



Original Research Article

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Deception in Selected Political Speeches

Article History:

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How to cite this article:

Hassan Z T A, et. al. "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Deception in Selected Political Speeches." European Journal of Clinical Pharmacy, vol. 8, no. 1, 2026; Pp:74-79

Received: 12-12-2025

Revised: 25-12-2025

Accepted: 15-01-2026

Published: 26-01-2026

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Abstract: In the current study, Winifred Crombie's (1985) semantic relational structuring is adopted to investigate and analyze how politicians deceive the public by portraying the occupying power as defending itself and the group defending its land as the occupying power. To do this, the researcher selects three political speeches about Israel's conflict with Hamas and Iran on a purposive selection of the years (2023-2025). So, The aim of this study is to inspect how semantic structuring relations are used by politicians to promote certain political ideologies and attitudes in order to mislead the public. Crombie's theoretical framework is basically applied to detect the political ideologies that operate in the political speeches analyzed. The chosen political speeches are analyzed using the categories of Crombie's SRS by examining the sentence constructions that include semantic structuring relationships to demonstrate the speaker's ability to both construct and change facts about Iran and Hamas. The study demonstrates that the chosen political speeches are replete with ideological allusions and clues intended by the speaker to manipulate the public.

Keywords: Deception, discourse, semantic relational structuring, ideology, Hamas, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of discourse, the emphasis is on how interlocutors choose the modes of speech to mislead others based on the situations in which they find themselves and in comparison to the social relationships, identities, ideologies, and attitudes they wish to disclose. Therefore, one of the primary subfields of discourse analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), whose primary goal is to identify ideational cues that are present in the linguistic decisions made by language users in written or spoken texts (Fowler, 1991).

Discourse analysts cannot ignore semantic findings when examining a spoken or written text because the discursial research encompasses the meanings of linguistic phrases. Additionally, lexis is the most basic method of investigating ideology, which is mostly but not entirely disclosed through word choice (Van Dijk,

1998). Conversely, ideology which is defined as a set of views that members of a social group share is typically created, replicated, and disseminated through spoken or written discourse (Simpson, 1993). Therefore, a semantic framework is used in this study to examine the ideological underpinnings of speeches intended to deceive the public. Hence, in the present study, In the current study, a semantic theoretical framework is adopted to uncover the mechanisms by which political ideologies in selected political speeches are constructed through the linguistic categories proposed by Winifred Crombie's (1985).

The analysis endeavors to unearth how politicians promote political ideologies, beliefs, and perspectives about Israel's conflict against Hamas and Iran and as reflected in the use of the semantic structuring relationships in his selected political speeches. As such,

the study adopts a **qualitative approach** to read the selected political speeches in pursuit of semantic relational structurings responsible for its ideological content. Finally, critical and ideological viewpoints will be used to discuss and interpret the data.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Although different researchers use different Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a problem-oriented interdisciplinary field, school or research movement that studies language and other semiotic systems in use. It began as a loosely networked group of scholars in the 1990s with a small symposium in Amsterdam. Since then, it has grown into a broad international program with a variety of approaches that examines the connections between discourse (language use), the individuals who produce and utilize it, and the social and political contexts, structures, and practices in which it takes place. "Its objective is to critically examine the relationship between language, ideology, power, and social structure—for example, social inequality as it is constructed, re-produced, legitimized, and resisted in language and other modes of communication" (Catalano & Waugh, 2020,p.1). According to Flowerdew and Richardson (2018), CDA aims "to advance our understanding of how discourse figures in social processes, social figures, and social change " (p.1).

Machin and Mayr (2025) state that "CDA provides a set of tools for analysing texts and spoken language. Such tools have been shown to be highly useful to scholars working across a range of academic fields" (p.8). This has been especially true in the fields of media and communications studies, as well as business, marketing, political, health, and legal studies, among others. Through the use of CDA's tools, features of written or spoken language that would be less obvious to the casual observer can be revealed. In other words, they

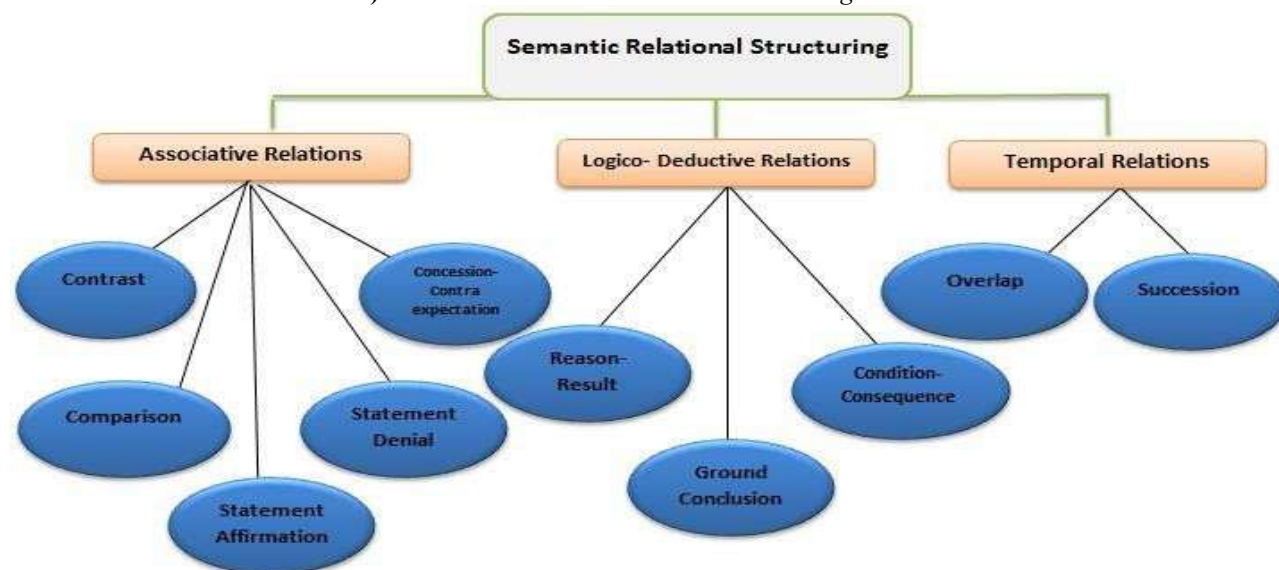
let us to go beyond the text's surface level and identify the evidence that shows what is really being communicated.

Van Dijk (2015) argues that the main focus of CDA is to examine the way social-power abuse and inequality are legitimated, enacted, reproduced, and resisted by talk and text in the political and social context. In such dissident research, critical discourse analysts adopt an explicit stance seeking to comprehend, reveal, and eventually confront societal inequity. For this reason, CDA can also be described as a social movement of discourse analysts who are politically active. As an analytical practice, CDA, in the study of discourse, is not one way of research among many others. Rather, it is a critical perspective that can be found in all areas of discourse studies, such as conversation analysis, discourse grammar, discourse pragmatics, stylistics, rhetoric, narrative analysis, sociolinguistics, multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics. In other words, "CDA is discourse study with an attitude" (p.466).

Semantic Relational Structuring (SRS)

Winifred Crombie (1985) categorizes semantic relations into three primary kinds, despite the fact that other academics employ different classification techniques. This kind of separation can be quite helpful in describing the possible linkages between discourse parts and determining the degree to which these relationships might be considered artistically relevant. "Associative relations (relations based on comparison and contrast), logico-deductive relations (cause-effect relations), and the temporal relations" are these three categories. The final one contains two sub-relations: "temporal overlap (i.e. events overlapping in time) and temporal succession (i.e. events following one another in time)" (Longacre, 1996, p.53). Those specific semantic relations given by Crombie (1985) are shown in Figure (2.1).

2.1): *Crombie's Semantic Relational Structuring Framework*



RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study applies Winfred Crombie's (1985) model to examine and highlight the primary forms of Semantic Relational Structuring in specific political speeches because it is highly compatible with the data examined and its components effectively illustrate the speaker's attempts to influence public about Israel's conflict with Iran and Hamas. The politicians use categories such as contrast, comparative similarity, reason-result, and condition repercussions to express his views on Iranian troops and Hamas. The reason for the number of the data selected, which are three, is that they are sufficient to cover the subject and apply every component of the selected theoretical framework. Regarding the selection of the year (2023–2025), this is due to the Israel's conflict that occurred at this time against Iran and Hamas. Nonetheless, this framework includes the temporal, logico-deductive, and associative semantic links to be applied to the data being studied.

Semantic Relational Structuring in Selected political Speeches

Associative Relations:

Associative relations are generally indicated by some conjunctions such as *then*, *while*, *and*, *but*, and *or* which explicitly mark the relation (Longacre, 1996). However, Crombie (1985) identifies several subtypes of associative relations:

Contrast

Contrast is used to strike a comparison between two things, events, or abstractions in terms of some particular aspect in which they differ. However, it is usually indicated by several discourse markers, such as e.g. *however*, *although*, and *but* (Kehler, 2000). However, in this study, in many examples of contrast, Netanyahu portrays Israel as a symbol of peace, democracy and prosperity, while presenting Iran and its allies as a source of terrorism and darkness, ignoring the crimes and violations of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinians:

1. "While Israel is committed to achieving such a peace, Iran and its terror proxies are committed to scuttling it".
2. "And that is the choice we face today: the curse of Iran's unremitting aggression or the blessing of a historic reconciliation between Arab and Jew".
3. "On the one hand, a bright blessing—a future of hope. On the other hand, a dark future of despair".
4. "Ladies and gentlemen, Israel has made its choice. We seek to move forward to a bright age of prosperity and peace. Iran and its proxies have also made their choice. They want to move back to a dark age of terror and war".
5. "And now I have a question, and I pose that question to you: What choice will you make?"

Will your nation stand with Israel? Will you stand with democracy and peace? Or will you stand with Iran, a brutal dictatorship that subjugates its own people and exports terrorism across the globe?"

Comparative Similarity

It is a semantic relation that can be shown by some discourse markers. One of the most utilized markers is *like*, which is sometimes deleted. Its absence /presence brings about the strengthening/weakening of the impact of a given comparison (Kittay (1987). Using some examples of comparisons, Netanyahu depends on religious rhetoric to turn the conflict into a holy battle, citing biblical texts to justify his war, promoting the Abraham Accords as a religious peace while strengthening Israeli hegemony, and portraying the aggression on Gaza as a divine destiny to sway public opinion:

6. "Over 3,000 years ago, Moses gave the People of Israel a message that has steeled their resolve ever since: "Be strong and courageous," he said. Today, our strong and courageous soldiers and people stand together to defend ourselves against those who seek our destruction".
7. "But to truly realize the blessing of a new Middle East, we must continue the path we paved with the Abraham Accords four years ago".
8. "Our doctrine of peace through strength has already brought us the Abraham Accords, and total victory will help us bring more historical peace agreements".

Statement Affirmation

Basically, the affirmative statement comprises a positive meaning that expresses and shows the validity or truth of a basic assertion, which may be applied to statements, clauses, verb phrases, and some other utterances (Stefano & Andrea, 2008). In some examples of Statement Affirmation relation, Netanyahu repeatedly warns the world about Iran's nuclear program in his releases, emphasizing Israel's opposition to Iran possessing any nuclear weapons. These statements reflect Israel's consistent policy of confrontation with Iran:

9. "For decades, I've been warning the world against Iran's nuclear program".
10. "They should join Israel in stopping Iran's nuclear weapons program".
11. "He has made clear time and again that Iran cannot have a nuclear enrichment program".
12. "Now, as Prime Minister, I've made it clear time and again: Israel will never allow those who call for our annihilation to develop the means to achieve that goal".

Statement Denial

Denial is indicated by negation and it can be either direct or indirect. A statement can be denied directly using

markers such as *no* or *not*, and indirectly by giving a reverse answer. However, people's use of denial requires that they have knowledge about the affirmative state of affairs or what it is alleged to be true (Faulkner et al., 2007). Utilizing many examples of statement of denial in the current study, Netanyahu projects a discourse ostensibly committed to peace while concealing the reality of military escalation. He denies the damage done by reducing the war to a security necessity, while ignoring actual war crimes. He offers false promises of safety while forcibly displacing civilians under bombardment, and denies responsibility for mass murder through emotional language, despite the targeting of civilians:

13. **"For the sake of the peace and security of the entire world, we must not let that happen".**
14. **"We won't rest until our citizens can return safely to their homes".**
15. **"We don't want to see a single innocent person die".**

Concession-contra-expectation

The associative relation of concession-contra-expectation evoked by Netanyahu can be seen in the below excerpt:

16. **"Now, ladies and gentlemen, even with Hamas's greatly diminished military capability, the terrorists still exercise some governing power in Gaza by stealing the food that we enable aid agencies to bring into Gaza".**

In this excerpt, there is a concession-contra-expectation relation used by Netanyahu. He openly ignores the fact that the increased Israeli siege is the primary cause of the humanitarian catastrophe in his address, portraying Israel as a state that facilitates assistance access while accusing Hamas of stealing it. He argues that the situation would not have escalated to the point of famine if Israel had permitted adequate and consistent access to relief. Furthermore, Netanyahu's charges against Hamas are meant to deflect attention away from findings from other countries that attest to Israel's intentional blocking of humanitarian access. He portrays Israel as a savior and Hamas as a band of thieves, presenting the issue in a binary that lacks objectivity. This significant oversimplification clearly supports a political agenda that seeks to justify the ongoing blockade, whereas the truth is that Israel maintains complete control over Gaza's borders and enforces arbitrary limits on the importation of vital supplies. His inclination to employ emotional language serves to provoke public sentiment. He reiterates phrases like "taking food from children" while disregarding the reality that his nation's policies block the distribution of food and medicine.

Logico-deductive Relations

In English, this type of relations depends on semantic markers that make logical deductions and cogent results. According to Crombie (1985, p.112), it falls into the

following three subtypes:

Reason-Result

Keil (1989) argues that reason-result relations are more essential and useful than other sorts of relations in governing the structure of concepts and intuitive theories. However, an effect is usually the result of a conjunction of several causes, even though in practice one of these causes is singled out as *the cause* of the action and the rest are referred to as *conditions* (Mill,1973).

Using reason-result relations, in some examples, Netanyahu accuses Iran of aggressive intentions, asserting that failure to confront it threatens the security of the Middle East and the world due to its support for terrorism and development of ballistic and nuclear missiles. He warns of the expanding scope of the Iranian threat, which could reach Europe and the United States, and calls for stripping Iran of the legitimacy to possess nuclear weapons:

17. **"Because Iran's aggression, if it's not checked, will endanger every single country in the Middle East, and many, many countries in the rest of the world, because Iran seeks to impose its radicalism well beyond the Middle East".**
18. **"That's why it funds terror networks on five continents. That's why it builds ballistic missiles for nuclear warheads to threaten the entire world".**
19. **"The increasing range of Iran's ballistic missiles would bring that nuclear nightmare to the cities of Europe and, eventually, to America".**

Grounds-Conclusion

Crombie (1985, p. 112) suggests that a *Ground-Conclusion* relation occurs in the way that "Clause A states an effect, clause B concludes the existence of something causing the effect to exist or happen". However, through an example of Ground-Conclusion relation, Netanyahu seeks to reinforce the notion that Hamas' existence poses a continuing threat to Israel, asserting that the organization will regain its strength and rearm to continue its attacks. In this way, he seeks to justify military campaigns against it and garner international support for its removal from power, portraying it as an obstacle to peace and security in the region:

20. **"And the reason is simple: because if Hamas stays in power, it will regroup, rearm, and attack Israel again and again and again, as it has vowed to do. So, Hamas has got to go".**

Condition-Consequence

Conditional sentences can indicate the cause and effect of two events. The main part of conditionals comprises "an antecedent clause" and "consequent clause" or "protasis" and "apodosis" (Traugott et al, 1986, p.67). The antecedent can be defined as a subordinate clause that refers to a supposition situation, while the consequent consists of a proposition situation that occurs

if the antecedent is realized (Young 1989; Dancygier 1998; Elliot 2006).

Using Condition-Consequence relation, Netanyahu links achieving a "complete victory" over Hamas with the establishment of peace and security, using discourse that presents the elimination of the movement as the sole condition for regional stability. Through phrases such as "complete victory" and "without a complete victory, terrorism will be encouraged", Netanyahu attempts to gain international legitimacy and domestic support for the continuation of the war, arguing that any solutions short of the complete elimination of Hamas will threaten the security of Israel and the free world. This speech reflects an attempts to portray the conflict as an existential battle, in which military victory becomes the only path to peace:

21. **"Our security and the prospects of peace in the Middle East depend on one thing: total victory over Hamas".**
22. **"But if they don't, we will fight until we achieve victory. Total victory".**
23. **"All those who yearn for peace should support our quest for total victory".**
24. **"Without total victory Iran and its terror proxies—Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and others—will be emboldened to subvert moderate states in the Middle East; they'll threaten the entire free world".**

Temporal Semantic Relations

Temporal semantic relations are of two types: (1) temporal overlap and (2) temporal succession. Their investigation in the data under investigation is as follows:

Temporal Overlap

Temporal overlap, as it is explained by Longacre (1996, p. 64), it denotes "an event which takes place during a span". It occurs when two or more actions happen at the same time. By the use of temporal overlap relation, arguing about Iranian threat, Netanyahu attempts to present Israel's position as not only self-defence from Iran, but also protection for Arab states and the whole world from that threat. Netanyahu, in this argument, wants to send two messages: first, that Iran represents a common threat requiring international solidarity, and second, that supporting Israel is a defence of democratic values and Western interests:

25. **"When you stand with Israel, you stand for your own values and your own interests".**
26. **"Yet, in defending ourselves, we also defend others. We defend our Arab neighbors".**

Temporal Succession

Marmaridou (2000) argues that though grammatical means can affect temporal relations, yet they do not specify the sequences of the events in a temporal succession. That is to say, "the temporal succession is not confined to the dependencies between tense forms in successive clauses". Rather, it can be indicated by lexis

(p.82).

Through using temporal succession relation, Netanyahu describes Hamas' crimes and portrays it as a "terrorist organization" that commits brutal atrocities against Israelis, such as slaughtering civilians and burning families to death. They also exploit their own people by stealing aid and placing rockets between homes, endangering Palestinians:

27. **"Thousands of Iranian-backed Hamas terrorists from Gaza burst into Israel in pickup trucks and on motorcycles, and they committed unimaginable atrocities".**
28. **"They raped and mutilated women. They beheaded men. They burned babies alive. They burned entire families alive—babies, children, parents, grandparents".**
29. **"Hamas steals the food, and then they hike the prices".**
30. **"They feed their bellies, and then they fill their coffers with money they extort from their own people".**
31. **"They put a missile in every kitchen. A rocket in every garage".**

CONCLUSION

Using Winifred Crombie's (1985) model of analysis, the practical analysis of this study has found and examined the usage of semantic relational structuring in a few chosen political speeches about Israel's ongoing conflict with Hamas and Iran. The associative semantic relations, logico-deductive semantic relations, and temporal semantic relations have all been used in this study's practical application to illustrate and highlight the various forms and expressions of attitudes, feelings, opinions, and meanings regarding the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas and Iran. It is important to note that the sometimes the same excerpt may have multiple semantic relations as an example of overlapping. So, the study sums up that the utilized semantic relational structuring framework assists to form the interpretation of the meanings of the selected political speeches and show the semantic relations between them in a way that makes their understanding smooth and accessible.

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