

## "An Investigation into the "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" by Winston Churchill: A Critical Discourse Analysis"

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### Abstract

Winston Churchill's celebrated speech "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" during World War II remains a shining example of the impact of rhetoric at a time of hardship. This paper will evaluate the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Churchill's speech following Fairclough's CDA framework. Through this analysis of the linguistic and discursive patterns employed by Churchill, this paper tries to elucidate the hidden power structures, ideological narratives, and rhetorical tools that shape the content of the text. This analysis seeks to uncover the construction of resilience, patriotism, the national identity during the times of crises. Through this we will also be exploring the lasting influence of politics on collective memory and history narration.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, Winston Churchill, We Shall Fight on the Beaches, Speech

### Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and examining spoken, written or visual texts which aims to unmask the leading power structures, ideologies, and social practices hidden in discourse. It is a linguistic branch that arose in the late 20th century as a tool that studies the representations of reality in language that come out of the society and language simultaneously. Essentially, CDA stands for language analysis and looks at how language can either reinforce or change the existing socio-political inequalities, dominant ideology or hierarchical structural relationships of power. At its basis, it utilizes ideas from linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science among others, to dissect discourse and its socio-political roots.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), one can uncover who is in a powerful position in speeches and how the language is used by those in power to affirm their authority, shape people's perception of reality, and keep their society constantly stratified. CDA can point out this mechanism of persuasion and control through analysis of linguistic features as pronouns, modes and metaphors. CDA helps recognize the inner ideologies and beliefs that are part of the speech content. Language demonstrates how it is used as a tool to build up those views, identities and social norms in favour of specific social group while advancing their agenda through out the process.

Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework of textual, discursive practices, and socio-cultural perspective offers a more refined perspective on discourse. The role and use of language in the process of constructing meaning, championing ideologies, and shaping social reality is multifaceted and each dimension is unique in its own way.

As regards the multidimensional framework structure of CDA, such an approach is useful for studying speeches due to the fact that it takes the micro-linguistic features as well as the macro-level surrounding factors into account. When the concept of the four-dimensional framework is implemented, researchers gain deeper contentions in the complexity of political rhetoric, ideology and power dynamics leading ultimately to a more sophisticated comprehension of the power of language in social reality.

Winston Churchill, an eminent figure in 20th-century history, delivered perhaps his most remembered and quoted speech, 'We Shall Fight on the Beaches', on June 4, 1940 amidst the World War II. As the prime minister, Churchill's words were a call to action summoning the British people to national unity in defiance against the Nazi invasion which adopted the country almost solo in resisting the waves from the Axis powers.

"*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*" proves itself as a historic symbol that made Churchill a good leader, man, with an indomitable spirit and charismatic character. Here lies embodied the essence of determination and perseverance which symbolized the British country's wartime experience and left a huge impact on the present and future period with its energetic rhetoric and unchanging support for democracy and freedom.

Using Foucault's CDA framework as a lens to dissect "We Shall Fight on the Beaches," researches are going to deepen their understanding of the linguistic, sociopolitical, and socio-cultural motives behind the Churchill's speech. They can explore how language can become an instrument for constructing resilience, patriotism, and national identity when it comes to a crisis moment; but, also, they can explore the hidden power dynamics and the ideological positioning within the discourse. Finally, CDA delivers a sophisticated means of dissecting the political rhetoric intricacies and influencing the resistance or consolidation of foundational historical events and collective memory.

### **Scope and Limitations of Research**

#### **Scope**

This article thoroughly examines the linguistic features and rhetorical devices that Churchill uses in his "*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*" speech to create the messages of indomitability

and self-identity resisting the attacks. For this purpose, I explore the use of metaphors, pronouns, modality as well as of linguistic means aiming to achieve the speech persuasive impact.

Furthermore, the study analyzes the broader socio-political situation in which the speech was delivered with regards to Churchill's political mission, the audience's response, and the globally politically charged atmosphere of World War II. Such an assessment helps to understand where the speech belongs by its historical context and to see how it might impact the political discourse of that period of time. Besides, the study paper also analyzes the long-lasting effect of Churchill's speech on collective memory as well as on a few historical narratives, while at the same time taking into account universally. It is not only the speech itself but also what we learn about its interpretation and reception that informs us about what way were people over the ages.

### **Limitations**

This research article firstly examines the WWII specific historical circumstances for Churchill's speech while the broader socio-political dynamics of the period may not be fully caught within it. While Fairclough's CDA method is applied objectively, there is no avoiding such subjective factors as the reader's point of view towards the politics at stake and the interpretation of the speech. Which means that while the obtained results might be able to contribute certain knowledge about the way political speech is talks about in the time of crisis, nevertheless these findings might not be fully generalizable to other historical or contemporary situations. The other issue would be that not all sources that may be relevant may be collected and would give details only on the première and the short term effect of Churchill's speech but may not be so good at following the long term impact. Firstly, due to time constraints, the research is going to be dedicated to the English-language version of Churchill's speech, but this may not give translation and interpretation of his speech in other languages an adequate assessment.

Overcoming the drawbacks of such researches is fundamental for the protection of the authenticity and the reliability of the research output and as well for the maintenance of transparency in the research process.

### **Significance of Research**

This research paper will definitely make both small and significant contributions to vital areas. By carrying out a detailed critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Churchill's speech which defines time for a wordsmith, this research pieces together how language and power

interact with ideology to create a political communication which is more effective during a crisis. It is, basically, a ground to discover how ideologists employ language to modify public opinion, to originate national identity, and to mobilize mass movement. Besides, a closer look at the speech of Churchill in the context of the World War II offers a full grasp of what was going on in the given socio-political surroundings of that time. The language, socio-political and sociocultural dimensions of that speech are considered. Therefore, the study clarifies the feeling of history and justification of Churchill's rhetoric in historical memory and narratives. In addition, the present research extends the theoretical advancements of critical discourse analysis by virtue of applying Fairclough's grid to a prominent writing from the long-gone era. Audiovisual analysis reveals one of the main strengths of CDA – uncovering the underlying balance of power, ideological bias and manipulative arts used by politicians as a rhetorical toolkit. Therefore, CDA is a valuable device for researchers doing research on language and politics. The reasons for such biases are many and their consequences are multiple and important for the research into contemporary political rhetoric, public impressions, and the common memory. With taking a closer look at the mechanisms of language which are in the forefront at the times of crisis with respect to resilience, patriotism, and national identity, decision-makers, communicators, and people itself are given the chance to check and empower their political communication. However, this research is not only influencing curriculum and cultural heritage, but it also expands our knowledge of historical documentations creating a deeper value for them as well as the authors behind them. Through an in-depth study of the characteristics of the speech, this paper invites the reader to the exploration of relationship between the social, political and linguistic aspects of the World War II's key period and their cultural heritage which still plays a vital role in today's society.

### Research Questions

1. What linguistic characteristics and rhetorical instrument is used by Winston Churchill in his speech "*We shall be fighting on beaches*" to convey idea of persistent and defiance?
2. What influences of social and political nature did play the most crucial role in both formation of the speech and in document's delivery during the period of the World War II?
3. Which keeps to linger the Churchill's speech lasting traces in collective memory and made it a part of British and global historical narratives?

## Objectives of Research

- While the poem analysis will be focusing on the linguistic features and rhetorical devices Churchill used in his "*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*" speech.
- To find out how the socio-political factors which existed in that time, contributed to the crafting and the delivery of Churchill 's speech during the Second World War.
- It is interesting to investigate the lasting impression that the speech of Churchill had on the collective memory and on historical narratives.

## Literature Review

CDA essentially aims to bring out the secretive thoughts and power working through language use, predominantly present in public discourse like political speeches, media texts, and a variety of institutional communication. For Fairclough (1995) discourse plays not only a site where social practices, power relations and ideologies are intersections but also as revealing of underlying power dynamics because language that one uses can be interpreted as having meaning and allowing for various power relations. Like van Dijk (2001), social language discourse is also viewed as a means of affirming and sustaining social inequalities, describing the language and discourse as a tool for defining and keeping the status quo. Unpacking speeches and corresponding discourse in terms of CDA implies the work of grasping multiple linguistic features, e.g. lexical choices, grammatical structures, rhetorical tools, and discursive patterns that attempt to disclose discourse of domination and ideological perspective. On the one hand, Wodak and Meyer (2009) show in the case of a political speech how the use of words and phrases effectively allows certain people to promote and maintain dominant narratives, to their own benefit, while leaving some to fall into oblivion or not even to be spoken of.

Additionally, the authors claim that for CDA, meaning in discourse is socially negotiated because speakers do not express social realities but create a discourse on power dynamics (Fairclough, 2003). So, speech analysis within the context of the society should be taken into consideration in order to make certain that language is not used as a tool in shaping people's views, changing the attitudes, and justifying the particular policies. Aside from giving analytical findings, CDA already has a practical impact in social mobilization and advocacy. By showing how language constructs the power relations of the society in such a way that social inequalities become reproduced and maintained, CDA prepares socially

deprived sections of the community to fight against the established discourses and to cultivate narratives that match their interests. To give an example, feminist scholars have explored the issues of women's gendered representations in mass media and provided guidelines for more gender-balanced and gender-fair depictions of women (Lazar, 2005).

Winston Churchill's famous speech, *"We Shall Fight on the Beaches,"* which was spoken on the fourth of June, 1940 and during the Second World War, is an incredible example showing how strong the human spirit can be while being faced with challenging times. This speech was delivered at a turning point of history and, moreover, was intended not only for the British nation but also for the mankind, reminding those present that the cause defended was the battle fought for liberty and that the enemy must and would be defeated. By looking carefully at different texts used in studies, this review of scholarly works tries to figure out the importance and immutability of Churchill's speech in world history. The speech which Churchill delivered has been analysed over a long time from different angles through historical, political and rhetorical methods. In his seminal work, *"Churchill: As well as the book by Sir Martin Gilbert, titled "Churchill's World War II: 1939-1945: A Biographical Companion."* In his biography, Gilbert explores the strategic consequence of the speech in improving confidence among the nationals and sustain support for the war. Gilbert shows us that Churchill's words were inspiring and patriotic and they were heard by the British people as they stood facing the enemy with their hands united and their hearts resolved.

Furthermore, scholars such as Richard Toye, in *"The Roar of the Lion: As analyzed in the book, "The Turbulent Time: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches,"* Churchill's speeches, such as *"We Shall Fight on the Beaches,"* reveal his speaker's strategies (Toye, 2013). In regard to this issue, Churchill's skill of public speaking is also indicated by Toye. Through this skill, he has the power of reshaping public opinion and telling the narrative of the war. As a result, Toye shows the Churchill's skills in persuasion revealing the ways he used emotions and description to encourage courage and determination on the people of Britain. Also, the influence of the speech of Churchill goes even further than the sphere of rhetoric, and gets into artistic and literary sphere. In her essay, *"Winston Churchill's Finest Hour: In "The Cultural Legacy of Churchill's 'Fight on the Beaches' Speech,"* Patricia Malone examines the far-reaching cultural lineage of the language and its impact not only on the immediate generation but on popular culture as well (Malone, 2003). Malone asserts that Churchill's speech not only has gone beyond a historical event but it has become a symbol of

steadfastness and refusal represented in the struggle against oppression and has a universal meaning that goes beyond the given time and space.

At last, "*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*" by Churchill has become a significant historical event that means resisting, determination, and leadership in the presence of the threat. The scholars do this through an interdisciplinary approach combining the fields of historical, rhetorical and cultural perspectives, thus highlighting the speech's intricate nature and significance. The speech remains evergreen as far as the field of contemporary studies is concerned.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper uses the three-dimensional structure of CDA by Fairclough that are textual analysis, discourse practice analysis, and sociocultural analysis. This textual analysis concentrates on the language aspect in which metaphors, pronouns, and mode of expression are used by Churchill to show the resolution and defiance. This analysis of discourse practice studies the overall social-political context of the speech in addition to Churchill's political purpose, the audience's reaction and the situation of the second World War. Lastly, I will discuss the longstanding influence of the speech on social memory and historical narratives, as well as the way this impacted the UK and people around the world. The primary source is "Churchill's '*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*'" speech together with the accounts and documents on the period in relation to its presentation and impact. Secondary data that we will use are scholarly analyses, history publications, and theoretical articles on rhetoric or political discourse, as well as critical discourse analysis.

### **Discussion & Analysis**

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a systematic approach to analyzing discourse, which takes into consideration linguistic features, socio-political factors, and the power of discourse in creating collective memory.

Winston Churchill's "*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*" speech is still among the most famous and inspiring orations of the 20th century. Speech made on June 4, 1940, in the middle of World War II that was to bolster the British people as they faced imminent invasion by Nazi Germany. This essay carrying out Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis will analyse Churchill's speech in the framework of his speech features, socio-political context, and impact on collective memory and historical narratives.

### **Linguistic Features and Rhetorical Devices**

In the speech of Winston Churchill, there is a linguistic particularity along with rhetorical devices comprising notions of being resolute and victory that are expressed. These include:

**Repetition:** Churchill's consistent repetition of fundamental points described in their declarative forms, e.g., "*We shall fight,*" echoes the statement of indestructible perseverance. For instance, he states, "*We will fight on the beaches, we will fight on the groundings, we will fight in the fields and in the streets, we will fight in the hills.*" The repetition of words establishes a feeling of agreement and support among the listeners, focusing on the nation's tenacity amidst adversity

**Parallelism:** In the manner of his speech, Churchill repeatedly utilizes parallel structure to support the critical points and presumably have some possessing a sense of continuity. Case in point, he adds: "*We shall defend ourselves on the grounds, we shall fight in the forests of France, on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with an unwavering confidence and power in the air.*" In doing so, he emphasizes the extent of the will to resist being manifested on different war fronts and thus, substantiating the notions of determination and strength.

**Metaphor:** Churchill relays metaphor made of feelings and legible images in depicting the strife of individuals and the state. He is known for use a positive rhetoric which is referring to the current moment as Britain's greatest hour that represented their struggle against tyranny. His foresight into the future with a reference to blood, toil, tears, and sweat accentuates the difficulties of the path to victory, but in doing so, is uniting the people in a common cause.

**Antithesis:** In his speech, '*We'll fight them on the beaches, we'll fight them in the streets,*' Churchill effectively conveys a sense of urgency and reiterates the seriousness of the matter through this juxtaposition of contrary concepts. He says, for instance, "*We shall never surrender*", which is an expression of alternatives with one of them being giving up, and, consequently, highlights the necessity of persevering along in hard times.

### **Socio-political Factors**

The formation and delivery of Churchill's speech were influenced by various socio-political factors, including: The process of the speech outlining and the performance itself was not isolated from the many political factors, such as:

**The Context of World War II:** Being in 1940, when Britain considered that the salvation depended only on them after the French capitulation, the leader of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, delivered his magnificent speech accurately defining the essence of the desperate situation. The most menacing security threat-the imminent invasion-the Churchill longed for



such hey days, and he wanted the nation to realise that what was ahead was just the warning shot.

The Dunkirk Evacuation: In the context of the speech, the reference to the Dunkirk evacuation several weeks before Churchill's speech and not only has it been a part of the speech, but also, the emergency connects the story happenings to the events that went on. Death was expunged by the Dunkirk escape, and the seemingly pay of the defiant cause embodying the above said continuity of defiance persisted.

Leadership Role: He has become a soldier of democracy, fighting for the survival of his country, but his might should be played mostly as an interest of the country's highest position during its greatest hardships. The speech itself is a vivid illustration of his form of leadership: hence, this manifests the non-compromise attitude of the nation and keeps strong its freedoms' promotion enthusiasm.

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