

تحليل خطاب ناقد لتغريدات ترامب في اطار الحرب الباردة بين الولايات المتحدة والصين حول فايروس كورونا

US-China Cold War over COVID -19: A Critical Discourse

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المستخلص :

يعاني العالم بأسره من نقشي جائحة كورونا. الأمر الذي أدى إلى توقف شبه تام للحياة في جميع مفاصلها . وتتبادل الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والصين المزاعم فيمن تسبب بانتشار ذلك الوباء . يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحليل تغريدات الرئيس الأمريكي السابق دونالد ترامب وحربه الكلامية مع الصين حول مصدر الجائحة COVID-19 ونقشي الوباء . فضلا عن ذلك، يهدف البحث إلى تحديد استعمال التمثيل الذاتي للولايات المتحدة والأيديولوجيات المخصصة لاستعمالها في الحرب الباردة بين الولايات المتحدة والصين. ولبلوع الأهداف التي يبغى البحث تحفيها، تم تحليل التغريدات المختارة من خلال توظيف منهج (Fairclough's (2003) الذي يتمثل بتحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) و (Van Dijk's 2006)، الخاص بتحليل المستويات الكلية للأيديولوجية. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن ترامب قد استعمل لغة عنصرية لإثارة الصراع والتوتر مع الصين من خلال استعماله "نحن" مقابل "هم" لإلقاء اللوم على الصين بشأن الفيروس.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التحليل الناقد للخطاب، فايروس كورونا، الصين، الأيديولوجية، ترامب، التغريدات.

Abstract:

The entire world suffers from the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. It has resulted in a total cessation of life in all its facilities, and the exchange of allegations between the United States and China. This article is intended to analyze Trump's tweets and his war of words with China over the origin of COVID-19 and the outbreak of the pandemic. The article aims at identifying the use of U.S-THEM self-representation and the ideologies intended for using them in the cold war between the US and China. Achieving the targeted objectives, the tweets selected are analyzed based on Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA) approach, and Van Dijk's (2006), Macro levels-analysis of ideology. The results of the study showed that Trump used racist language to arouse conflict and tension with China through "Us" against "Them" to blame China for the virus.

Keywords: CDA, Covid-19, China, Ideology, Trump, Tweet

Section One**1.2 Introduction**

As one of the leading outlets to send messages to the public, the political leaders of many countries use social media. Donald J. Trump, the (45th) U.S. President, has posted on his official account more than 35.9 thousand tweets ([@realDonaldTrump](#)) and has over 82.7 million followers as of July 2020 (Juma'h & Alnsour, 2018). According to (Ott, 2017) Trump's lexicon on Twitter is repetitious and straightforward, relying heavily on monosyllabic words such as "**good**," "**bad**," and "**sad**". Second, Trump's tweets are mostly "negative in connotation, and most of them are outright threats" (Lee & Quealy, 2016). Third, Trump makes frequent use of exclamation points and all caps (Ott, 2017).

The COVID-19 outbreak began late last year in Wuhan, China, and has since spread across the world, killing tens of thousands of people. The response of Trump to

the US pandemic was widely criticized because the coronavirus claimed over 100,000 lives in America and infected more than two million people. Trump has repeatedly attempted to describe Covid-19 as the "*Chinese virus*" or the "*Wuhan virus*" that caused outrage from many civil liberties organizations, warning that racism and violence against Asian Americans would be incited by such a language (Guardian staff, 2020). In the face of the pandemic, both countries waged a political war with one side describing the virus as a "*Chinese virus*" and the other was not lagging declaring it to be a United States bio-war weapon. Beijing is reluctant to slow down in the face of the US opponent this time, in contrast to its policy of caution, and has expelled journalists working for US media outlets (Karnitschnig, 2020). This article is intended to investigate this cold war by analyzing Trump's tweets accusing China of the outbreak of COVID-19. The article arouses two questions to be under investigation:

1. How did Trump use language in his tweets accusing China of spreading the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What does Trump's cold war with China reveal about his ideology?

1.3 An overview of Ideology and CDA

According to (Van Dijk, 2003), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of discourse analytical study that examines, through speech and text, explicitly the abuse, supremacy, and inequality of social power used, repeated, and resisted in the social and political context. Many scholars have presented their standpoint on CDA, including (Tenorio, 2011) the CDA 's scope is not only focused on language; its analytical point of view attracts both scholars and activists from various fields. Likewise, (Widdowson, 2004) The CDA aims to highlight the deceptive essence of discursive processes and to Strengthen communication and well-being by eliminating obstacles to presumed convictions legitimized by debate. (Billig, 2003) argues that the CDA has the primary

characteristics of a critical approach and supports the CDA 's insistence that an interdisciplinary approach is essential.

Public speech, such as ads, newspapers, political campaign debates, official records, laws and regulations, and so on, are the focus of critical discourse analysis. It aims to explore the interactions between language, ideology, and power. It is important first to explain what political discourse is before addressing political discourse (Persada & Syahrudin, 2018). Via ongoing struggles and/or cooperation between political actors and institutions to avoid and resolve potential conflicts, power can be acquired and exercised in political discourse (Chilton, 2004).

"Critical implies revealing relations and triggers that are concealed in Fairclough 's terms" (Fairclough, 1992), Which implies decoding ideological operations since the discursive ideological trends conceal the power struggles taking place in the social world. Ideologies have been recognized as fundamental values that underlie the shared social representations of social groups of specific types. The foundation of discourse and other social processes, in turn, are these representations. Ideologies have often been believed to be articulated and acquired mainly by discourse, that is, by spoken or written communicative interaction (Van Dijk, 2006). This must occur by certain discursive mechanisms and techniques if ideologies are obtained, articulated, implemented, and replicated by discourse. The pronoun (*we*) is, for example, one of these constructs commonly used to refer deictically to the current speaker group (Van Dijk, 2006). Usually, they do so in terms of the ideological debate as community members justify, inspire or legitimize their (group-based) behavior. Accordingly, the four macro levels-analysis proposed by Van Dijk (2006) include 1) emphasizing positive things about 'us'; 2) emphasizing negative things about 'them'; 3) de-emphasize negative things about 'us'; and 4) de-emphasize positive things about 'them'. Thus, in terms of macro-analysis,

this article focuses on the self-other binary as demonstrated below; Donald Trump: Self, We, Us! In-group, China: Others, They, Them! Out-group.

Section Two

2.1 Methodology

2.2 Data Collection

A linguistic analysis of Donald Trump's tweets during the latest Covid-19 outbreak was proposed in the present paper. The source of the data is taken from <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1278099002345619462>, with a total of 326 words. The tweet transcript will be analyzed to examine the ideological views of the "US vs THEM" from the tweets. The data contains one overarching theme, the Covid-19 outbreak, and it has ramifications for America and the rest of the world.

2.3 Model of Analysis

The paper is carried out using the qualitative study of the CDA, which is a method and research instrument built under the Critical Research Paradigm by constructionists back in the 1970s. Moreover, it should be noted that in discourse studies, discourse analysts are not primarily interested in the sample size of their given corpus, as a 'large sample can generate an uncontrollable amount of data without contributing to the analytical outcome of the study. At the same time, in discourse studies with a restricted sample size of the corpus, useful theoretical interpretations can also be made (Waikar, 2018). Henceforth, the macro-level-analysis of ideology can be used for the data chosen in this article, a descriptive-analytic research approach based on the Fairclough model (1995) and Van Dijk (2006).

Section Three

3.1 Results and Discussion



Figure.1. Word cloud of the most frequent words.

At this point, via NVIVO 12-Pro, the researcher has analyzed the data and can obtain some important results. The total word cloud of the tweets is seen in **Figure 1**, where we can see how Trump often used such terms for Covid-19, the United States, and China. In addition, his style of speech and lexical choices of Trump can be seen clearly by using NVIVO 12 Pro, as he tweets about China significantly, directly, and implicitly in his tweets. Trump freely spoke about Covid-19 and contrasted it with China and other derogatory words, such as "ugly face and Chinese virus," by using such lexical choices. Also prominent in the word cloud are the phrases China, Coronavirus, and President, indicating the prominence of us versus them binary. The connection can be seen between the words and their associates. It also highlights the hierarchy of specific

words and their implications, as described in the Ideological Square, such as virus, united, good, patriotic, Coronvirious, etc., indicating the salience of the polarising binary self-other.

3.2 CDA Analyses

President Trump appeared very confident as he briefed the American people on the new advances in virus containment. He says that in the US, the pandemic is under control by using the adjective '*very*' as an intensifying adjective to legitimize his speech. To add more, to express solidarity with the American people, Trump used the pronoun '*we*' to speak in the tone of the group to involve himself and the American people as a single country. Trump appreciates other nations, the WHO, and the CDC's efforts to contain the virus using words such as 'hard and intelligent' and '*hard and smart*'. He uses the pronoun '*me*' that refers to Trump himself as President of the United States. It's an open reference to Trump's economic experience or context to reassure the American public that everything in the stock markets and international trade with the rest of the world is fine.

In particular, the US President blames the World Health Organization for its failure in carrying out its role in the fight against this epidemic. The president is publicly accusing China, despite US financial support, of exploiting the WHO. To refer to himself and the American people as one nation, the president uses the pronoun '*we*'. Trump insists on reconsidering the U.S.-World Health Organization partnership as aligned with China. To refer to himself as the president of the United States, who has the power and authority to address matters, Trump uses the pronoun '*I*'. He rejected the **WHO's** suggestion to open the border with China by using the pronoun '*they*' **WHO**, and saw their suggestion as a flawed one.

Trump seeks to focus as much as possible on the economic side since it was the core theme of his 2018 election campaign. First use words with capital letters such as **'OPEN UP OUR GREAT COUNTRY'** to draw the attention of the readers, and secondly, to display his patriotism as belonging to a great nation such as the United States. The president sees the outbreak as an intangible adversary. He refers to the misery caused by this outbreak, and he calls for patience to overcome the ordeal, given the loss of many loved ones and friends. At the end of the tweet, as usual, the president invested in the economic side to reassure the American people that the economy will transcend the ordeal and flourish in an unprecedented way.

Trump makes a strong distinction between the numbers of 37,000 people who died as a result of common influenza and those 22 who died as a result of the corona outbreak, based on official US estimates. In the last part of his tweet, Trump encourages the American people to "**think about it**," the figures are not alarming or important in terms of the numbers of those infected or dead. The US President's call, therefore, is to return to daily life and revitalize the US economy.

In this tweet, which is a clear allegation of China being the key reason for the spread of the virus, Trump openly names the virus a Chinese virus. From the beginning, Trump claims to have taken the virus seriously, and he talks about himself as the US president using the pronoun **'I, my'** and his precautionary steps to reduce the epidemic by closing China's border. Trump points to the effectiveness of his precautionary measures that have helped save American citizens' lives, as he sees these statements as false and misleading, which is the reverse of what the press is promoting. To mobilize world sentiment against China, Trump used the pronoun 'us, our' to refer to the US and other nations, reiterating his argument against China that this virus is Chinese and invisible. Trump acknowledges the precautionary measures of American citizens by wearing masks and social distancing and discovers it as a patriotic attitude. Trump

repeats the term patriotism to use the term '*nobody*' to equate himself to other people all over the world. Trump sees himself as the most patriotic and favorite ever seen by the American people.

In this tweet, to clarify three separate points of view, Trump uses the pronoun '*I*' to refer to himself only three times. First, as he is the president of the strongest nation, the spread of the epidemic across the world is closely monitored, depicting the epidemic as having an ugly face. Second, the word '*tremendous*' was used by Trump to describe the enormous harm this outbreak has caused to the US. Third, Trump repeated the word '*more*' twice, referring to his frustration at China as the key reason behind the global disease outbreak. Trump says that the damage caused by the epidemic is visible, and on his part, he feels the enormity of these damages, considering him the head of a superpower. Trump refers to the aviation industry, one of the main sectors impacted by the Chinese virus, which represents a large national income for the United States of America. To refer to himself and the American people, Trump uses the word '*we*' again when he speaks in the tone of a group to refer to the unity between him and the American nation. Trump is committed to overcoming this pandemic and aims to unite, stronger than ever, the American people.

3.3 Ideology Analyses

Throughout his tweets, President Trump has aimed to persuade the American people that the epidemic is under control and that there is nothing to worry about. Trump is referring to international attempts to contain the Covid-19 outbreak. Trump relied on official figures from the WHO, the CDC, and neighboring countries to make this argument more formal. This is an implicit sign of the capacity of the US health system to cope with Covid-19's spread in terms of the availability of medical supplies, clinics, and healthcare workers. According to (Biscop, 2020), the corona crisis will accelerate

the US and even EU action, which they were envisaging already, to reduce the interdependence with China (and others) by reviewing the supply chains in critical sectors. US President Donald Trump has approved a US\$ 2 trillion total emergency spending bill (Pramuk, 2020). Trump refers to the role played by the WHO, while it's sponsored by the US, it's regulated by China, unfortunately. Trump says the precautionary steps, such as border closures, have been quite optimistic and quite efficient. Trump has continued to pit people against each other, ignoring that a pandemic requires global cooperation and medical solutions, not national and military ones, or even local ones where states compete with each other for medical supplies in an “*eBay*” style bidding war encouraged by the Federal government. By presenting himself as a “*wartime president*” against a willful enemy who is “*brilliant*” or “*very smart*”, Donald Trump has externalized responsibilities and blamed the media, international institutions, political correctness, and the governors (Misha Ketchell, 2020).

Accordingly, Trump is very optimistic using the clause “*Once we OPEN UP OUR GREAT COUNTRY*”, the epidemic will end soon, and he is betting on the US economy “*Our Economy will BOOM, perhaps like never before!!!*.” Recovering to compete with other countries' economies in an unprecedented way. Trump's proposals centered on the airline industry as it represented a high US national income as he said: “*The US will help these sectors strongly*” Trump used the language of numbers and figures to persuade his Twitter followers that the number of people infected in the USA is minimal compared with the number of daily deaths from flu. He is trying to connect these figures with the American economy and is calling on the people of America to continue their daily lives as usual and to make the economy spin without stopping at all. Trump refers to the precautionary measures “including my very early decision to close the “*borders*” from China against the wishes of almost all. Many lives were saved”,

That his administration pursued early to curb the spread of the epidemic including the closing of the borders of the United States.

Trump points out that his administration reflects the will of the entire American people, without exception, by using the clause “*wishes of almost all*” to safeguard the lives of American citizens, which is a priority of the Trump administration. President Trump, at the end of the tweet, encourages the American people not to listen or pay attention to the media by using the clause “**The Fake News new narrative is disgraceful & false!**” which publishes manipulated and false news. Trump considers himself the patriotic and favorite president of the American people based on his efforts to fight the Covid-19 outbreak. He is treating the virus very seriously; he is the person who can feel the damages caused by the pandemic all over the world. Trump is trying to de-emphasize negative things about ‘us’, especially at losses in the economic sector. Many industries are already going through crises and projecting huge losses. Total losses to the aviation industry have been projected around US\$ 63-113 billion. Wall Street has already come down along with many other stock markets across the world. The financial sector, especially banks, is also under pressure, and investors are looking for safe places to invest even at a negative interest rate. However, the job losses have started, and the biggest loser would be the common people during and after the COVID-19 crisis (Ilyas, 2020). President Trump has sought to minimize the role of the World Health Organization in reducing the spread of the virus by all means. Trump accused this organization, even though the United States sponsors it, but that it is quite biased toward China.

Trump has tried hard to concentrate on three critical issues to “Emphasise negative things about China, the epidemic, and the WHO”. Throughout the selected tweets, Trump is repeatedly trying to “*emphasize negative things about ‘China’* and link it to the outbreak of the virus. The clause “*I always treated the Chinese Virus very*

seriously”. Trump’s initial insistence on identifying corona as a Chinese virus was not helpful either. Viruses do not have a nationality; governments do (Biscop, 2020). To mobilize public opinion against China, Trump defines this epidemic as ***Chinese, invisible and with an ugly face***, the effect of this epidemic on the global economy is evident, and in turn, on the US economy. America is working actively with other countries to reduce the spread of the virus, calling this virus as ‘*invisible China virus*’ due to its negative effects on the American economy. Trump describes the virus as an “*ugly face*” with it is “*tremendous damage*” to the United States; he is very “*angry*” at China because of the stumbling and collapse left by the epidemic in the American economy. Calling COVID-19 the “**Wuhan virus**” or the “***Chinese virus***” is absurd when it has spread globally. Intentionally referring to COVID-19 as a “Chinese virus” only inflames animosity and hinders the real work of public health and disease prevention (Webel, 2020).

On the other hand, Trump has sought to minimize the international role that the World Health Organization plays in fighting the virus in any way. Trump, on the one hand, sees the WHO as China-controlled ‘***China-centric***’ and, on the other, finds its border opening proposals’ ‘their advice’ with China as a ‘*faulty recommendation*’. President Trump abruptly stopped using the expression “***Chinese virus***” after China promised to send medical supplies, and turned his attack on the WHO instead, attacking them for praising China (Misha Ketchell, 2020).

Trump has tried hard to reduce China's role in curbing the spread of the disease or to point to China's global role in providing European countries such as Italy and Spain with medical assistance. The United States' absence is all the more striking. Donald Trump has missed the chance for the US to play some part in international solidarity and collaboration by not taking the crisis seriously. It could even cost him his re-election (in which case, one may hope for a more positive foreign policy in Washington) (Biscop,

2020). China has a major effect on global health supplies and is in a position to control the supply chain of medical products to the United States. The team also fears that increased criticism of China by the *POTUS* could also cause the preservation of important information about the outbreak of the virus that can help track, treat or locate a vaccine. In the US official circles, there is continued criticism of China for buying a large portion of the global supply of medical masks and calls for a decrease in reliance on global suppliers and a rise in local pharmaceutical manufacturing (Crowley, Wong, & Jakes, 2020).

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