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A Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House' by Michael Wolff

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Abstract

Language plays a pivotal role in constructing identity and ideology. It shapes the people's ideas and beliefs about specific perspectives. This research is mainly concerned with constructed ideologies through discourse. The present study is based on the book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" written by Michael Wolff. The approach for present research is qualitative in nature and for analysis; different extracts are taken from the book. It adopts Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model for analysis which includes textual, discursive practice and social practice analyses. The study reveals that a constructed ideology of Trump is portrayed in this book, in which, he is presented as ineligible and unfit person for the post of president of United States. Thus, in conclusion, the value of discourse in conveying the specific ideology cannot be underestimated.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, identity, ideology, language, qualitative research

1. Introduction

Discourse is a written and spoken form of text which is practiced because of specific ideologies and there is no neutral language (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as mode of responsibility (Fairclough, 1992, p. 63).

"Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" is written by Michael Wolff. In this book, he discussed about the U.S. president Donald Trump and his staff who were the part of 2016 presidential campaigns. This book is divided into twenty-two chapters in which different events are described especially Trump's conversation with his senior staff. Wolff claims that he has more than two hundred interviews with Trump before the publication of his book. This book was scheduled to release on 9 January 2018 but due to preceded demands, its publisher released this book on 5 January 2018 and it was the on the number one on New York times best seller list. After the publication of this book Donald Trump tweeted that it's full of lies and he didn't give permission for any interview (Wolff, 2018; Stelter, 2018; Gaydos, 2018).

Lee (1992) states a "language is an instrument for the phenomena of human experience to conceptual categories. It is clearly, not simply, a mirror that reflects reality. Rather it functions to impose structure on our perception of the world" (p. 8). Halliday (1978) describes language as a social semiotic and people use it on daily basis to communicate with each other. Hidden meanings are also conveyed through language which can be interpreted according to specific cultural context. Machin and Mayr (2012) explain "language shapes and maintains a society's ideas and values; it can also serve to create and legitimize certain kind of social practice" (p. 18).

Price (1998, p. 38) states "an ideology is a specific example of organized belief, while ideology in general is the framework of all those ideas and beliefs which offer a coherent, but incomplete, critique of things as they are. An individual ideology must make sense to large number of people, even if they do not accept all ideas or values it offers". Steger and Paul (2013) define ideology as a set of shared ideas or belief. They explain that ideology gave a vision which is followed by society and groups intentionally and unintentionally. Coffin (2001) defines critical

discourse analysis as "CDA gives attention to the dynamic interplay between text production, the text itself and text interpretation or consumption" (p. 99).

This research is significant to reveal the inculcated ideologies in "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House". This research also explores the linguistic devices which are used to describe the specific ideology. As Machin and Mayr (2012) explain ideology gives the world view and is practiced by societies. Van Dijk (1998) describes ideology as a science of ideas.

1.1 Research Questions

The research is aimed at finding the following research questions:

a) What are the ideologies/ideology working behind Wolff's book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House"?

b) How is the sentence structure manipulated in conveying the particular ideology?

1.2 Objectives of this Research

The objectives of this research papers are given below:

• To find out the hidden ideologies/ideology in the book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" (2018).

• To highlight the specific sentence structure and linguistic devices which are used to convey the particular ideologies.

2. Literature Review

Sipra and Rashid (2013) examine the speech of Martin Luther King in socio and political perspective and conclude that certain specific stylistic features are used to convey a specific meaning and it propagates a specific theme in a sophisticated manner. Luther king uses different metaphors and linguistic devices and conveys the relationship of powerful and oppressed. And he is achieving the success and support of powerless group without any conflict with powerful group.

For Fairclough (2001), "Critical discourse analysis … oscillates between a focus on structure and a focus on action—between a focus on shifts in the social structuring of semiotic diversity (orders of discourse), and a focus on the productive semiotic work which goes on in particular texts and interactions. In both perspectives, a central concern is shifting articulations between genres, discourses, and styles—the shifting social structuring of relationships between them which achieve a relative stability and permanence in orders of discourse, and the ongoing working of relationships between them in texts and interactions" (p. 124).

According to Van Dijk (2008), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a kind of discourse which analyses and studies the dominance, power, oppression and inequality and how it is practiced and resisted in discourse according to different social and cultural contexts. Further, Fairclough (1995) explains that discourse should be analyzed with the relation of power and ideology according to different contexts and there should be linguistic and intertextual analyses.

According to Aschale and Ababa (2013), political ideologies protect the interests of dominant group. Their research on Barak Obama's speeches concludes that language plays a decisive role in every political battle which is prepared. Powerful group suppresses other groups and use the counterfeit names of "aid" and "tolerance" and they impose their ideologies on weaker groups. As Eagleton (1991) defines 'ideology' as "a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands" (p. 1).

Following Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model, Horváth (2009) examines the political discourse and explain that ideologies reside in text. Political leaders and powerful people use persuasive strategies to influence their audience and impose a specific ideology related to social, economic and politics which are practiced.

3. Research Design

Research design is a systematic and organized plan which is followed in a research. Researchers follow a specific research design which consists of all tools for data analysis (Kerlinger, 1986). The research design of this research is qualitative and different extracts from the book are taken for analysis. According to Nunan (1992) qualitative research gives the insider perspective and it is discovery oriented.
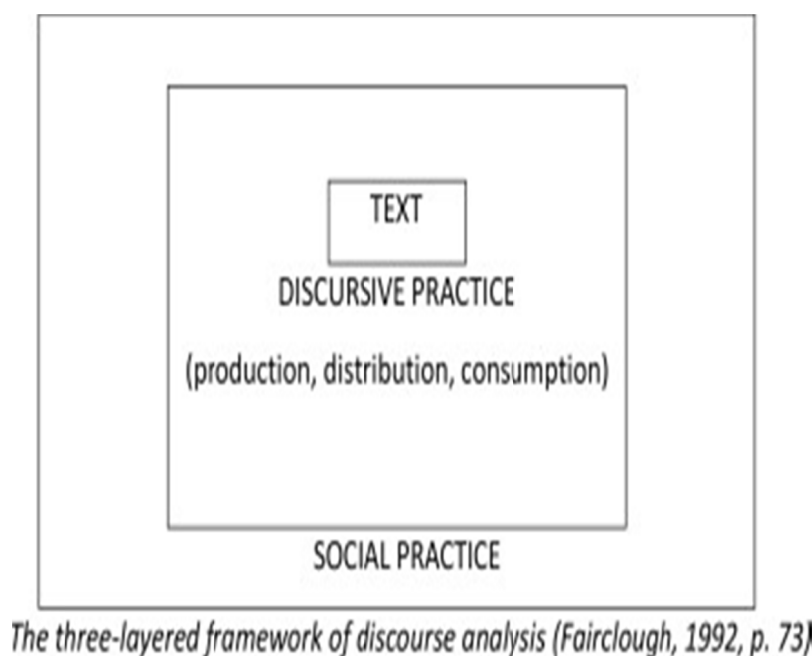
3.1 Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

The corpus of this study is only one book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" (2018) written by Michael Wolff. Different extracts taken from the book are analyzed by following Fairclough's (1992)

three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. Those extracts which are significant in conveying the ideology are selected for analysis. Eight (8) extracts are selected for analysis.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The researchers adapt Fairclough's (1992) following three-dimensional model for this research which includes:

• Textual analysis

• Discursive practice analysis

• Social practice analysis

The three-layered framework of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73)

"Text analysis can be organized under four main headings: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure" (p. 75). Vocabulary and grammar deal with words and combination of clauses of sentences while cohesion and text structure observed that how different sentences and clauses are linked to each other and what is organizational properties of text.

Discursive practice deals with the "formal features of texts: the 'force' of utterance, i.e., what sorts of speech acts (promises, requests, threats etc.) … involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption, and the nature of these processes varies between different types of discourse according to social factors" (pp. 75–78).

Social practice analysis is related to economic, political, ideological and cultural perspectives and they play a vital role in production and consumption of discourse.

4. Analysis

In this section different extracts taken from the book "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" are analyzed. Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model is used for analysis. Sentence structure and vocabulary of extracts are analyzed, and it is observed that how specific linguistic devices constructs specific ideology/ideologies.

4.1 Significance of the Title "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House"

Title of the book plays a significant role in conveying a specific ideology and most of the times we can judge the main purpose of the book by its first cover page. According to Linsdell (2013) "the cover is not only the billboard for the book, but, in a sense, the first page of the story, because it is here that book can communicate a little of the style and mood of the tale inside" (p. 1).

Donald Trump gave warning to North Korea on 8 August 2017 that they are not able to threat U.S. anymore and they will face fire and fury which world has never seen before. And Wolff also chose the title of the book "FIRE AND FURY" after hearing the conflict with North Korea. All words are capital and in bold size on the cover of the

book "FIRE AND FURY: INSIDE THE TRUMP WHITE HOUSE" and gives the prominence. Title of the book with Donald Trump picture also explains the furious and angry mood of Donald Trump as a president of U.S. Similarly, the words "INSIDE THE TRUMP HOUSE" describe the Donald Trump as powerful and authoritative man who has access and control over white house.

Figure 1. Fire and fury

Further, the words "FIRE AND FURY" which are the actual statement given by Donald Trump explore his negative constructed ideology which is portrayed by Wolff.

4.2 Analysis of Extract 1

This extract consists of a long paragraph which is taken from the author's note. In this paragraph, Wolff describes the reason why he wrote book and says, "Reason to write this book could not be more obvious". The use of "more" which is the comparative degree shows that it is somehow the greater need. Implicitly, Wolff answers the expected questions from people and media that's why he needs to write this controversial book against the president of United States. He further explains that after the inauguration of Trump, U.S. entered in political storm. For storm he gives the reference of "Watergate scandal" which was the major political scandal of United States happened in early 1970s. In this paragraph, negative lexicalization is used like political storm and Watergate which describe that after 1970s there was not any big disaster for United States. Implicitly, there is comparison of two different time periods, one is 1970 when Watergate scandal occurred and other is 2017 when Trump's inauguration ceremony held. Wolff compares these two different years and describes it as a storm and danger for U.S. In the next lines, he uses first person pronoun "I" which explains the authority of omniscient narrator. Theoretically, there is more than one theme in this paragraph. Further, Wolff explains that he tried to see all events of "Trump white house through the eyes of the people". The word "life" is used in a positive sense and it interprets the people and Trump staff who lives in white house. In the given lines, author first use the pronoun "I" and shows his authoritative identity who describes all of the events in white house but later he covers his word by mentioning the other people of white house and says that all stories are through the eyes of Trump's senior staff and his colleagues. Moving to the next, there is again negative lexicalization "act of Trump presidency" and it criticizes the Trump's actions and commands which are not professional, but it is like act or drama which is played by him. There is one example of Trump act that he fired Bannon as chief strategist and hired John Kelly as chief of staff (See Appendix 1, Extract 1).

4.3 Analysis of Extract 2

This extract is taken from the "Prologue: Allie and Bannon". A prologue is the introduction of the book which describes the extra information and plot related to specific book. In this paragraph, Wolff describes the character of Allies and his relationship with Trump. Allies was the CEO and chairman of Fox news, and he resigned in July 2016 after sexual harassment allegations. In this paragraph, Allies and Trump friendship is described and it also

explains how he (Allies) helped and amazed his friend after first debate with Hillary Clinton. There are positive lexicalizations used by Allies for Trump like "salesmanship", "showmanship" and "sixth sense" which describe the positive traits of Trump's personality. There is one negative adjective "shamelessness" which is used to describe how Allies and Trump has close relationships. The use of negative adjective also implicitly describes that Trump and Allies both are same in nature and have been involved in sexual relations with their staff. "Trump's game" is also described in a negative way which describes that he is quite sharp in making decisions and likes to play games and tricks with others. Overall, Wolff described the positive features of Trump personality through the eyes of Allies but consciously he implants the specific sentence structure and lexicalization which describes his (Trump) negative aspects (See Appendix 1, Extract 2).

4.4 Analysis of Extract 3

This extract is taken from the chapter one "Election Day". In this paragraph, Wolff described the relationship of trump with his family and other staff. In this paragraph, it's explained that Trump is not like a common man to make real relationships and in fact he is described as dysfunctional and mad man. In the first line, Wolff used a phrase "real relationships" which describes the difference between real and fake relationships. This phrase implicitly describes that Trump has not even have good and normal terms with his daughter and off course he wouldn't even have good terms with his staff as well. Bob Mercer, the major Republican donor and he supported Donald Trump, had only few talks with Trump. Bob Mercer is monosyllable and he only utter one word while conversation. Here "monosyllable" conveys a significant meaning that Trump does not like to listen to other's opinions and he just needs obedient people who will reply in either yes or no. Trump relationship with Rebekah Mercer is also explained which consists of only one selfie at Trump Tower. Rebekah Mercer is also the Republican major donor as well as the foundation and director (See Appendix 1, Extract 3).

4.5 Analysis of Extract 4

This extract is taken from chapter two "Trump Tower". Trump Tower serves as the headquarter of Trump organization and his both election campaigns 2016 and 2020 are headquartered in this tower. In this chapter, Wolff reveals that Trump has sexual relationship with his friends' wives. In this extract, Trump's sexual relationships with his friends' wives and other girls are revealed, and all this happen in his Tower. Here, the Trump tower has a significant meaning which shows that he keeps power and dominance, and he can do any illegal and unprofessional activity at his tower and this tower is like a wall which does not give access to anybody to investigate the hideous activities. Negative vocabulary like "persuade", "sex", "fuck", "great time" and "promise" is used to portray his personality. In the end of the paragraph pronoun "I" is used which describes that authoritative and individual role of Trump when he says, "I promise". The use of specific sentence structure and vocabulary conveys specific and hidden ideologies. Here, the use of negative lexicalization unveils the ideology of anti-Trump. And it is also shown that being a president, his behavior is not formal and professional with his friends and staff (See Appendix 1, Extract 4).

4.6 Analysis of Extract 5

This extract is taken from chapter three "Day One". This paragraph explains about Russian intelligence and U.S. intelligence community and there is a conversation between nation republican figures with Kushner. The name of the national republican figure is not mentioned by Wolff. It has been claimed that Russia helped Trump to win the election. Kushner is senior advisor and son in law to Trump. In the above paragraph there is the repetition of phrasal verb "piss off" which is repeated three times. The other verb "fuck" is also repeated two times. The repetition of words emphasis on the specific idea and belief, and it describes that it is the most important thing to undertake. Here, the abbreviation "intel community" is used which is the full form of United States Intelligence Community. In this paragraph, pronoun "you" is used, and it explains that republican person has the friendly terms with Kushner. People use pronoun "you" to make a friendly relationship. The pronoun also explains that unnamed republican figure is the well-wisher of Trump, but he is not able to convey his message directly to Trump and therefore he tries to convey his/her message through Trump's son in law (See Appendix 1, Extract 5).

4.7 Analysis of Extract 6

This extract is taken from chapter Four "Bannon". In this paragraph, Trump's views on his staff are explained implicitly. It is described in the lines that Trump likes winners and he is not constant on his views and sometimes he becomes bad to his best friends when they become losers. Murdoch is an Australian born American and Bannon gave compliments about him in front of Trump that he does not have any feel for the American people. Here, the phrase "no feel" portrays the negative personality of Murdoch. There is also a negative lexicalization "bad-mouthing" and "loser" which is used by trump for his best friend Ailes as now he has sexual harassment allegations (See Appendix 1, Extract 6).

4.8 Analysis of Extract 7

This extract is taken from chapter six "At HQME". In this extract, Wolff describes the first week of Trump's presidency. According to senior staff, Trump behavior and style is not like a president of United States and he does not act in a professional way. As Wolff (2018) explains in the epilogue that he wrote the story of this book through the eyes of Trump's closest colleagues and senior staff. There is the negative lexicalization that shows the immaturity and unprincipled behavior of Trump. There are following lexicalization and vocabulary used to unveil the working ideology behind this paragraph:

"Not acting presidential", "restraining his behavior", "he had not taken the leap", "palace like servants and security".

This paragraph also illustrates that being a president he enjoys all facilities at white house (See Appendix 1, Extract 7).

4.9 Analysis of Extract 8

This extract is taken from chapter eleven "Wiretap". In this extract, there are three tweets by Trump which he tweeted on 4th March and made allegations that ex-president Obama tapped his phones during election campaign 2016 at his Trump tower office. He used repetitive words, allusion, idiom and negative lexicalization in his tweets. Repetitive words emphasized on specific theme and ideology. Allusion is an indirect reference to some specific story, historical event and person. There are following repetitive words used in extract:

"Wires tapping"

Following allusions are used in this extract:

"McCarthyism", "Nixon/Watergate".

Following idiom is used in the extract to describe ex-president Obama as inferior:

"ANEWLOW"

There is following negative lexicalization is used by Trump in his tweets for opponents especially for Obama:

"How low has president Obama", "Bad (or sick) guy", "red handed" (See Appendix 1, Extract 8).

5. Findings and Conclusion

The current research investigates the working ideology/ideologies in "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" written by Michael Wolff (2018). Some particular and significant extracts are analyzed from the book. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992) is adopted as framework for data analysis. In analysis of extracts, sentence structure and lexicalization are observed. Some linguistic devices and specific sentence structures are manipulated to convey the specific ideologies. In this book Wolff (2018) claimed that he had more than two hundred interviews with Donald Trump before writing this book. He further says that he had a talk with Trump senior staff and he wrote this story through their eyes and perspective. The researcher critically evaluates the words choices, cohesion, sentence structure and vocabulary, and it is analyzed that Wolff used negative lexicalization for Trump while presenting by his personality by his friends and staff members. The book cover also unveils the working ideology behind this book that it is anti-Trump book. Wolff chose the title "Fire and Fury" because Trump used this phrase for North Korea. The picture and title of the book reveals Trump's aggressive mood. In this book, Wolff describes the relationship of Trump with his staff and family, and by using specific words choices he portrays him as dysfunctional man who is not eligible as a United States president.

Thus, the findings reveal that language plays an important in constructing ideologies and identities, and there is no neutral language (Machin & Mayr, 2012). As this study is based on the critical discourse analysis of "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" in which different significant extracts are analyzed and results show that Wolff (2018) manipulated the sentence structure and working ideology of this book is anti-Trump.

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Appendix 1

Extract 1

"The reason to write this book could not be more obvious. With the inauguration of Donald Trump on January 20, 2017, the United States entered the eye of the most extraordinary political storm since at least Watergate. As the day approached, I set out to tell this story in as contemporaneous a fashion as possible, and to try to see life in the Trump White House through the eyes of the people closest to it. This was originally conceived as an account of the Trump administration's first hundred days, that most traditional marker of a presidency. But events barreled on without natural pause for more than two hundred days, the curtain coming down on the first act of Trump's presidency only with the appointment of retired general John Kelly as the chief of staff in late July and the exit of chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon three weeks later" (Wolff, 2018, p. 8).

Extract 2

"Ailes enjoyed many things about Trump: his salesmanship, his showmanship, his gossip. He admired Trump's sixth sense for the public marketplace—or at least the relentlessness and indefatigability of his ceaseless attempts to win it over. He liked Trump's game. He liked Trump's impact and his shamelessness. "He just keeps going," Ailes had marveled to a friend after the first debate with Hillary Clinton." (Wolff, 2018, p. 11).

Extract 3

"Trump had no real relationship with either father or daughter. He'd had only a few conversations with Bob Mercer, who mostly talked in monosyllables; Rebekah Mercer's entire history with Trump consisted of a selfie taken with him at Trump Tower. But when the Mercers presented their plan to take over the campaign and install

their lieutenants, Steve Bannon and Kellyanne Conway, Trump didn't resist" (Wolff, 2018, p. 18).

Extract 4

"Trump liked to say that one of the things that made life worth living was getting your friends' wives into bed. In pursuing a friend's wife, he would try to persuade the wife that her husband was perhaps not what she thought. Then he'd have his secretary ask the friend into his office; once the friend arrived, Trump would engage in what was, for him, more or less constant sexual banter. Do you still like having sex with your wife? How often? You must have had a better fuck than your wife? Tell me about it. I have girls coming in from Los Angeles at three o'clock. We can go upstairs and have a great time. I promise" (Wolff, 2018, pp. 25–26).

Extract 5

"Don't let him piss off the press, don't let him piss off the Republican Party, don't threaten congressmen because they will fuck you if you do, and most of all don't let him piss off the intel community," said one national Republican figure to Kushner. "If you fuck with the intel community they will figure out a way to get back at you and you'll have two or three years of a Russian investigation, and every day something else will leak out (Wolff, 2018, p. 37).

Extract 6

"He doesn't know anything about American politics, and has no feel for the American people," said Bannon to Trump, always eager to point out that Murdoch wasn't an American. But Trump couldn't get enough of him. With his love of "winners"—and he saw Murdoch as the ultimate winner—Trump was suddenly bad-mouthing his friend Ailes as a "loser" (Wolff, 2018, p. 50).

Extract 7

"Within the first weeks of his presidency a theory emerged among Trump's friends that he was not acting presidential, or, really, in any way taking into account his new status or restraining his behavior—from early morning tweets, to his refusal to follow scripted remarks, to his self-pitying calls to friends, details of which were already making it into the press—because he hadn't taken the leap that others before him had taken. Most presidents arrived in the White House from more or less ordinary political life, and could not help but be awed and reminded of their transformed circumstances by their sudden elevation to a mansion with palace like servants and security, a plane at constant readiness, and downstairs a retinue of courtiers and advisers" (Wolff, 2018, p. 66).

Extract 8

"On March 4, Trump's early morning tweets began:

Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my "wires tapped" in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism! (4:35 a.m.)

Is it legal for a sitting President to be "wire tapping" a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. ANEW LOW! (4:49 a.m.)

How low has President Obama gone to tap my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy! (5:02 a.m.)

At 6:40 he called Priebus, waking him up. "Did you see my tweet?" he asked. "We've caught them red-handed!" Then the president held his phone so Priebus could hear the playback of the Baier show" (Wolff, 2018, p. 118).

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