A PRAGMATIC REPRESENTATION OF RACISM IN PRESIDENT TRUMP'S TWEETS AND SPEECHES

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to pragmatically reveal how racist ideology is expressed and represented in discourse. American discourse is purposefully chosen as the data of the current study because racism was and still is a prime might behind segregation in the US. In other words, the study analyzes the pragmatic strategies used by the current President of the US, Donald Trump, in his racist speeches and tweets. Although Trump says that "he is the least racist person anywhere in the world", he has, in fact, many racist beliefs and actions and he is always accused, even by his employees, of fueling racism.

1. Introduction

As an ideology, racism subsists at the individual and institutional level in a society. It involves prejudices and acts of discriminations whether at individual or group levels. Thus, it is considered as a major problem that requires permanent and persistent objection. In this vein, the current study sets itself the task of investigating the pragmatic strategies employed by President Donald Trump to issue his racist ideas and beliefs. To achieve the aim of the study, the relevant literature is reviewed and a model is developed to analyze the data and come up with certain conclusions.

2. Racism

Racism is defined as a complex system of social inequality in which some groups have more power than other groups in society. This power difference is represented in having less access to or control over symbolic resources, such as education, knowledge, information and status, among a host of other resources (Van Dijk, 2004: 38).

In the Oxford Dictionaries (Web source 1), racism is stated as "the belief in the superiority of one race over another. It may also mean prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against other people because they are of

a different race or ethnicity". In this regard, Garner (2009: 11) epitomizes racism as encompassing three elements: (1) hierarchical power relationships between people, (2) an ideology about racial differences, and (3) discriminatory actions.

Moreover, racism is defined by the UN as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (Web source 1). Racism can also mean "the hatred of one person by another or the belief that one person is less than human because of skin colour, language, customs, place of birth or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person" (web source 2).

2.1 Blatant vs. Aversive Racism

Greenwald and Banaji (1995) differentiates between blatant (overt explicit) racism and aversive (covert implicit) racism. The first type has become taboo because it has been sanctioned in the West; thus, racism has changed from being blatant to a more covert expression of racial prejudice which is embedded in social processes and structures.

While blatant racism is depicted by "overt hatred for and explicit discrimination against racial groups, aversive racism is characterized by more complex ambivalent expressions and attitudes" (Hutchings and Valentine, 2004: 398). Depending on Devine and Elliot (1995), aversive racism is termed by a contention between the rejection of personal fanaticism and negative feelings and beliefs rooted in the inner self. Accordingly, "Blackness is associated with crime", which is an example of aversive racism, is preferred to "Black people are criminals", which is blatant racism. Both examples have the implications that blacks are just beasts which are responsible for crimes. In spite of the fact that both examples represent blacks as perpetrators of crime, the first example expresses this racist ideology blatantly, whereas the second one imbeds this ideology in the structure and meaning of the sentence. This negative portrayal of blacks, here, is intended to instigate fear against them.

2.2 Cues to Racial Discourse

According to Balcerzak and Jaworski (2015), racial cues are defined as "prejudice-relevant signals in the environments that largely determine whether an event is perceived or experienced as being race-relevant". Racism can be detected in discourse since racial discourse is characterized by certain characteristics which can be summarized as follows:

- Using racist names, insulting messages, or threats.
- Personal or group attacks including violence or assault.
- Presenting others negatively, while presenting oneself positively through emphasizing the negative attributes of others and de-emphasizing their positive attributes.
- Racist jokes including those about one's colour, nationality, race, language, or culture
- Making derogatory assumptions about others because of their colour, culture, religion, or language (Web source 3).

2.3 Model of Analysis

Racist beliefs and ideas can be expressed by means of discourse. Through the strategic use of pragmatic strategies, discriminatory beliefs and practices can be constructed and diffused. Thus, a model is developed by the researcher as a basic apparatus for analyzing the data so as to come up with the pragmatic structure of racist discourse including the strategies employed by President Donald Trump in his racist speeches and tweets. The model, first, starts with the choice of a topic through which exclusion is justified. A fund of topics can be resorted to including migration, culture, economy, colour, language, and ethnicity. According to Reisigl and Wodak (2001), recurrent topics employed in racist discourse are those concerning differences particularly in others' religion, language, colour, culture, etc., or even "representations of others as a threat for our jobs, safety, and culture". In the second level, the type of racism, whether blatant or aversive, is determined. Then, the strategies used to realize each type is presented. Each of these strategies is employed by Trump to reflect his racist beliefs and opinions and achieve his aims of negatively portraying the other so as to blackguard them and instigate fear against them.

The strategies employed are pragmatic ones aiming at communicating the speaker's intended meaning in a real communicative situation in order to achieve communicative goals since pragmatics is not only concerned with what a message is about, but also with what a message is intended to achieve. These include strategies of speech acts, implicature, tropes, and fallacy. As for speech acts (see), they include speech acts of dispraise, insult, taunt, and criticize. As for fallacies, they include, as reisigl and wodak (2001) mention, those of argumentum ad baculum (i.e., threatening with the stick), the argumentation ad hominem (i.e., a verbal attack on others' personality and character including his credibility, honesty, integrity, competence, and so on), and ad populum or pathetic fallacy (i.e., appealing to prejudiced emotions, opinions, and convictions of a specific social group instead of resorting to rational arguments).

2.4 Analysis

In this sub-section, some tweets and speech extracts said by Trump at different occasions are analyzed according to the model developed above so as to come up with the pragmatic strategies he employs to issue his racist beliefs:

(1)

"Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here? We should have more people from places like Norway". "Those shitholes send us the people that they don't want".

The topic of the previous racist speech is migration and colour. Racism here is expressed implicitly wherein covert expressions of racial prejudice are employed by Trump. He vaguely uses the expression *"shithole countries"* instead of mentioning these countries by name and *"these people"* without directly referring to them. To realize implicit racism, Trump resorts to the following strategies:

-Rhetorical question in *"Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?"* The positive rhetorical question which is conceived of

as an indirect use of language is used here to denote the negative statement "We shouldn't have all these people from shithole countries come to our country".

- Reference represented by the employment of the expression *"shithole countries"* which is an indirect reference to countries such as Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, and African countries, as well as the expression *"these people"* which indirectly refer to people from these countries.

- Implicature in *"We should have more people from places like Norway"*. By saying that they accept people from Norway to migrate to the U.S, Trump implicates that they do not accept migration from "shithole countries" because of their black colour and uncivilized culture as he thinks.

- Speech act of accusing in *"Those shitholes send us the people that they don't want"* wherein Trump accuses the aforementioned countries of sending bad people to the U.S.

(2)

"We have people coming to the country, or trying to come in-we're stopping a lot of them. You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people, these are animals, and we are taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before".

The topic that is mainly dominant in the previous extract is that of migration and the pressing intention to expel migrants from U.S. Racism here is explicit due to the use of expressions which overtly reflect hatred for and discrimination against racial groups represented by migrants. As for the strategies employed by Trump to issue his racist opinions and beliefs, these include those of:

- Reference *"We have people coming to the country"* wherein the noun *"people"* is an indirect reference to migrants from specific countries which Trump object their residence in the U.S. for racial issues such as their different colour, language, habits, and culture.

- Speech act of taunting *"You wouldn't believe how bad these people are"* which is intended as a sarcastic challenge or insult to those migrants.

- Pathetic fallacy, hyperbole, the speech act of describing, metaphor, and the fallacy of ad hominem *"You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people, these are animals, and we are taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before"*. These lines condense many features of racist and discriminatory rhetoric wherein Trump expresses his explicit emotion of hatred towards these migrants and his alleged fear of them to the extent that he promises to expel them out of the country at a rate that has never happened during the rule of president Obama. Trump resorts to the expressive speech act of describing to endorse his fringe ideology when he describes those migrants as *"animals"* to degrade them. Through this description, those migrants are constructed as beasts lacking human properties. Moreover, Trump makes use of the tropes of metaphor and hyperbole; he calls the migrants *"animals"* (metaphor) and he exaggerates when he describes them as such. In addition, Trump exploits the fallacy of ad hominem since his speech is considered as a verbal attack against migrants' character and

personality. He also makes use of the pathetic fallacy of appeal to emotion wherein he tries to arouse the fear of the Americans from those migrants.

(3)

"He came out of nowhere. In fact, I'll take it even further: the people who went to school with him, they never saw him. They don't know who he is. It's crazy". "President Obama has no control over the African American community". "Our great African American president hasn't exactly had a positive impact on the thugs who are so happily and openly destroying Baltimore."Sadly, because president Obama has done such a poor job as president, you won't see another black president for generations".

The topic of this extract is colour hostility. The type of racism is explicit since Trump is explicitly accusing, mocking, and blaming Obama. As for the strategies employed to crystallize this racist ideology, these include:

- Speech act of mocking *"He came out of nowhere. In fact, I'll take it even further: the people who went to school with him, they never saw him. They don't know who he is"*. Trump, here, is mocking Obama saying that his origin is unknown; speech acts of accusing and blaming *"President Obama has no control over the African American community"* and *"Our great African American president hasn't exactly had a positive impact on the thugs who are so happily and openly destroying Baltimore"* wherein Trump accuses Obama of and, at the same time, blames him for the protests in Ferguson and the riots in Baltimore. Then, he accuses Obama again of not doing his job as a president in a good manner *"Obama has done such a poor job as president"*.

- Implicature *"Our African American president"*. Trump here implicates that Obama is not American in origin; rather, he is African due to his black skin.

- Hyperbole in *"You won't see another black president for generations"*. Trump exaggerates his promise saying that no black president will rule for generations.

(4)

"The overwhelming amount of violent crime in our cities is committed by blacks and Hispanics. There are killings on an hourly basis virtually in places like Baltimore and Chicago and many other places. There are places in America that are among the most dangerous in the world. You go to places like Okland or Ferguson. The crime numbers are worse. 81% of white murder victims were killed by black people".

The topic that is evident in the previous extract is that of colour/ culture hostility. The type of racism here is overt due to the overt use of expressions calling for discrimination. Different strategies are employed to issue racial prejudice including:

- Implicature and the speech act of accusing *"The overwhelming amount of violent crime in our cities is committed by blacks and Hispanics"* and *"81% of white murder victims were killed by black people"* wherein Trump directly accuses the blacks of the crimes in the U.S. cities. Through his speech, Trump implicates that black people are criminals and murderers.

- Pathetic fallacy in *"The crime numbers are worse"*. Trump appeals to people's emotion of fear by arousing their fear from the blacks and Hispanics through accusing them of the crimes in the U.S. and of killing the whites.

- Ad hominem fallacy wherein Trump, throughout his speech, directly attacks the blacks and Hispanics.

(5)

"So interesting to see "Progressive" Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all), now loudly and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run. Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how it is done. These places need your help badly, you can't leave fast enough".

The topic of these racist remarks made by Trump is colour, culture, and supremacy. The type of racism here is covert. Trump is covertly speaking against four democratic congresswomen of colour, namely Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib, on the ground of criticizing his policy. The following strategies are employed to issue racism:

- Implicature in *"Progressive Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe.."* wherein Trump intends to say that these congresswomen are not American in origin so they do not have the right to nominate for election in the U.S..

- Speech act of describing *"Countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all)"*. Trump negatively describes the governments of the countries to which these congresswomen belong as being *"the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere"* and, at the same time, positively describes U.S. as *"the greatest and most powerful nation on earth"*. He gives supremacy to his nation.

- Rhetorical question *"Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came?"* Through the use of this question, Trump intends to state that these congresswomen should go back to their countries because they do not have the right to say how U.S. should be run.

(6)

"We've just seen many, many crimes getting worse all the time, and as Maine knows- a major destination for Somali refugees-right, am I right?"

The topic of this racist comment is asylum, while the type of racism is overt. Trump is overtly making a racist comment accusing Somali refugees of crime on the basis of an incident in June 2016 when three young Somali men were found guilty of planning to join the Islamic state in Syria. As regards the strategies employed, these are as follows:

- Allusion since Trump indirectly alludes to risks of terrorism.

- Speech act of accusing *"We've just seen many, many crimes getting worse all the time, and as Maine knows- a major destination for Somali refugees"* wherein Trump directly accuses Somali refugees of crimes.

- Pathetic fallacy through appealing to emotion since Trump, through his accusation, attempts to arouse people's fear of the Somali refugees.

(7)

"Donald Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of `Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on. We have no choice. We have no choice. We have no choice. According to Pew Research, among others, there is a great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population. Most recently, a poll from Center for Secure Policy released data showing that 25% of those polled agreed that violence against Americans here in the United States is justified as part of the global Jihad. They want to change your religion". Without looking at the various polling data, it is obvious to anybody the hatred is beyond comprehension," "Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine. Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life". "We have to take care of the Muslims that are living here. But we have to be vigilant." "I think Islam hates us ... We can't allow people coming into this country who have this hatred of the United States and of   people   that   are   not   Muslim."

The topic of this speech is religion. The speech gives an inference of religious hostility on the basis of the allegations that Muslims have a great hatred towards Americans. The type of racism is overt since Trump is overtly accusing Muslims and attacking them. Various strategies are employed including:

- Speech act of accusing wherein Trump accuses Muslims of having great hatred towards Americans and accuses them of having the destination of changing Americans' religion *"There is a great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population"* and *"They want to change your religion"*.

- Speech act of vilifying where Trump vilifies Muslims saying that they *"believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life"*.

- Pathetic fallacy through appealing to emotion *"They want to change your religion.. we have to be vigilant"*. Trump here is arousing peoples' fear and dread from Muslims. His words intend to agitate hatred against Muslims.

- Reference in *"people that believe only in Jihad"* wherein Trump makes an indirect reference to Muslims.

(8)

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems…they're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people".

The topics of this extract are culture hostility and migration. The type of racism here is overt due to the exploitation of expressions which overtly inveigh migrants from Mexico. Trump employs the following strategies to issue his racist beliefs:

- Speech act of accusing wherein Trump accuses Mecxico of sending migrants who have lots of problems *"They're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems"*. Then he accuses migrants of "bringing crimes"

- Speech act of describing wherein Trump describes migrants as being *"racist"*.

- Ad hominem fallacy wherein Trump directly attacks Mexican migrants.

- Implicature since Trump, through his speech, implicates that these migrants should return to their country because they are bad people.

 (9)

"The judge is a Mexican. We're building a wall between here and Mexico. The answer is, he is giving us very unfair rulings- rulings that people can't even believe".

3. Conclusions

After conducting the analysis of the data, the following conclusions have been reached at:

1. Although overt racism has been widely forbaded in the West, the American President Donald Trump still resorts to overt racism since he mostly expresses his racist beliefs using direct outward expressions of prejudice against others.

2. In order to degrade the others, express negative feelings towards them and, hence, instigate fear against them, Trump makes use of various strategies including the speech acts of accusing, taunting, describing, mocking, blaming, and vilifying; pragmatic reference; generating implicature though maxims non-observance; pathetic fallacy, ad hominem fallacy, and argumentation ad baculum fallacy; tropes including rhetorical question, hyperbole, metaphor, and allusion.

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