.K., France, and Germany to withdraw from the Iran agreement. He tries to unite these nations behind his efforts to abandon the agreement. The Europeans, as seen by( Laub and Robinson, 2020), found themselves at a critical angle as they were signatories of that agreement. The Prime Minister of Britain Boris Johnson and the foreign minister of Germany Heiko Maas want to preserve the agreement and advocate diplomatic methods within the agreement. However, they gave a nod to Trump for his resolution of withdrawal. A point that boosts the dominating tendency of Trump to

assert himself so as to realize what he is after.

By virtue of the two personal plural pronouns “We” and “Our”, in the example above, Trump, as an iconic power, seems to be susceptible to enhance cognitive abilities and goal focus while intending to effectively move his allies so that he can pursue his goals and satisfy his needs. In other words, power is conceptualized by him in agreement with his authority as the U.S. President; it is a power that affects the cognitive processes underlying his intention to abrogate Iran’s deal. Having used the two given plural pronouns, he is intent on passing the message to his allies that the withdrawal from the given deal involves coordinate and collective interests. As president of the U.S., he seeks to materialize his social goal via instigating forcebased hierarchical relationships with the U.S. big allies (The U.K, France, and Germany).

### 7.3 Lexical Items as Detectors of Aggressiveness

7. *The Iranian regime has funded its long reign of chaos and terror by plundering the wealth of its own people.*

8. *No action taken by the **regime** has been more dangerous than its pursuit of nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them.*

9. *In other words, at the point when the United States had maximum leverage, this **disastrous deal** gave this **regime**- and it's **a regime** of **greater terror**- many billions of dollars, some of it in actual cash- a great embarrassment to me as a citizen and to all citizens of the United States.*

10. *Making matters worse, the deal's inspection provisions lack adequate mechanisms to prevent, detect, and punish cheating and don't even have the unqualified right to inspect many important locations, including military facilities. Not only the deal fails to halt Iran's nuclear ambition, but it also fails to address the **regime's** development of ballistic missiles that could deliver nuclear warheads.*

11. *We will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction. **Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States.***

The words “regime”, “chaos”, “terror”, besides the prepositional phrase “by plundering the wealth” in example 8, the word “regime” in examples 8, 9, and 10, and the noun phrase “disastrous deal” and the sentence “it's a regime of greater terror” in example 10, are used by Trump with a negative connotation. He intends to pass the message that the Iranian government is authoritarian, dictatorial, and repressive. In the political sense of the word, the word “regime”, for example, tends to have the connotation of a specific political order which is on the verge of collapse for being corrupt, authenticated, and undemocratic (Webster, 2019 ). It is worth noting that the given words, the phrases, and the sentence have a pejorative association as they are usually used for degrading or demeaning the political order of Iran. By using them, the speaker tries to assert his aggressive stance on the Iranian political order. Hasan (2020) states that the consequent governments of the U.S. have endeavored, since 1979, to tarnish the image of the Iranian order in the mind

of the American public. Against such a controversial backdrop, it seems to be necessary to highlight the nature of the Iranian order. The president, parliament, and judicial system, according to

Hassan (2020), share powers that are all reserved to the national government.

Theocracy and presidential democracy are two combined elements in the political framework of Iran wherein the president and parliament are democratically elected. There is also an Assembly of Experts which is responsible for electing the Supreme Leader, and local councils. The candidates, who run for such positions, according to the constitution, must be vetted, before being elected, by the Guardian Council.

The frequent manipulation of the word “regime” in the examples above reveals the intentionality of Trump to intensify his stance that Iran poses a threat to world peace and security. Meanwhile, it echoes his hostility and aggressiveness towards the Iranian order. Historical knowledge and attitudes can be seen as constructs that evoke this current attitude. Then, his

social memory as well as his episodic memory and his aggressive attitude toward Iran are interconnected. The two given memories represent prior knowledge about his current hostile attitude toward Iran. It can be figured out that he has developed the given memories which have readily accessible information about how to behave aggressively against Iran under varying circumstances. Hence, the words in the examples above, which are of negative connotations, underline beliefs that have reinforced his aggressive behavior.

*12. The deal lifted crippling economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for very weak limits on the **regime's** nuclear activity- and no limits at all on its other **malign** behavior, including its **sinister** activities in Syria, Yemen, and other places all around the world.*

In the example above, the three words “regime”, “malign”, and “sinister” are used by the speaker to heighten his aggressive tone against Iran. The lexical approach to personality was adopted by (Buss & Plomin, 2014) who believe that personality traits can be described through adjectives and descriptive



phrases. People with high levels of emotional instability and negative emotions, according to them, tend to be moody and tense. Trump's tendency to escalate aggressiveness in political language may reveal his political immaturity since linguistic aggressiveness can result in more concrete political differences or disagreement among countries; an issue that may threaten world peace and security. The nominal phrases "malign behaviors" and "sinister activities" were used by Trump to delegitimize the Iranian intervention in Syria and Yemen. Paradoxically, Trump legitimizes the U.S intervention in Syria, Yemen, and other countries. The U. S., according to Spencer (2014), had an active involvement in Syria. During the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, the U.S. backed the Syrian opposition and the Federation of Northern Syria. The rebels of the Free Army, as one group of the Syrian opposition, were supplied by the U.S. with arms, non-lethal aids, training, money, and intelligence. By the same token, Snyder (2016) states that the U.S. bolsters up the Saudi-led intervention

in Yemen providing intelligence and logistical support. The war against Yemen, as seen by Snyder (2016), has had highly terrible impact on the humanitarian situation in Yemen to such an extent that it amounted the level of humanitarian catastrophe or genocide.

*13. In the years since the deal was reached, Iran's military budget has grown by almost 40 percent- while its economy is doing very badly. After the sanctions were lifted, the dictatorship used its new funds to build its nuclear-capable missiles, support terrorism, and cause havoc throughout the Middle East and beyond.*

To aggravate his aggressive attitude to Iran, Trump employs the word

"dictatorship". With this word, he tries to send the message to his addressees that the havoc, destruction, and terrorism in the Middle East are caused by Iran which is, as he alleges, run by an authoritarian government. Using this word might help him to emphasize the view that he is a democratic and liberal figure who runs a liberal country. Walt (2020) describes Trump as a leader who does not have toleration for political

pluralism because what matters to him is the loyalty and dedication of officials to his person, not to the country or the Constitution. According to Walt (2020), such dictatorial tendencies have not begun with Trump, but they are generally part of the nature of political system of the U.S. Walt adds that Trump almost tries to appear as a populist-nationalist who tries to provoke his opponents through disruptive and aggressive rhetoric. His politics is not liberal, conservative, or realist; it more accurately echoes what can be called celebrity populism.

*14. Since the agreement, Iran's **bloody ambitions** have grown only more brazen. In light of these glaring flaws.*

The adjectival phrase “bloody ambitions” marks the social character of violence. It is used by Trump to influence his audience’s emotions and motives and finally to justify the U.S. likely social action against Iran. Language and social action, according to Van Dijk (1998), are complementary in that one begins where the other ends, that is when people stop talking, they start taking

an action and vice versa, when they stop taking an action, they start talking. Trump, through the phrase “bloody ambitions”, tries to describe linguistically the inflicted havoc that Iranian nuclear capabilities might cause if they are not deterred by his administration. Thomas (2016) believes that the U.S. is involved in many bloody attacks in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. He sees that the intervention of the U.S. in some countries across the world has paved the way for counter-attacks against the American troops. An issue that motivated the U.S. A. to legitimize its interventional actions under what is called a war against terror whereby airstrikes and drone attacks on civilian people in Muslim countries were committed.

*15. In just a short period of time, **the world's leading state of terror** will be on the cusp of acquiring the world's most dangerous weapons.*

To legitimize his social action of shunning the nuclear agreement with Iran, he emphasizes his aggressive standpoint against Iran by describing it as “the world’s leading state of terror”. He tends, with the nominal

phrase, to persuade his listeners that his withdrawal from the deal could save the world which might be threatened if the deal is kept intact. It could be realized that the given phrase comes up as a result of the strategy of intimidation and domination implied in his cognitive processes (social memory and episodic memory). It reflects Trump's hostile stance against Iran, a stance that has become so obvious in example 11. That "Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States" is an obvious example of the strategy of intimidation and domination embraced by Trump. The sentence, meanwhile, displays the American dominance over the whole world since Trump, in the given sentence, doesn't specify a certain nation but all nations worldwide that they are susceptible to the American sanctions in case they tend to help Iran.

#### 7.4 Conditional Construction as Hypothetical Realities

*16. The agreement was so poorly negotiated that even if Iran fully complies, the regime can still be on*

*the verge of a nuclear breakout in just a short period of time.*

*The deal's sunset provisions are totally unacceptable.*

The speaker in the example above uses the conditional construction "if Iran..... time" to pass on his hypothesis that Iran had already achieved advanced nuclear capabilities before the signing of the deal. Introducing such a hypothesis could help him persuade his listeners to support the U.S withdrawal from the nuclear deal and urge them to realize how wrong decisions the former administration made when deciding to sign it. Mulligan (2018) observes that this one-sided withdrawal was not supported by different countries and international organizations. It was also criticized by many U.S scholars, but it was approved off by the U.S conservatives, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and allies. Based on this withdrawal, the blocking statute of 1996 was considered by the European Commission so as to declare U.S sanctions against Iran as being illegal in Europe. Accordingly, European citizens and companies were banned from complying with them. Moreover,

the European Investment Bank was instructed to facilitate investment by European countries in Iran (Amano, 2018).

*17. If I allowed this deal to stand, there would soon be a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Everyone would want their weapons ready by the time Iran had theirs.*

“If I allowed..... The Middle East”, in the example above, is a hypothetical conditional construction that is put forward to highlight a proposed supposition for arms race in the Middle East as a likely future phenomenon. Trump seems to be not concerned about Israel’s nuclear weapons. According to Brower (1997), Israel possesses a nuclear stockpile that ranges 80- 400 nuclear warheads which can be delivered in varied methods, that is by aircraft, submarines, or by intermediate to intercontinental ballistic missiles. It is worth mentioning that despite the international pressure on Israel, it refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty of

Nuclear Weapons. It claims that possessing such weapons would be

necessary for the Israeli national security.

*18. I made clear if the deal could not be fixed, the United States would no longer be a party to the agreement.*

The conditional construction “If the deal could ....., the United States.....agreement” can be perceived as a hypothetical reality of the hegemonic power of the speaker. Huyssteen (2006) draws a comparison between realism and hypothetical realism. Realism, according to him, is that view which is based on the knowledge that refers to objects which exist. Hypothetical realism, on the other hand, is that weak form of realism which is based on the theory of the growth of knowledge that is produced via evolutionary epistemology. It is void of any kind of empiricism. It claims that only sense experience is a foundation of all knowledge.

Having examined the conditional construction, in the above example, it could be pinpointed that Trump’s cognitive capacity, concerning his decision of the withdrawal from the Iran deal, has evolved through a

preconception of the external world (England, France, and Germany) which were parties to the deal. Therefore, the hypothetical reality, underlining the given conditional construction, encompasses the external reality along with the ontological reality of the known. In other words, he seems to be sure that these European states, which are the United State's close allies, cannot disregard his decision although they signed the deal after a long series of complicated and exhausting negotiations. Against such a backdrop, it is important to adopt van Dijk's (2013) view of our knowledge that when believing without the activation of a huge amount of knowledge of the world, it would be impossible to produce and understand discourse.

***19. The Iran deal is defective at its core. If we do nothing, we know exactly what will happen.***

The conditional construction in the above example implies a hypothetical reality. The speaker tries to pass on his assumption that the world would be more secure and safer if the Iran deal is blocked. The pronoun "we" is used by the speaker to intensify the

notion of ingroupness. It echoes the group attitude; that is, the attitude of the American political elite that Iran is anti- American politics. It is that historically political American group ground which dated back to 1979 when the Iranian Islamic Revolution overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty, which was under the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who was supported by the U.S. and replaced it with the Islamic Republic that advocated anti- American politics since its early days. In other words, the pro-American authoritarian monarchy was replaced with an anti-American theocracy (Hasan, 2020).

### **8. Summary of Findings**

The current study highlighted four thematic analyses that were based on the data under study. These thematic analyses are: a. personal pronouns as marks of narcissism, b. personal pronouns as tools of shaping social structures, c. lexical items as detectors of aggressiveness, and d. conditional constructions as hypothetical realities. They were conducted to four prominent themes (narcissism, shaping of social structures, aggressiveness, and hypothetical



realities). The dominance of each theme, in the discourse under investigation, is shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Frequency of the Themes of Aggressiveness, Narcissism, Shaping of Social Structures, and Hypothetical Realities**

Theme	Example No.	Frequency
Narcissism	1, 2, 3	3
Shaping of Social Structures	4, 5, 6	3
Aggressiveness	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	11
Hypothetical Realities	16, 17, 18, 19	4

### 9. Conclusion

Trump's discourse on the Iran nuclear deal underlined various themes that were articulated by means of grammatical items (personal pronouns and conditional constructions), lexical items, and the theoretical perspectives informing the present study. These themes are: narcissism, aggressiveness, shaping of social structures, and hypothetical reality.

By means of lexical items, the study revealed that the theme of "aggressiveness", whose occurrence was 11 times in the total speech, was the most predominant in the speech under investigation. Many words and phrases with pejorative connotations were employed by Trump. To maintain his hostile stance towards the government of Iran, Trump used such words and phrases to distort the image of the Iranian political order ( see examples 7-15). Moreover, the overuse of such words and phrases intensifies the point that Trump's cognitive background participated to a great extent in building up his recent aggressive attitudes against Iran; both his social memory and episodic memory were correlated in respect of such attitude. The theme of aggressiveness was also notable through the strategy of intimidation employed by Trump. This seems to be quite obvious when he threatened to sanction any state involved in supporting Iran (see example 11). This strategy shows the importance of cognitive representation that was stored in his long-memory. Such representation acted as reference

structures that urged and guided him to advocate such a strategy. His cognitive representation of Iran can be viewed as inputs that determined his current outputs on Iran. Besides, the strategy of intimidation enshrines the form of dominance adopted by the U.S. A. over years.

The second predominant theme highlighted in this study was “hypothetical reality”, it occurred 4 times in the whole speech. Hypothetical conditional constructions were used by Trump to highlight particular proposed suppositions about the Iranian political order and the Iranian nuclear potentials. He dealt with the concept of “What if?” via hypotheticals. Having manipulated hypothetical constructions, he tried to provide a means of understanding what would happen if affairs went in opposite direction to what he is supposed to be (see examples 16, 17, 18, 19).

Trump’s employment of personal pronouns brought the theme of “narcissism” into the open; it occurred 3 time in the speech. The study shows that there was a strong correlation between Trump’s identity and his

manipulation of personal pronouns.. The excessive use of the first person singular pronoun (I) echoed his narcissist character in that his self-focus or grandiosity was maintained via this pronoun. Besides, the first person singular pronoun (I) doesn’t only emphasize Trump’s narcissism, but also his tendency for developing a model of dominance (see examples 1, 2, and 3). The study shows that dominance as a form of power, is not only a state of awareness and understanding concerning only Trump’s mindsets and contexts, rather it is a cognitively ingrained domain of the American politics that is in the thought, behavior, and relations of the American successive political administrations.

The theme of “shaping social structures”, which occurred 3 times in the speech, was exposed to view in the current study via the use of the first person plural pronoun (We) which appeared to be influential in outlining social structures or alliances (see example 4). By means of this pronoun, Trump attempted to show himself as a hegemonic leader having the upper hand over other states of the

world especially the U.S. A. allies in Europe. Moreover, this pronoun was employed in certain contexts to emphasize the notion of intergroupness namely when it was used by Trump to particularly address the Trumpists who adopted an attitude which was in stark contrast with that of democrats who approved and signed the 'Iran nuclear deal' (see example 5). The manipulation of personal pronouns uncovered that Trump sought to impose his ideologies concerning the Iranian order and the Iranian nuclear potentials upon the American public as well as his European allies notwithstanding that his European allies themselves had been partners of the JCPOA (see example 6). The current discussion of the given pronouns made clear that Trump intended to assert a total authority so as to be seen as taking charge in a general sense.

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