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## A Case Study of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Discourse: Boris Johnson's Resignation Speech

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### Abstract

The paper is a study of qualitative with descriptive data presentation. The author uses power to invest the pronouns of Boris Johnson's resignation speech. The Cognition Theory by (Teun A Van Dijk, 2009) was used. Textually, social cognition and social context are three component aspects in revealing the implied meaning of the use of personal pronouns in Boris Johnson's Resignation speech. The data was collected from Boris Johnson's Resignation speech on the 7th of July, 2022. This transcript was collected from the media. The study's objective is to describe the personal pronouns used by Boris Johnson in his Resignation speech to find out the unexposed meaning of the relied personal pronouns. In this current paper, different pronouns (I, we, us, me, I'm) were used, and each has a specific function and target, and I have found that each personal pronoun used by Boris Johnson refers to a certain ideology and strategy. The reason behind using such pronouns is to attract the audience and supports them to achieve the wanted target in the policy. Also, Johnson tried to convince supports that he and his party in the right way.

**Keywords:** Audience, CDA, personal pronouns, Resignation, supporters.

## 1. Introduction

In most cases, language can be used by someone because of the interest in a group or an institution which can be impacted by a specific plan, agenda, and interest (Alvi & Baseer, 2012). It is obvious that one of the dominant parties, under any circumstances involved tends to control their power regarding the virtue of knowledge, perception, age, social status, etc regarding social intercourse. The use of language by those who reached power: high-level occupation, high social rank, and major political position will be one-sided, as stated (N. L. Fairclough, 1989). On the other side, those with lower positions seem inactive similar to the listener. It is remarkable, that the phenomena of dominant and less dominant parties through the use of language in social reality may be remarked in the interplay between the University Professor, Doctor-patient, Teacher-Student, Leader-Community, and Employer-Staff. Critical Discourse analysis is described as a discipline that focuses on certain activity in seeking text more details as explained by Jupriono (2010). Language in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is believed as a social practice that Ideology and Power associated with as indicated by (Baker & Ellece, 2011).

Most Politicians are characterized by using language to attract attention and receive proper support from the public. So, most politicians must have the linguistic qualifications to achieve specific plans, interests, and targets. Making a speech is considered one of the mono-dialogue practices mostly applied by certain politicians, Ministers, or top Rank individuals and Presidents to use power implicitly. Most politicians use one-way communication to develop and reinforce certain images, ideologies, plans, and agendas indirectly (Karapetjana, 2011).

Boris Johnson is the Prime Minister of the U.K and the current leader of the Conservative Party. He is proud that more than 14 million British citizens voted for him. Some of his critics stated that he won the election that he never expected, but won handsomely (<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/07/world/boris-johnson->

resign-news). The great paradox of Johnson is that he was described as a very flare character, and when he was an as successful politician for so long time. One thing that made him popular in this speech is his refusal to back down and refusing to apologize, despite that, that his party so massively rejected him. Most of Johnson's speeches are remarked with rhetoric and persuasive.

The UK. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is one of the ambitious leaders of the conservative party. He delivered many top positions during his political career. He preferred to present all achievements he did. Politicians are known for using Linguistic units and decorated styles for the reason of attracting the public by using sympathy and interest. Boris Johnson is known as an active person and received many positions during his career till reaching to the leader of the conservative party in 2019. Using personal pronouns was one of the strategies used by politicians to sustain the power of his administration. One of the ways to criticize and examine the use of language and manipulation is by obtaining the knowledge of Critical Discourse Analysis of any texts including political speeches (Teun Adrianus Van Dijk, 2008).

This paper tries to criticize personal pronoun usage by using Critical Discourse Analysis's application, which is considered one of the major strategies used by a politician to influence the public. The current article tries to find the proper answers to the presented questions. Identify the repeated pronouns by Boris Johnson. Determine the embedded meaning that can be analyzed in the personal pronouns used in Boris Johnson resignation's speech.

CDA can be described as an affecting course of Discourse Analysis. Specific interests and ideas can be secured and put to use by Politicians to achieve certain goals. The traditional CDA aims to analyze the composition and structure of the discourse. Language is considered one of the major means to influence the audience and party's followers. Using rich language will attract a large number of audiences

and followers. CDA has a huge influence on the social sciences and social structures. It is noted, that individuals speak in different grades of power, and some words have their weights and conviction.

## 2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The concept of CDA was proposed by and analyzed by Chilton (2004). The social rights were considered and remarked on by Fairclough (1989), and this was a preface of Critical Discourse Analysis. It can also assemble social practice, social relationships, meaning systems, and Knowledge (Heywood et al., 2004). The relationship between language and culture exists. Language can be effective on users indirectly by a huge preset of information. The two main objects of CDA are official discourse and Popular Discourse. Also, we can notice that CDA exposes the complex connections between social structure, discourse, and social relations. All that raises the people's awareness to resist domination, misuse, and inequality of social power. Handyani et al. (2018) said that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be used to describe, analyze, interpret and critique social life that is reflected in speech. From the other hand, Amoussou and Allagbe (2018) confirmed that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims in discussing the social issues mainly on the production and reproduction of power abuse or power domination.

On the other hand, CDA can be utilized in examining the implied meanings of any issues: gender, race, social rank, and domination confirmed by (Teun A Van Dijk, 2015). The summary was completed by (N. Fairclough, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2009) regarding the determined CDA's principles such as: Addressing social issues, Power relations and discursive, Constructing Society and Culture, Seeking ideological Nations, Having Historical Characteristics, the link between text and society is mediated, it is interpretive and explanatory, it is a form of social action according to the Researcher's information and what he had reviewed from the

previous studies, identity, and Ideology is related closely to the application of personal pronouns. They can be presented collectively or individually (Yang & Cai, 2023).

### 3. Methodology

The Methodology of the current paper discusses the use of personal pronouns referring to the implied power in Boris Johnson's Resignation speech, delivered on the 7th of July, 2022. I have to start this paper after two days after Boris's speech. He started his speech by using very few pronouns, especially the personal pronoun "I", "Me" and "We" on some rare occasions. This study applied the CDA approach to data processing. The main objective of the critical study has referred to which is the main task is to reveal all of the aspects of hidden power abuse in Boris Johnson's Resignation speech.

#### 3.1 The Technique Used in Data Collection

All the data of this current study were collected from Boris Johnson's Resignation speech on the 7th of July, 2022. This speech was found on online media (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/07/world/europe/boris-johnson-resignation-speech.html>). The phases of this study are to reduce data presentation and conclusion. The process of grouping data will be followed regarding categories. Then, the data will be presented by referring to the topic and subject topic. In the form of a narrative account, all of the collected data were organized. The final step is the conclusion of the data collection.

#### 3.2 The Selection of Analysis Units

Data and Categories were collected, and the second step was to define unit analysis for each category. This paper concerns the use of personal pronouns in Boris

Johnson's Resignation speech. Many social analyses for some contexts were undergone: the social development and pre-post social development.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Analysis

Boris Johnson's Resignation speech consisted of 48 lines and 686 words. He started his speech with welcoming words and ended it with thanking words to all his supporters. Is remarkable in the first Transcript, he used the personal pronoun "I" to express the hard efforts he made alone by appointing his cabinet, and he will work hard in the future to appoint another leader. He believes he is still the leader of the Conservative Party, and that he can gain the trust of those who voted for him. In the 1st transcript, the personal pronoun "I" was mentioned three times, which represents his power to lead the party and the country, to get a positive impression and the trust of the British people. The pronoun "I" is a self-focus used by depressed persons more than stable persons. Also, the use of such pronouns means, that the speaker is serious and ready for any responsibility or consequences regarding his mandate duty. As he confirmed, Boris tried to convince his supporters and British people that he was the proper Prime Minister and the Leader of the Conservative Party during his ruling period. The many lives of a political survivor, that how he was described by one of the BBC's articles as an age of grey, machine-like politicians (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-59966249>). In many other newspapers and articles, he was described as the blond ambition, and how he selected his guide to the road of power (<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jul/21/boris-johnson-route-to-number-10>).

*"It is clear now the will of the parliamentary Conservative Party that there should be a new leader of that party and therefore a new prime minister, and I've agreed with Sir Graham Brady, the chairman of our backbench M.P.s, that the process of*

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*choosing that new leader should begin now and the timetable will be announced next week. And I've today appointed a cabinet to serve, as I will until the new leader is in place."*

In the second transcript, the personal pronoun "I" was used one time plus the pronoun "us" and "you" were used only once. More than 15 million voters voted for Boris in 2019, which was a remarkable success that never expected it. The use of personal (I) is to indicate the speaker's duty and responsibility toward his supporters and people to achieve the required obligations, especially what he had promised in 2019. He never forgot his commitment and promise to the public. The pronoun "us" refers to the Conservative Party's members who won the election in 2019, without their supporters' votes, they never can claim the ladder to success. We can remark also, that the pronoun "you" is used to refer to the Conservative Party's supporters who voted in the 2019's election. The speaker is sharing the winning prize with his supporters regarding their voting in the election.

*"So, I want to say to the millions of people who voted for us in 2019, many of them voting Conservative for the first time: 'Thank you for that incredible mandate, the biggest Conservative majority since 1987, the biggest share of the vote since 1979."*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> transcript started with the pronoun "I" two times, which represents Institutes, departments, Secretaries, and the Administration. He indicated the success he had during his rolling period through the three years of difficulties and critical issues that confronted his cabinet, and they passed successfully regarding the great efforts and hard work they did.

*"And the reason I have fought so hard in the last few days to continue to deliver that mandate in person was not just because I wanted to do so, but because I felt it was my job, my duty, my obligation to you to continue to do what we promised in 2019."*

While in the 4<sup>th</sup> Transcript, two personal pronouns were used. The pronouns are "I+ing" and "us". It was confirmed that they are following the herd instinct, and are working together (Politics). Boris said; "Even if I left, another powerful leader will show up. We will stand till select another great leader according to our perfect system". These pronouns came to the state, that the current system's target is to help the people, reduce taxes and present a great service to the Public. All we have to work together, Politics and Friends for the best of the Public.

*"And of course, I'm immensely proud of the achievements of this government: from getting Brexit done to settling our relations with the continent for over half a century, reclaiming the power for this country to make its laws in Parliament, getting us all through the pandemic, delivering the fastest vaccine rollout in Europe, the fastest exit from lockdown."*

Finally, the 5<sup>th</sup> Transcript used only one personal pronoun of "I" and "we". The UK. Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised to find another alternative leader to take his place, and he addressed the Public. In the last few months, leading the West in standing up to Putin's aggression in Ukraine.

*"And let me say now, to the people of Ukraine, that I know that we in the U.K. will continue to back your fight for freedom for as long as it takes."*

## 5. Findings

The use of personal pronouns in Boris Johnson's Speech depends on the reaction toward the critical events that confronted the Conservative Party. Johnson was very careful in selecting personal pronouns to influence the audience and communicants to believe in his goals and targets. Generally, we remark that Johnson used many different personal pronouns to apply his strategies (Beard, 2015). The use of the pronouns I and my in the Transcripts above refer to the speaker's characteristics such as responsibility, leader's commitment, and notifying his audience of the great goals



achieved by his administration. These pronouns are not hints of contradiction. These pronouns also refer to the great efforts he did in selecting his cabinet that hold for three long difficult years, and he succeeded to control the severe events that Great Britain had been exposed to such as; Brexit and COVID-19. Most of the strategies adopted by politicians are utilizing some strategies and techniques of communication, and they are known to adopt personal pronouns as confirmed by Karapetjana (2011). Commitment, Loyalty, and Integrity are found in the personal pronouns I and my.

The pronouns other than "I" and "my" were utilized to refer to Unity, identity, and belongingness. The reason behind using "we" is to share responsibility toward the conservative party's strategy, and not blame Boris for the critical events that occurred since receiving Prime Minister's position. The pronoun "we" was used many times more than any other pronoun due to a certain target in the speaker's mind. Boris means that he with the help of the people of the United Kingdom will achieve togetherness and victory for their party.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The reason behind using these personal pronouns is to achieve certain political and associational targets. They were used to attract the audience and refer to himself or the event that Boris wants to explain. Boris Johnson in his Resignation speech used different pronouns (I, we, us, me, I'm) to express his target and the Achievements he made. Each pronoun has a different function, so the speaker tries to employ them for his interest, benefit, and Conservative Party's advantage and to appear in a winning image. According to Teun A Van Dijk (2015), Boris Johansson has succeeded in using different personal pronouns to express his achievements during the ruling period, and as a good leader for the Conservative party in the UK. He used the personal pronoun "I" mostly to express his power to demonstrate and manage all the

Crises that confronted his country from 2019 till the day of Boris' resignation. Remarkably, Johnson tried to create his identity and connection with the audience by using frequent pronouns. Also, Johnson succeeded to embody a real fusion of pronouns in his speech. The Researcher confirms in his current words, that Boris Johnson succeeded in using "we and us" pronouns to refer to the conservative party's supporters and those who supported him during his period of the ruling.

The people were included to show solidarity and togetherness with the ruling party. This is considered a positive matter adopted by the British public. The reason behind using Critical Discourse Analysis is to reveal the used language by politicians to achieve their plans and goals. Most politicians seek dominance and hegemony in the public, and these pronouns are their way to achieve their goals and targets. Also, Critical Discourse Analysis is considered one of the powerful strategies which are used by a most politicians to disclose their power and ideology. Many aspects can be presented such as the structure of the sentences, the use of vocabulary, the use of pronouns, and the speech method which all together compose the speech quality. We remark that the use of "I will" and "I've" refer to the idea and strategy used by the speaker to present his power and ideology as a great and powerful leader during his ruling period. At the same time, other pronouns were used such as "we, our, and us) to indicate that there are no barriers between the leader and the audience, and they are working all the time together and in one hand. This is what we call attracting the audience and supporters to draw them to his side. But, utilizing all these pronouns was not sufficient to strengthen the support confidence of the resigned president due to the cumulative critical issues related to the resigned president's cabinet during COVID-2019. A previous study by Bowo, Wijayanti, and Wulansari (2022) showed Boris Johnson strong image as a leader by his denial of party members who urged Johnson to resign. And most of the pronouns refer to "I" which refers to the prime Minister himself. Bramley (2001) confirmed that the use of pronouns will construct

"self" and "other" in Politics. It means that pronouns have a great influence on the speaker's character.

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