IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ERDOGAN'S POLITICAL SPEECH

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Abstract

The way we perceive language is the foundation of our social construction and individual or group relationships, and studies in sociolinguistics have tried to explain this relationship between the use of language and the importance of perceptions. A particular discourse, spoken or written, can stem from different sources such as power, cultural or social background, region or social status. This paper aims to discuss the realisation of identity and background by means of language use in a political discourse, which is mainly grounded in Norman Fairclough's assumptions in critical discourse analysis. For this aim, the discursive strategies of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a debate in the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2009 will be examined within the context of his ideological, cultural and language background.

Keywords: *political discourse, power, ideology, critical discourse analysis.*

Introduction

Politics is a struggle for power in order to put certain political, economic and social ideas into practice. In this process, language plays a crucial role, for every political action is prepared, accompanied, influenced and played by language. This paper analyzes discourse of political speech, namely by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a debate. Given the enormous domestic and global significance of the said speech, it is crucial to decipher ideological traits typical of Erdogan enshrined in his political discourse. The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of identity and linguistic background on Prime Minister Erdogan's political discourse and the ideological components of his speech.

Language is closely bound up with our social and cognitive development from childhood, and our identity formation. The attitude that a listener can adopt towards the speech of another speaker has been a significant issue in sociolinguistics. The study of language attitudes is one of the most important topics in the social psychology of language. Much of the work on language attitudes has been conducted under the rubric of the social psychology, but sociolinguistics has always shared "overlapping concerns and involvements" (Garret, 2001, p.626). Trudgil (1992) describes language attitudes as "the attitudes which people have towards different languages, dialects, accents, and their speakers" (Trudgil, 1992, p.44). Such attitudes may range from very favourable to very unfavourable, and may be manifested in subjective judgments about correctness, worth and aesthetic qualities of varieties, as well as the personal qualities of their speakers. Whilst linguistics studies have shown that such attitudes have no linguistic basis, sociolinguistics studies have proven that

attitudes are social in origin, and they may have important effects on language behaviour, being involved in acts of identity and linguistic change.

One example of the first language attitude studies was conducted by Labov in 1966 where he walked around 3 NYC department stores, asking the location of departments he knew were on the fourth floor. By pretending not to hear, he had each informant pronounce the two words twice, once spontaneously, and once carefully. Informants were shop workers at different grades, giving a further possible stratification. The results showed that the use of [r] corresponded with a higher class of store and higher rank of employee. Furthermore, use of [r] increased in careful speech.

Fasold (2006) notes that most language attitude work is based on a mentalist view of attitude as a state of readiness: "an intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response" (Fasold, 2006, p.147). A person's attitude, in this view, prepares her/his reaction to a given stimulus in one way rather than in another. The other view is the behaviourist view. According to this theory, attitudes are to be found simply in the responses people make to social situations. Moreover, Holmes (2001) notes that attitudes to language ultimately reflect attitudes to the users and the uses of language. The standard variety in a community has "overt prestige" (Holmes, 2001, p.344). Speakers who use the standard variety are rated highly in terms of educational and occupational status, and these ratings reflect the associations of their speech variety, which is generally held up as the best way of speaking in the community. "Covert speech" refers to positive attitudes towards vernacular or nonstandard speech varieties (Holmes, 2001, p.348). Correspondingly, Giles and Coupland (1991) report a study in Kentucky where Kentucky students were

asked to evaluate standard American and Kentucky accented speakers. The Kentucky speakers scored high on solidarity, low on status; standard American speakers scored low on solidarity, high on status. Likewise, Coupland et al (1994) found in their study that teachers in Wales rated Carmarthen English (characterised by one teacher as the Welsh version of RP) relatively highly not only for prestige, but also for dynamism, pleasantness, and "Welshness". RP, on the other hand, scored highly on prestige, and very low in all other respects.

These studies imply that attitudes to language can be linked to social and cultural identity, to social status and to the notions of prestige and solidarity, and that attitudes to language and its varieties can be influenced by different factors related to the users of that specific language. This paper aims to discuss the realisation of power by means of language use in a political environment, specifically focusing on the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his walk-out from a debate in the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2009.

Political Discourse

Discourse is a broad term with various definitions which "integrates a whole palette of meanings" (Titscher et al., 2000, p.42), covering a large area from linguistics, through sociology, philosophy and other disciplines. According to Fairclough (1989) the term refers to "the whole process of interaction of which a text is just a part" (Fairclough, 1989, p.24). As pervasive ways of experiencing the world, discourses refer to expressing oneself using words. Discourses can be used for asserting power and knowledge, and for resistance and critique. The speaker expresses his/her ideological content in texts as does the linguistic form of the text. That is, selection or choice of a linguistic form may not be a live process for the individual

speaker, but the discourse will be a reproduction of that previously learned discourse. Texts are selected and organized syntactic forms whose "content-structure" reflect the ideological organization of a particular area of social life (Dellinger, 1995).

According to Schaffner (1996), political discourse, as a sub-category of discourse in general, can be based on two criteria: functional and thematic. Political discourse is a result of politics and it is historically and culturally determined. It fulfills different functions due to different political activities. It is thematic because its topics are primarily related to politics such as political activities, political ideas and political relations.

Power is a complex and an abstract idea and has a significant influence on our lives. It is the "ability of its holders to exact compliance or obedience of other individuals to their will" (The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thoughts, 1999, p.678). According to Edelman (1977), the power-holder is a person who can "exercise influence outside the context of formal proceedings [thus wielding] real power" (Edelman, 1977, p.123). Language has a key role in the exchange of values in social life and transforming power into right and obedience into duty. It may both create power and become an area where power can be applied. Social values and beliefs are the products of the institutions and organisations around us, and are created and shared through language. Rousseau (2004) highlights this point saying "the strongest is never strong enough always to be master unless he transforms his power into right and obedience into duty" (Rousseau, J.J., cited in The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thoughts, 1999, p.678). Edwards (2006) notes that people do not "react to the world on the basis of sensory input but, rather, of what we perceive that input to mean" (Edwards, 2006, p.324). This is because language use corresponds to views of

the social status of language users, thus providing simple labels which evoke social stereotypes that go far beyond language itself. For instance, listening to a given variety, acts as a trigger or a stimulus that evokes attitudes or prejudices or stereotypes about the community to which the speaker is thought to belong. According to Wareing (2004), the affective function of language is concerned with who is allowed to say what to whom, which is "deeply tied up with power and social status" (Wareing, 2004, p.9). In other words, how individuals choose and use different language systems varies according to who the speakers are, how they perceive themselves and what identity they want to project. Language use also varies according to whether the situation is public or private, formal or informal, who is being addressed and who might be able to overhear. Likewise, Meyerhoff (2006) points out that we draw very powerful inferences about people from the way they talk.

It is a common knowledge that politics is concerned with power: the power to make decisions, to control resources, to control other people's behaviour and often to control their values. According to Jones and Peccei (2004), politicians throughout ages have achieved success thanks to their "skilful use of rhetoric", by which they aim to persuade their audience of the validity of their views, delicate and careful use of elegant and persuasive language. Rhetoric is "the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence" (Oxford English Dictionary). Although the use of language is unquestionably an important element of politics, Fairclough (2006) notes that it can "misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave visions and imaginaries which can be implemented to change realities and in some cases improve human well-being, but it can also rhetorically obfuscate realities,

and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations" (Fairclough, 2006, p.1).

Wareing (2004) also mentions that words can also have a strong influence on our attitudes; which word is chosen affects people's perception of the others and of themselves. Similarly, Jones and Peccei (2004) point out that language can be used not only to steer people's thoughts and beliefs but also to control their thoughts and beliefs. The best example for this notion may be Newspeak, a form of English invented by George Orwell in his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four (1998) in which people's thoughts are controlled and limited by the language available to them. Orwell (1949) says that "Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. (...) To give a simple example, the word 'free' still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as 'The dog is free from lice.' It could not be used in its old sense of 'politically free' or 'intellectually free', since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless" (Orwell, 1998, p.231). The novel makes it clear that it might be possible to manufacture an ideology which could steer the way people think.

The main purpose of politicians is to persuade their audience of the validity of their political claims. Political influence flows from the employment of resources that shape the beliefs and behaviours of others. Common resources include expert skills, the restriction of information, the ability to confer favours on others or to injure them without physical force, and subtle or crude bribery. Edelman (1977) states that the

knowledgeable politician becomes successful by "using his or her knowledge of informal influence" (Edelman, 1977, p.123). According to Jones and Peccei (2004), this can be achieved through "presupposition" and "implicature". These tools can lead the listener to make assumptions about the existence of information that is not made explicit in what is actually said, but that might be deduced from what was said. Presuppositions are background assumptions embedded within a sentence or phrase. These assumptions are taken for granted to be true regardless of whether the whole sentence is true. Such technique is particularly useful in political discourse because it can make it more difficult for the audience to identify or reject views communicated in this way, persuading people to take for granted something which is actually open to debate. Like presuppositions, implicatures lead the listener to infer something that was not explicitly asserted by the speaker. However, unlike presuppositions, these operate over more than one phrase or sentence and are much more dependent on shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer and on the context of the discourse (Jones and Peccei, 2004, p.44).

Van Djik (2006) notes that political situations do not simply cause political actors to speak in certain ways, instead "there is a need for a cognitive collaboration between situations and talk or text, that is a context" (Van Djik, 2006, p.733). Such contexts define how participants experience, interpret and represent the for-them-relevant aspects of the political situation. Political discourse is not only defined with political discourse structures but also with political contexts. Thus, acting as an MP, Prime Minister, party leader, or demonstrator will typically be perceived by speakers or recipients as a relevant context category in political discourse.

A linguistic analysis of political discourse in general, and of political speeches in particular, can be most successful when it relates the details of linguistic behaviour to political behaviour. This can be done from two perspectives: we can start from the linguistic micro-level and ask which strategic functions specific structures (e.g. word choice, a specific syntactic structure) serve to fulfil. Alternatively, we can start from the macro-level, i.e. the communicative situation and the function of a text and ask which linguistic structures have been chosen to fulfil this function. Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the micro-level of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macro-level of analysis.

Given the power of the written and spoken discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, henceforth) can be used for describing, interpreting, analyzing, and critiquing social life reflected in text. CDA aims to systematically explore relationships between discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. Precise analysis and descriptions of the materiality of language are factors which are always characteristic of CDA. It strives to explore how these non-transparent relationships are a factor in securing power and hegemony, and it draws attention to power imbalances, social inequities, non-democratic practices, and other injustices in hopes of spurring people to corrective actions (Fairclough, 1992). It tries to illuminate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favour their interests. This means that CDA can theoretically bridge the gap between micro and macro approaches, which is a distinction that is a sociological construct in its own right (Van Dijk, 2003, p.354).

This paper specifically analyses discourse of political speech, namely the short speech of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a debate with Israel's president, Shimon Peres, in the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2009. Given the enormous domestic and global significance of the speech in terms of international relations, it is important to decipher the ideological traits of Mr. Erdogan enshrined in his speech. The aim is to examine the realisation of power in Mr. Erdogan's language use and its ideological component through a linguistic analysis based on CDA.

When Erdogan walked out from a debate with Israel's president, Shimon Peres, in the World Economic Forum in Davos this year, he immediately became the most popular political leader around the world. Not only people of high socio-economic status, but also people of low socio-economic status, have shown great interest in what happened in the Davos debate. This specific incident can significantly explain how political discourse is constructed and affected through experience, and how people's attitudes and perceptions can change according to the given situations. The next day, Radikal Daily (30/01/2009) went with the headline "A Kasimpaşa tune in Davos," a reference to the Prime Minister's birthplace. Prime Minister Erdogan said:

Erdoğan: [In English] Excuse me.

Ignatius: Mr. Prime Minister [touching his shoulder] I would apologise to Mr. Erdoğan…

Erdoğan: [In English] One minute … one minute [touching Ignatius' arm] One minute. No way out! *[Olmaz!]*, [Applause rises from the audience]

Ignatius: Only a minute.

Erdoğan: Mr. Peres, you are older than I am. The volume of your voice is too high.

[Sayin Perez, benden yaslisin. Sesin cok yuksek cikiyor.]

And I know this is because of the guilt psychology. My voice will not be that loud.

[Biliyorum ki sesinin bu kadar cok yuksek cikmasi bir sucluluk duygusu geregidir.

Benim sesim bu kadar yuksek cikmayacak.]

Know this like that. When it is time to kill, you know how to kill well.

[Bunu da boyle bilesin. Oldurmeye gelince siz oldurmeyi cok iyi bilirsiniz.]

I know well how you kill children on beaches, how you shoot them. (...)

[Plajlardaki cocuklari nasil oldurdugunuzu nasil vurdugunuzu cok iyi biliyorum.]

Ignatius: [Ignatius touches Erdoğan's shoulder to warn him to end his speech] Mr. Prime Minister we cannot start the debate again. [Pushing each others' arms]

Erdoğan: Do not interrupt me.
[Sozumu kesmeyin]

Ignatius: We really need to let people go to dinner.

Erdoğan: The Old Testament's sixth amendment says "Thou shalt not kill" There is murder here. ...
[Tevrat altinci maddesinde der ki "Oldurmeyeceksin". Burada oldurme var.]

From a sociolinguistic perspective, there are three points to be discussed about the Prime Minister's political discourse and people's attitudes to his language. First, Erdogan demonstrated a good example of attitude and identity construction through his use of language. It should be noted that the use of 'you' in Turkish as a second person subject is different from in English. That is, there are two different 'you' subjects for formal and informal situations. 'Sen' is the informal one and 'siz' is the formal one. A careful look into the Prime Minister's talk shows that he always used 'sen' in his speech to the moderator and to Israeli President Shimon Peres until he addressed Perez as the representative of the whole Israeli nation ("When it is time to

kill, you know how to kill well"). The use of 'sen' was a sign of anger and bluntness as well as an indication of "My behaviours do not resemble those of diplomats, especially not those of Mon chers at all." *Mon cher* is a negative connotation to portray a Turkish diplomat. As Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has implied, the general image of a Turkish diplomat at home is one that is doing nothing but hopping from one cocktail party to the other with a whisky glass in his hands.

However, Ilter Turkmen, a retired ambassador, said in his interview on CNNTURK (30/01/2009) that "The rhetoric of the PM was not in line with the rhetoric of diplomacy. (...) He reacted emotionally. (...) The PM has not done the right thing; however, there is nothing to say about his ability to turn his mistake in Davos into a domestic political success." In the same interview Mumtaz Soysal (2009), an ex-Foreign Minister said, "...It is wrong to expect a politician to be a diplomat; however, it was completely unpleasant of him (the PM) to speak with the language of the street and address the president of a country 'you' ('sen' - the informal second person pronoun). Whoever you are, it is regarded as rudeness." However, Erdogan spoke like an average Turkish person, which led the vast majority of Turkish society to applaud him. In regards to many comments that appeared on various pages on the internet, it can be implied that the attitude of the average Turkish person towards the PM's language show a strong group membership feature.

This clearly indicates the rhetoric of the Prime Minister and the effect of his background on his political discourse. The BBC webpage describes Prime Minister Erdogan as a politician from a poor background. He was born in 1954, and grew up mainly in the Kasımpaşa district of Istanbul, a less than affluent neighbourhood, famous for its macho honour code. Kasımpaşa men are known to be quick to show

anger, painfully proud and blunt in word, and he has always been proud of his identity as one. His background and commitment to Islamic values also appeal to most of the devout Muslim Turks who have been alienated by the state. Kasımpaşa men are known to be quick to show anger, proud and blunt in word, a bit of a Kabadayi - a blusterer or hothead. This was obvious when Erdogan scolded Peres over Israel's war in Gaza, making statements with a crimson-face, and when he warned the moderator verbally and physically.

The second important point in the Prime Minister's talk was his biblical reference, a quote from the Old Testament. It is customary in Turkey's right-wing political discourse to employ religious language, which is an inherent part of traditional Turkish public speaking. However, given the neoliberal stand of Prime Minister Erdogan and that it was not a quote from the Quran, the Islamic Sacred Book, it is essential to analyze this biblical reference of Erdogan's and give a possible explanation of the particular choices made by him. All *Old Testament* canons are related to the Jewish Bible Canon (Tanakh), but with variations. The choice of this particular biblical reference can be perceived as Prime Minister Erdogan's attempt to criticize the Israeli Government's military actions, by implying that their actions were against their own religion and that they should be ashamed of their guilt.

The last issue to be discussed is how Turkish people perceived Erdogan's reaction in the debate. The comments and virtual polls on the internet suggest that 80% of Turks supported Erdogan's actions. Daniel Steinvorth (30/01/2009) from the Der Spiegel daily website notes that the Prime Minister has never made much of an effort "to keep his exuberant temper in check." On the contrary, Erdogan once said in a TV interview in response to a question about his character "Anger is an art of

rhetoric," and continued, "This idea of showing the other cheek, we don't have that. I am not some kind of patient sheep." (February, 2009). According to Fairclough (2000) the image-making rhetoric, an attempt to self-portray as a normal person, can be seen as a characteristic of a new-generation politician. This is why Turkish people mostly admired him even more after his performance at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Preston (2002) notes that it is unsurprising to observe that people have attitudes towards languages and their varieties and these attitudes are mostly tied to the attitudes towards the groups of people as well.

Columnist Hasan Pulur's (30/01/2009) comments make the connection between Kasimpasa and the PM's attitude more obvious; "This is an issue of style, an issue of perception. This style of the PM has not been constructed recently; on the contrary, he grew up in this way, he has lived in this way, and has made the people around accept it." According to Murat Yetkin from Radikal daily, Erdogan not only showed that emotions had place in politics although in a less diplomatic manner, but also declared that he was ready to pay for it.

Fairclough (2000) notes that political identity is constructed, and leader identity in contemporary politics is generally built upon a tension between the public office and the private individual, "the extraordinary position of the leader and the ordinary person who holds it" (Fairclough, 2000, p.97). In terms of language, this means a tension between the public language of politics and everyday language. Communicative style is a matter of language in the broadest sense with the use of verbal language as well as other aspects contributing to the complex bodily performance that constitutes political style. "A successful leader's communicative style is not simply what makes him or her attractive to voters in a general way; it

conveys certain values which can powerfully enhance the political message" (Fairclough, 2000, p.4).

The communicative style of the leaders is recognised as a crucial factor in political success or failure, and the AKP owes its historical success to its leader, Prime Minister Erdogan. Fairclough (2000) notes that there is considerable variation in how people perform in political positions, particularly as the leader, the PM or the President. The variation in performance comes from their social identity - their social class, the cultural and regional community from which they come, their gender, etc. Comparably, most of the columnists, academicians, politicians and public agree that in the Prime Minister's speeches and interviews, there is always a mix between the vernacular language of the normal person and the public language of politics. Prime Minister Erdogan has the toughness of his background in his communicative style, which exists as a matter of policy and strategy. This political instinct, finely balanced with the calculation of effects on public opinion, contributes to every action he makes.

Conclusion

Studies in sociolinguistics have made it clear that people living in different areas display differences in the use of language, which can reflect and cement the ideas of groups they are used in. As a result, attitudes towards language can be positive or negative, stemming from issues such as social or cultural background, power and status. This paper analysed the ideological component and linguistic background enshrined in the Turkish Prime Minister's speech during a debate. The result is in line with Fairclough's notions of ideology residing in text and that "ideology invests language in various ways at various levels" and that ideology is both "property of structures and of events". Despite serious criticisms, Erdogan has retained his

background throughout his political time in government, even in the recent Davos debate, where he used language as a powerful social tool to present his characteristics. His attitude and linguistic behaviour were the reflection of a particular social group, and the attitude of this particular group towards him was positive. Our attitudes to language are significantly important, and our perceptions of the characteristics of a person or a social group may be influenced by these attitudes. An awareness of language attitudes, thus, may not only help one understand himself and his abilities better within a society, but also help him evaluate others and their influence more correctly.

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