

## An ideological discourse analysis of a ruler: Daenerys Targeryen

*Un análisis sobre la ideología del discurso de un gobernante: Daenerys Targeryen*

**ABSTRACT:** The objective of the present study was to analyze the discourse of a TV series character and identify the elements employed to convey her ideology. The method followed was taken from Van Dijk (2004) and it focuses on the examination of meaning at a semantic level. In order to achieve this, five speeches of the character were taken and broken down to be studied. Results show the presence of patterns of three repeated structures such as exemplifying, giving details of the good she has done and the bad others have done, the use of pronouns to emphasize her role as a fair ruler and to create a distinction between her and other rulers.

**KEY WORDS:** Discourse analysis, ideology, power, semantics, meaning.

**RESUMEN:** El objetivo del presente estudio es analizar el discurso de un personaje de una serie televisiva e identificar los elementos que se emplearon para transmitir su ideología. La metodología utilizada fue tomada de Van Dijk (2004) y se enfoca en el análisis del significado a nivel semántico. Para lograr dicho objetivo, se extrajeron 5 discursos del personaje y se dividieron en pequeños segmentos para ser estudiados. Los resultados demuestran que existen tres patrones repetidos de estructuras como lo son la ejemplificación, los frecuentes detalles que describen lo bueno que el personaje ha hecho y lo malo que otros han hecho, el uso de pronombres para resaltar su rol como una gobernante justa y para, al mismo tiempo, hacer una distinción entre ella y los otros gobernantes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Análisis del discurso, ideología, poder, semántica, significado.

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Recibido: 26/09/2019  
 Aceptado: 13/11/2019  
 VERBUM ET LINGUA  
 NÚM. 15  
 ENERO / JUNIO 2020  
 ISSN 2007-7319

### Introduction

It is well known that when powerful people speak in public, their words have great impact on society. Sometimes, even when improvising they manage to convince the audience with arguments that, at least in the moment, seem valid. How do they achieve this? The answer is one of the many aspects that are hidden in discourse;

the way people express their ideas is the key to convey meaning. According to Van Dijk, T. (2009) when discourse is analyzed, it is necessary to contemplate it as an act of communication that happens in a specific place, during a specific period of history, or in a specific political situation. Thus, it is through discourse that people interact, and the characteristics of discourse will be highly influenced by the social status, and ideology of the speakers (pp. 22-24).

For instance, people are considered powerful when they have certain privileges such as education, knowledge, and wealth. These provide them with a social status of authority and enable them to influence people on an 'inferior' level. (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, p. 2). Power, therefore, is only a platform for people to be heard but it is through language and discourse strategies that they have access to control the audience and manipulate them by using certain formulas including patterns of words, grammar structures, and intonation variations.

Focusing on the linguistic theory of discourse, "an utterance should not only be characterized in terms of its internal structure and the meaning assigned to it, but also in terms of the act accomplished by producing such an utterance." (Van Dijk, 1992, p. 2) This pragmatic view establishes a relation between the communicative context and the utterances that are acceptable. Besides, "ideologies influence the various levels of discourse structures, from intonation, syntax and images to the many aspects of meaning, such as topics, coherence, presuppositions, metaphors and argumentation, among many more" (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 4).

Hence, the objective of the present study is to analyze the discourse of a fictional character (Daenerys Targeryen), and identify the semantic elements that she uses to convey the ideology of a fair ruler. Daenerys is one of the main characters of the popular series *Game of Thrones* which has had a high impact on the fans who either believe in her or disregard her. In any of these cases, Daenerys' discourse demonstrates to have a huge effect not only on the rest of the characters, but on real people outside the film. Furthermore, this character's intentions have generated controversy between the fans who assure she is the best option to be the one and only queen, and those who affirm that she is the least appropriate person to rule the seven kingdoms. This controversy can be compared with the many debates that constantly arise in real life when politicians are doing promotion campaigns to get to the presidency of a city, state or country. Therefore, it is possible that Daenerys, and real people in power, are using similar discourse strategies to convince their audiences.

#### Literature review

As stated by Van Dijk (1998) there has been a great debate about the actual definition of the concept of *ideology*. The author discusses how this concept has been printed with a negative connotation since times of Marx and Engels when it was suggested that "ideologies express or conceals one's social or political position, perspective, or interests." (p. 2). Therefore, people tend to take others' beliefs as ideologies while they consider their own beliefs as the truth. According to the Marx and Engels school, ideologies were "prevailing ideas of an

age.” (p. 2) Those predominant ideas were highly related with the set of beliefs that the ruling class had, due to the fact that the ruling class had the power to control the way ideas were produced and reproduced thorough media, politicians, literature, and education. Not to mention that the rulers also had the ability to impose their ideas and present them as unquestionable knowledge that the ruled used to accept as natural. (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 2)

Time after, Gramsci proposed an opposing theory which suggested that ideology was not a matter of imposition. For him, “hegemony more subtly works through the management of the mind of the citizens, for example by persuasively constructing a consensus about the social order.” (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 3) This neo-Marxist view results very relevant to the present study since there is a transfer of ideology in the corpus to be analyzed but the character does not impose it. However, the perception of the concept of ideology keeps changing and in the twentieth century the term got rid of pejorative connotations. Hence, a more up-dated definition is suggested by Van Dijk: “ideologies are usually defined as political or social systems of ideas, values or prescriptions of groups or other collectivities, and have the function of organizing or legitimating the actions of the group.” (1998, p. 4) Therefore, this is the definition I will refer to when the concept of ideology arises.

It is now necessary to define the elements that are used to express and interpret ideologies through discourse. Van Dijk (2004) stated that ideological discourses “typically organize people and society in polarized terms.” (p. 43) That is, they use

structures to distinguish two groups of people usually by saying good things about Us and bad things about Them. However, the author highlights the fact that this type of structure can be studied at many different levels. He proposed eight levels, each one with its different structures, to analyze discourse in terms of ideology: meaning, propositional structures, formal structures, sentence syntax, discourse forms, argumentation, rhetoric, and action and interaction. (pp. 43-44)

Even when there are several levels, Van Dijk (2004) affirms that “ideological ‘content’ is most directly expressed in discourse meaning.” (p. 45) This is why semantics becomes essential, since the choice of words that the speaker makes immediately reveals his/her ideology. Once again, there are many structures to be analyzed in terms of meaning and they will be briefly defined next according to Van Dijk (2004). First, the concept of *topic* relates to the general idea of a text, it answers to the question, ‘what is it about?’ with a complete proposition like the ones used in newspaper headlines. *Topics* differ from *themes* in that the second are more abstract representations of the main idea, and they tend to come in single words such as ‘education.’ Thus, a discourse may have one theme while it discusses a variety of topics. The ideological function of such topics is to emphasize the good we have done, and the bad others have done. It also can be de-topicalized the bad we have done, or the good others have done by not mentioning it. (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 45)

Another key concept regarding meaning is *the level of description*, this has to do with the degree of details used to describe

certain topic. This tool may influence the relevance of what the speaker is saying, for example if one wants to emphasize the other's mistakes, one would give a lot of details about them. On the other hand, when one makes a mistake, very general information will be given to diminish its importance. Regarding *implications and presuppositions*, they are also an important element of this level. Taking into account that when people speak they do it based on mental models, or mental representation they have about events, it is necessary to say that sometimes the speaker does not need to give all the information contained in his/her mental model because the hearer already knows that information. Thus, sometimes the hearer needs to infer such information that is missing in the discourse by using his/her mental model or sociocultural knowledge. "All propositions that appear in a model but not in the discourse may thus be called the 'implied' meaning of a discourse." (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 46). It is essential for Critical Discourse Analysis to make explicit the implicit ideology that speakers are conveying. Another common characteristic of meaning in discourse is *local coherence* which states a logical relation between the propositions being said. Of course, this is an element that needs to be present in every discourse no matter the ideology, yet, the way a set of facts appear coherent among each other depends on ideological perspectives. (Van Dijk, 2005, pp. 46-48)

*Synonym and paraphrase* are other structures used to convey specific meaning at the semantic level. Even when two words have nearly the same meaning, speakers may give a different connotation to each concept according to their ideology. The

same happens with paraphrasing, speakers will use their own style including all kinds of lexical variations that are valid in that specific context. Another semantic characteristic of ideological discourse is *contrast*; it has been previously discussed how discourse tends to be polarized creating two groups of people. This contrast emphasizes the good about Us and the bad about Them as it allows the speaker to add opposing characteristics to each group. Similarly, *examples and illustrations* are often used to convince the audience. Usually, these come in the form of stories that relate to arguments previously stated. In words of Van Dijk (2004) "a very credible story [...] provides the experiential 'evidence' for the general statement" (p. 49). Not to mention that each illustration portrays an ideological picture of the discourse. (Van Dijk, 2004, pp. 48-49)

In the same way, *disclaimers* are typically employed in discourse when prejudice prevails. Van Dijk (2004) states that "*Apparent Negation* is the best known: I have nothing against X, but..." (p. 50). It is called like that because at the beginning the speaker denies any negative feeling about others but in the following clauses only negative aspects are discussed. This tool allows the speaker to be perceived as a good, non-judgmental person that does not speak badly about others. In terms of structure, it is important to talk about *propositions* as well since discourse meaning is displayed in propositions. Basically, this term refers to complete thoughts expressed in a phrase within a sentence; therefore, more than one proposition may appear in a sentence. According to the ideological perspective of the author,

propositions share a common structure in which the predicates are somehow negative or positive. Thus, speakers make their beliefs evident through non impartial propositions. It needs to be highlighted that such propositions may refer to a variety of *actors*. “Actors may thus appear in many guises, collectively or individually, as ingroup (‘we’) or outgroup members (‘they’), specifically or generally, identified by their name, group, profession or function; in personal or impersonal roles, and so on” (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 51). For instance, the author mentions that minorities are often referred to as Them, that is, as an outer group which semantically reflects social distance (Van Dijk, 2004, pp. 50-51).

*Modality* is another structure that modifies the intention of propositions, for example it can be said that something is ‘well known,’ or that ‘it is probable’ or ‘urgent to do.’ This clearly reflects the way the speaker sees the situation being discussed. On the other hand, *evidentiality* is the result of the hearer’s expectation of knowing that what the speaker is saying is true. Thus, discourse may include proofs to back up their beliefs, such as ‘I saw it on TV’ since much of the information is taken from media. However, “the use that may be made of media messages may be biased, [and hence] such ‘evidence’ may also be ideologically based” (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 52). Finally, the author describes another structure to be looked at: *hedging and vagueness*. These are easy to identify when speakers do not know how to answer a question and then, use vague language instead of saying something that the audience does not want to listen to. This absence of clarity is typi-

cal of political or diplomatic language. For this, speakers may use elements like euphemisms, indirect negations, or justifications. (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 52)

Discourse analysis has been a channel to study the power of language and its implications. Several methodologies have been adopted by scholars to analyze a variety of corpuses. However, due to the nature of this paper the focus is on those investigations that took the corpus from a fictional character. For instance, Beyad & Mehrmotlagh (2018) developed research to analyze the discourse of a female character of the novel *Philida* by André Brink. The authors studied the way this African slave gains voice, and it was discovered the presence of conflicting sub-discourses which have had impacts on the formation of the characters’ identity and power. Later, the findings were compared to the actual situation of African women after the colonization period. The methodology employed for such analysis was a three-step model that included textual, intertextual, and contextual examination. This, hence, is similar to the present study since it attempts to analyze the discourse of a fictional female character. Besides, in further research the discourse used by this character could be compared with the discourse of Mexican politicians who have ruled the country.

Similarly, Wong & Gómez (2018) carried out a study on discourse analysis with a focus on semantics, including aspects of context and discourse strategies as well. The authors examined the speeches that appear in the TV series *True Blood*, in which some of the characters are vampires. This fictional population was considered as a minority group and the speeches are compared with

those of real life that portray a discriminatory discourse. As a result, there were found 13 patterns of discrimination implicit in discourse which can be observable in the series and in factual speeches. The methodological procedure followed by the authors is highly related to the present study, since the focus is on the semantic patterns that the character uses to appear honest.

Opposite to the previous two studies, Carreon & Peña (2018) analyzed the speeches of factual women who are politicians. This study on critical discourse analysis took place in The Philippines, where these women were undertaking political campaigns. The authors analyzed the linguistic features that characterized the style of their speeches and their repercussions. For instance, they found a high use of super polite forms, intensifiers, hedges, and direct quotations among others. Results show that “they employed [those specific] parts of the speech [...] to convey gratitude, hospitality, and inclusiveness to the public as well as to portray themselves as reliable, approachable, sincere, and ethical politicians” (p. 100). Even when the participants of this study are not fictional, they share the same goal with the character studied in the present paper: convince their audience and become rulers. Therefore, similar results are expected.

### Corpus analysis

#### *Description of the corpus*

The corpus is a compilation of speeches of Daenerys Targaryen, one of the main characters of the TV series *Game of Thrones* produced by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, and based on the bestselling book series by

George R.R. Martin. The first of eight seasons aired in 2011, and the last season has just streamed in 2019. Daenerys’ character appeared since season one, when she was a 15-year-old girl that was sold to *Khal Drogo*. After Daenerys’ brother dies, she claims to be the heir of the throne to the 7 kingdoms and she aims to become a fair ruler by liberating all the slaves. In order to achieve that she needs to get an army willing to fight for her, and gold to get weapons and ships.

Hence, the segments of the story that were selected include different speeches that she gives every time she arrives at a new city and wants to free its people. Those speeches were selected because they are directed to slaves, or former slaves, and those were the specific moments in which she used her words to convince the people that she was a fair ruler and they should follow her. They are presented chronologically as she was conquering more cities; therefore, in every speech she gives, she is more powerful and thus, more convincing.

#### *Methodology*

In order to collect the data of the corpus, five speeches were taken from different episodes and seasons of the series with the purpose of noticing the progress of the character’s discourse. Each speech was transcribed and later segmented into smaller pieces according to the different ideas mentioned in the text. The actual videos of the character speaking are available in the Appendixes section in the following order. The first speech was taken from the tenth episode of the first season (Appendices 1 and 2). The second speech took place in the fourth episode of the third season (Appendices 3 and 4). The third speech

occurred in the third episode of the fourth season (Appendix 5). The fourth speech was part of the sixth episode of the sixth season (Appendix 6). Finally, speech number five was taken from the eighth episode of the eighth season, the end of the series (Appendix 7).

The corpus was broken down into short segments for them to be deeply analyzed in terms of ideology; however, basic suprasegmental aspects were considered in the transcription to help the reader have a wider understanding of the speaker's intentions. Therefore, these aspects were signaled along the text: the long pauses are represented by ellipsis (...), the raise in the character's volume is marked by the double underlining (example). Lastly, dashes ( - ) were employed to indicate a clear segmentation of syllables.

As stated before, there are many levels of discourse that can be analyzed, since ideologies may come in different formats. That is, some are directly pointed out while others are implicit in the words of the speaker and result difficult to interpret. However, the methodology followed in this study consists of analyzing only the semantic elements that the character employed to express her ideology. Hence, the focus is on the level of meaning and all the structures that constitute it: topics, level of description, implications and presuppositions, local coherence, synonyms, paraphrasing, contrast, examples and illustration, disclaimers, propositional structures, actors, modality, evidentiality, and hedging and vagueness. (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 42-53). First, the corpus was analyzed to find the presence of such structures. Then, the three most repeated elements found were exam-

ined at a deeper level to check the way they were used, the frequency, the purpose and the impact they had.

#### Data analysis

The first segment to be analyzed takes place in Season 1, episode 10. The tribe that appears here is called the *Dothrakis*, they are ruled by a *Khal*, but this *Khal* has just passed away. Therefore, the *Khal's* wife (Daenerys) is trying to convince them that they have to stay together being a *Khalasar*. It is important to mention that the *Khal* is always the strongest man of the horde, and it is difficult to conceive a woman with no power in this role.

**[1 a]** You will be my *Khalasar* (...) I see the faces of slaves (...) I - free - you. (...) Take off your collars, go if you wish no one will stop you. But if you stay (...) it'll be as brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives. (S01, E10. See appendix 1)

The topic of this first part of speech is “Daenerys frees the *Dothraki* slaves” and the speaker makes it very evident using the pronoun I (“I free you”) right away. This emphasizes the fact that she is the one freeing them, otherwise she could have said “you are free.” It is important to highlight the way Daenerys uttered that phrase segmenting syllable by syllable and raising her voice, these two characteristics make it the main focus of attention of this passage. On the other hand, she leaves implicit the fact that she is going to rule them from now on, when she says, “you will be my *khalasar*,” everybody knows that the last *Khal* is dead, and she is the new *Khaleesi*. Therefore, all

the focus is on their freedom, not on the fact that they will be still ruled by someone. Besides, she illustrates clearly that they will not be treated as slaves anymore, she proposes a relation between a new *Khalasar* and a new family which is coherent according to the ideology she is trying to portray.

Daenerys is trying to convince the audience that she wants them to be a family for her, and that is noticeable in the way she modifies the volume of her voice. The underlined words in [1 a] show a rise in her intonation; basically, the main nouns are highlighted: *you*, *khalasar*, and *slaves*. The stress put in these words draws the attention of listeners to the negative situation they are living in and immediately creates a contrast with the following words that are over accented (double underlined): *brothers*, *sisters*, *husbands*, and *wives*.

Another semantic element used is the word “*Khalasar*,” even when it is not an exact synonym, she could have referred to them as their army, but instead she selects this specific word to persuade them that she is one of them. Moreover, the propositional structures are arranged one after the other all of them with positive arguments included in the predicates. The only negative aspect mentioned is the proposition “I see the faces of slaves” but this is there to make a contrast with all the good she is offering; it is a reminder of what they have been so they can compare it with the new lifestyle offered.

[1 b] I - am Daenerys Stormborn, of house Targaryen, of the blood of Old Valyria, I - am the dragons’ daughter, and I swear to you that those who harm you will die - screaming. (S01, E10. See appendix 2)

This second and last part of the speech takes place a couple of minutes after [1a], once the people that decided to go, had left. This is the first time that she introduces herself before a group of slaves and to have more impact she explains with details who she is. These details are at the same time implicatures of (good) reasons for her to be a ruler: she comes from a prestigious family, she has come all the way from Valyria, and she is the only one that can manipulate dragons. Not only the words and arguments selected are important but the different stress Daenerys puts in each of them. For instance, she uses the phrase “*I am*” twice and it is highly stressed on both occasions with a high volume and an elongation of the vowels. This undoubtedly shows emphasis on her as an authority, and as a ruler.

In regards to the second sentence, the use of pronouns shows emphasis on the fact that she personally will be their protector, (I swear) otherwise this phrase could have been omitted. Additionally, there is an emphasis on the intonation of the verb *swear*, which denotes the importance she gives to the following. On the other hand, she has already defined them as a group, by putting social distance between the inner group (you) and the rest of the population (those). At the end, the last two words (die screaming) are over accented, with a short but significant pause between them which assures that she is someone to be feared. It is implied that she has no problem murdering anyone who acts against her inner group, but she does not topicalize what happens with the members of the inner group that betray her. At the end, her discourse in [1a] and [1b] focuses only on talking about her

good intentions, and the bad that others have done or may do in the future.

The following segment happened in the city of Astapor after Daenerys exchanged one of her three dragons for an army of slaves (The Unsullied). In this scene she pretends not to speak Valyrian and the deal is made through an interpreter of Astapor. She had the whip to command the Unsullied already and the ruler of Astapor had the dragon tied with a chain. In this moment, the ruler says (in Valyrian) to the interpreter “Tell that bitch her beast won’t come” and Daenerys listens to him and answers back in Valyrian “a dragon is not a slave.” The man gets petrified when he discovers she speaks the language, then she introduces herself as in [1b]

**[2a]** Unsullied, (...) slay the masters! Slay the soldier, slay every man who holds a whip but harm no child. Strike the chains off every slave you see. (S03, E04. See appendix 3)

First of all it is important to mention that this, as the speech 1, was given in the slaves’ mother tongue. This is the first tool used by Daenerys to seem closer to the people of the city. Then, she addresses the army by its name “Unsullied”. The intonation in this vocative makes clear that she is about to say something important and it is reaffirmed with the subsequent pause. By using this specific word, she frames the slaves in a group of which masters and rulers are not part. Similarly, she names different actors (masters, soldiers) by their position in order to create a distinction. Then she generalizes (every man who holds a whip) making clear that all of

them are bad people. This is the main idea of her ideology, and she topicalizes it very clear: the bad people deserve to be slayed, but innocent people should not be harmed by any means. The Unsullied find this to be locally coherent and therefore they start doing what they were commanded to. For them, Daenerys’ ideology sounds reasonable, now they have in their hands the opportunity to make justice.

**[2b]** Unsullied, (...) you have been slaves all your life, today you are free, any man who wishes to leave may leave and no one will harm him. I give you my word. (...) Will you fight for me, as free men? (S03, E04. See appendix 4)

Once more, Daenerys addresses the Unsullied army by their name, just as in [2a] she stresses the vocative rising her tone of voice and making a pause after it to draw the attention of the audience. At the same time, she makes it clear that they will keep their identity; they will continue to be who they are. However, a vast contrast is highlighted in the first sentence “you have been slaves all your life, today you are free.” Then again, she uses this technique of reminding them how bad it has been so that they acknowledge the good she is making for them. She also topicalizes the fact that they may leave if they want to, which happens to be an essential part of her discourse and ideology: she wants an army that fights for her because they want to, not because they have to. Then, the phrase “no one will harm you” says implicitly that she is a person full of mercy that would not harm innocent people. Similarly, when she says “I give you my word”, it is making it clear that

she is an honorable woman; it is implicit that her word is worth it, and it is coherent because she has done it before.

Finally, the last sentence is uttered after a pause, and it happens to be the most stressed part of the speech; the tone and volume of her voice make evident the power position in which she is, and adds urgency for the army to act in her favor. On the other hand, the positive adjective she uses to refer to them as “free men” not only makes it a positive proposition but emphasizes the idea of them being and meaning more than just an army for her.

The third speech took place at the gate of Meereen city, which she is about to conquer, or as she says, free from their masters. Although the present study does not focus on semiotics, it is important to picture what this scene looks like. Hence, bear in mind that Daenerys has just arrived at the gate of the city, all the masters and slaves are watching from above, and she was standing in front of a huge army of Dothrakis and Unsullied willing to fight for her.

**[3a]** I am Daenerys Stormborn, (...) your masters may have told you lies about me, or they may have told you nothing. It does not matter. (...) I have nothing to say to them. I speak only to you. (S04, E03. See appendix 5)

This time, Daenerys does not introduce herself in detail, she only mentions her name, yet the army standing behind her says what kind of person she is. Very straightforwardly, she starts talking about the masters; these actors that she names according to their role and job. By naming them, as “masters” it is implicit that

the rest of the population are slaves. Besides, she brings to topic how bad they are for defaming her, and how good she is because those are lies and she is only a victim of those lies. Then, she diminishes the importance of the masters, because as the other sample speeches, she talks directly to the slaves. From now on, when she uses the pronoun “you” although everyone is listening, the masters have been displaced from it. Now “you” refers only to the slaves of Meereen and adds importance to them.

**[3b]** First, I went to Astapor. Those who were slaves in Astapor now stand behind me, (...) free. Next, I went to Yunkai, those who were slaves in Yunkai, now stand behind me, free. (S04, E03. See appendix 5)

The second part of the speech is merely an illustration of what she does when she arrives at a city. Her previous achievements are evident in the number of people standing behind her; they are the proof. Of course once more, Daenerys exemplifies using contrasting propositions (they were slaves, now they are free). In addition, these contrasting propositions are also highly stressed which adds emphasis to both concepts, slavery and freedom; there is no doubt this is the main topic of the speech.

**[3c]** Now I have come to Meereen, (...) I am not your enemy, your enemy is beside you. Your enemy steals and murders your children. Your enemy has nothing for you but chains and suffering and commands. (...) I do

not bring you commands, I bring you a choice and I bring your enemies what they deserve. (S04, E03. See appendix 5)

This is the last part of the speech, and to conclude, Daenerys explicitly mentions that she has come to Meereen but it is implicit that freedom, protection, and mercy have come with her as well. Then she makes a positive proposition “I am not your enemy” and contrasts it with the following three negative propositions referring to their masters: “your enemy is beside you,” “your enemy steals and murders your children,” “Your enemy has nothing for you but chains and suffering commands.” Now she is replacing the noun “master” for “enemy” and she gives examples of the bad practices they carry out. After that, she retakes the positive arguments about her: she is just the opposite of the masters (I do not bring you commands, I bring you a choice). At the end she restates that she is a fair ruler and she will do justice for them, she (with emphasis on the pronoun “I”) personally bring their enemies what they deserve.

The fourth speech to be analyzed took place in a community of Dothrakies, years after some of them did not believe in her (see sample [1a] & [1b]).

**[4a]** Every *Khal* who ever lived chose three blood riders to fight beside him and guard his way, but I am not a *Khal*. I will not choose three blood riders; I choose you all. I will ask more of you than any *Khal* has ever asked of his *Khalassar*. (S06, E06. See appendix 6)

This time, there is not an introduction as such since the people there already know Daenerys. She starts right away topicalizing the way *Khals* usually work, making an absolute generalization: “every *Khal* who ever lived.” It is important to highlight the noun “Khal” and the pronouns “his” and “him” all of them referring to male figures to make a distinction between them (men rulers) and her (the first *Khaleesi*). Then she keeps contrasting what *Khals* do and what she plans to do. Again, by using the pronoun “you” creates a closer bond to the tribe, it is implicit that they are all important and necessary (I choose you all). Once again, the intonation of the speaker rises in this particular sentence “I choose you all” with urgency embedded in the volume. After that, she offers a challenge, something that they have never been asked before and yet she implicitly states that she trusts them to succeed in such a feat.

**[4b]** Will you ride the wooden horses across the black salt sea? (...) Will you kill my enemies in their iron suits and tear down their stone houses? (...) Will you give me the seven kingdoms; the gift *Khal Drogo* promised me before the mother of mountains? (...) Are you with me? Now (...) and always? (S06, E06. See appendix 6)

Now Daenerys offers a collection of details as to what she is asking. The whole passage could have been substituted with the sentence “Will you fight for me?” Yet, she wants to make sure that everyone understands she has gained so much power since the last time they saw her, and she

is finally ready to conquer the iron throne (The throne of the king/queen of the seven Kingdoms.). Besides, she brings to topic the dead character Khal Drogo who was Daenerys' husband, and father of the baby they lost. This serves to manipulate them and make them think that they owe that to Drogo and it is in their hands to accomplish his last will. She knows the Dothrakies are savages and fear no one. At the end she explicitly invites and challenges them to be part of her army and fight for her cause from that moment on.

It is important to acknowledge the motivating this speech results due to many suprasegmental aspects employed, rising intonation being the most evident. Yet, at the very end she increases her volume even more, it seems that her voice is about to rip and this causes a great effect on the listeners who are already convinced by the arguments.

The following speech is the last one that Daenerys gave in the series; she was now the most powerful woman in the seven kingdoms. They just conquered King's Landing (The city where the king/queen of seven Kingdoms lives) and Daenerys' army is waiting for her to talk to them.

**[5a]** Blood of my blood (...) You kept all your promises to me (...) you killed my enemies in their iron suits... you tore down their stone houses... you gave me the seven kingdoms... (S08, E08. See appendix 7)

First of all, bear in mind all the gabble that was there among all the fighters. That is why Daenerys starts by drawing the attention of the men by saying "blood

of my blood." The fact that she uses this noun phrase to refer to the Dothrakies emphasizes the bond they have made and as stated in [1a], they are considered as family for her. As soon as she starts talking everyone keeps silence. She topicalizes the important role that they have had so far; thanks to them she is the queen now. For the first time the emphasis is not on her and it is evident in the absence of the pronoun "I", instead she repeats the pronoun "you" to give them the credit for achieving such a goal. She uses, then, only positive propositions about the Dothrakies, and implicitly, she is thanking them and making them responsible for her victory. This acknowledgement is well received by the Dothrakies who after each phrase she speaks, start yelling and celebrating with their machetes in the air.

**[5b]** Unsullied, all of you were torn from your mothers' arms and raised as slaves, now, you are liberators. You have freed the people in King's Landing from the grip of a tyrant. But the war is not over. We will not lay down our spears until we have liberated all the people of the world... from Winterfell to Dorne... from Lannisport to Qarth... from the Summer Isles to the Jade sea... Women, men, and children have suffered too long beneath the wheel... Will you break the wheel with me? (S08, E08. See appendix 7)

Now she is talking to the Unsullied, and even when it may not be necessary, she gives a description of who they are: "all of you were torn from your mothers'

arms and raised as slaves” and then she contrasts this idea with the fact that they are liberators now: “you have freed the people in King’s Landing from the grip of a tyrant.” Once again, the emphasis is not on her but on them: the bad they have received from other people and the good they have done. Now they are like her; they are fair fighters that have freed thousands of people.

Consequently, she affirms that the war is not over, and she restates her ideology: there must not be any slaves in the world; the whole system (wheel) is a mistake. It is important to notice how for the first time she uses the pronoun “we”: “We will not lay down our spears until we have liberated all the people of the world.” Now there is no distinction between “you” and “I”; there is an idea of fraternity implicit in that. Then Daenerys explains with geographic details (from Winterfell to Dorn, from Lannisport to Qarth, from the Summer Isles to the Jade Sea) that she will liberate all the people from the whole world. From here it can be inferred that even when she already has the throne, she is not willing to give up on her idea of liberating all the people. It is implicit that her goal is to abolish slavery, more than becoming the queen. Finally she expresses her worry about the people, but instead of using a general noun such as “people” she emphasizes the unfairness by specifying: “women, men, and children have suffered too long beneath the wheel.” And to wrap up, she invites the army to keep fighting for this cause. The agreement of the Unsullied towards her ideology is evident since in every pause she makes, they knock their sticks on the floor.

The last speech Daenerys gives was quite revealing, since everybody thought she was going to feel fulfilled when conquering King’s Landing and would stop fighting more kingdoms. The objective of the present study was to analyze her discourse through her speeches, and from there one can conclude she was in fact a fair ruler. Yet, there are a series of topics that she never mentions in her speech but are present in her actions. To illustrate, she burned the whole city of King’s Landing just to prove to the previous queen, that she was now in the power, and those people were innocent, they were victims of the wheel. It is important, then, to emphasize the role of de-topicalization in ideology speeches, because they may result the most powerful weapon.

Finally, it is interesting the concept of the wheel, as a system that oppresses whole cities. Yet, in the context where all of the previously analyzed speeches took place, it can be noticed that she is becoming a new type of wheel. For instance, it is true that she is liberating slaves, but on the other hand, she cannot stand the fact that there are other fair rulers. She wants everybody to bend their knee before her or else they die. She makes it very clear in her last speech, even when she is the queen of the seven kingdoms, she will not accept the existence of independent cities or kingdoms; they all must be her subjects.

#### Interpretation of the findings

In the previous analysis it was found that not all of the elements suggested by Van Dijk (2004) were present, or appeared very rarely. Thus, the focus in this section is on the interpretation of the three more repre-

sentative semantic structures employed by Daenerys.

*Actors: nouns, pronouns, and noun phrases*

There are three main actors whom Daenerys talks about: the slaves, the other rulers, and herself. The type of nouns, pronouns and noun phrases that she uses plays an important role. In the next chart (Chart 1), it can be seen the structures that were employed and the times they appear in the corpus.

As it was expected the more repetitive pronouns were *You* and *I*, similar to what Wong & Gómez (2018) found in the analysis of *True Blood*. The authors found that these elements establish “an opposition between Us and Them (or You), a device typical of political and, more broadly, ideological discourse” (p. 13). In this case, in all the speeches Daenerys would ask the slaves to work together with her, as a team, meaning that both (*You* and *I*) will become the same actor against Them; the other rulers. That is why in the last speech she finally says *We*. It is important as well to notice the other ways she refers to each actor without using pronouns. First, to talk about herself she uses her full name, bearing in mind that

her last name is an important one. She also calls herself the dragons’ daughter, again, because she knows that her ancestors (the only family that can manipulate dragons) were important people. These two are positive ways of naming her; two reasons why she is a good option to be a ruler. Then she employs two other structures to express the negative things she is not, the same structures that are true for The Others.

To refer to the army of slaves, she majorly uses positive words or phrases to name them. For instance, she calls them, ‘free men,’ or ‘liberators.’ She also tries to make them feel part of a group by calling them ‘Khalasar’ or ‘Unsullied,’ so they feel they still have their identity. On the other hand, she sometimes refers to them as *slaves*, with the intention of polarizing both actors: the other rulers who are always referred to with negative structures, and the noble slaves who will be actors of change to liberate the seven kingdoms. In this case, the form of addressing each actor is a clear contrast, not only between the slaves and the unfair rulers, but also between those rulers and Daenerys. For this reason, she always calls them with negative names; besides, by using these names, she generalizes

Chart 1

Daenerys	To refer to the slaves	To refer to other rulers
I/ me (29)	You (31)	They/ them (2)
Daenerys Stormborn (2)	Slaves (5)	Those who harm you
The dragons’ daughter	<i>Khalasar</i> (2)	Masters (2)
Not your enemy	Unsullied (3)	Soldiers
Not a <i>Khal</i>	Free man	Every man who holds a whip
	Blood of my blood	enemy (6)
	Liberators	<i>Khal</i> (2)
We (2)		Tyrant

that all the other rulers are bad people. At the end it is all about saying who is good and who is bad, according to Daenerys ideology, it is impossible that other good rulers exist, but she and her army are good people and therefore it ends up being a conflict between Us and Them.

#### *Examples and illustrations*

Another frequent structure observed in Daenerys' speeches is related to examples and illustrations. These elements were found in four of the five analyzed speeches. In the first speech she says: "it'll be as brothers and sisters, as husbands and wives" (see [1a]) this describes the type of relationship they will have if they decide to stay with her. Then, in [3b] she says "first, I went to Astapor. Those who were slaves in Astapor now stand behind me, free. Next, I went to Yunkai, those who were slaves in Yunkai, now stand behind me, free." Here, she briefly tells the story of the good actions she has done which also serve as evidence for them to believe in her. With this, she convinces them to fight for her and become free men. Similarly, in [4a] she illustrates how different she is from other rulers: "Every Khal who ever lived chose three blood riders to fight beside him and guard his way, but I am not a Khal. I will not choose three blood riders." Finally, in [5b] she told them "all of you were torn from your mothers' arms and raised as slaves, now, you are liberators. You have freed the people in King's Landing from the grip of a tyrant." This illustrates what they used to be and what they have become.

Illustrations were basically used as a tool to make the speeches more vivid and credible. They helped the slaves to create a

mental image of who Daenerys is and what her ideology is. Even when she never explicitly says that she is different from other rulers or that they are unfair, it is implicit in the way she illustrates the situations. Therefore, she uses positive illustrations to talk about herself and negative illustrations to talk about the other rulers in order to persuade the slaves and make them do what she wants. This allows the slaves to make a contrast and draw their own conclusions of who is a better ruler and who they should fight for.

#### *Level of description*

The great detail that Daenerys uses to describe situations or actors is another characteristic of her discourse. She knows how to add information that will be relevant for the hearers and she does not hesitate to use as many words as necessary in order to persuade them. This structure is constantly used in all her speeches, sometimes more than once as it has been previously analyzed. For instance, she expresses several details of who she is: "I am Daenerys Stormborn, of house Targaryen, of the blood of Old Valyria, I am the dragons' daughter" (see [1b]). Similarly in [3c] she describes the enemy using a series of negative propositions but at the same time she is describing what she is not; that is, she is describing the negative things she does not do: "I am not your enemy, your enemy is beside you. Your enemy steals and murders your children. Your enemy has nothing for you but chains and suffering and commands." Regarding the Others, she also uses synonyms to describe them like in [1b]: "slay the masters! Slay the soldier, slay every man who holds a whip." Here,

Daenerys explains with enough details who has to be slayed. Additionally, she is generalizing, that all the masters, soldiers, or people with whips deserve to be killed, all of them are bad.

This structure was also used to explain what Daenerys was requiring the army to do. For example, in [4b], she asked them: “Will you ride the wooden horses across the black salt sea? Will you kill my enemies in their iron suits and tear down their stone houses? Will you give me the seven kingdoms?” In this sense, the hearers know exactly what they have to do, or what Daenerys needs them to do. By giving all those details, she also motivates them to go on that ‘adventure,’ as they are an army and they like to fight. Then, in [5a] she thanks them for having accomplished her / their goal: “you killed my enemies in their iron suits, you tore down their stone houses, you gave me the seven kingdoms.” This time the details add importance to everything they have done and make them feel part of the victory.

Two more examples were found in the last speech. First, Daenerys sets the plan which is to continue conquering the whole world, but she says more than that: “we will not lay down our spears until we have liberated all the people of the world, from Winterfell to Dorne, from Lannisport to Qarth, from the Summer isles to the Jade sea.” (see [5b]) Details here demonstrate that there are no boundaries for Daenerys as she is willing to conquer every city, one by one. At the same time, she is describing the huge empire she is building and all the places that are part of it. Finally, in [5b] Daenerys makes a statement of the people that have suffered when she says: “women,

men, and children have suffered too long beneath the wheel.” This time, details are employed to express that everyone, no matter the gender or age have suffered, and this adds impact to the bad others have done and the good she (and the army) will do by liberating them

These results are somehow relatable with the ones obtained by Carreon & Peña (2018) when they analyzed factual women’s speeches. On the one hand, the speeches of both studies shared the same purpose and they achieved it. The authors explained that:

The application [certain] linguistic features in the campaign speeches of the women politicians served to project the image of these politicians of being respectful, humble, and that they see their audience, their supporters as equals and as fellow Filipinos who want to help their country towards a better future. (p. 101)

In this sense, Daenerys also employed specific linguistic elements to portray a positive image of herself, and she attempted to treat her army as equals who would fight to liberate their city, never as slaves. On the other hand, the focus of Carreon & Peña was not on semantics but on style and therefore the structures that were analyzed in both studies are not the same. For instance, they studied the type of verbs employed by the politicians which was not analyzed in the present study. However, results show that in both cases, discourse was used to convince their audience that they are good candidates to rule them. It would be interesting, thus, to analyze this corpus

with their methodology or vice versa and observe the variations of the results.

### Conclusions

The study of the discourse of Daenerys Targaryen allows to identify three representative semantic strategies that powerful people use to convey their ideologies. To begin with, the constant use of illustrations and details to make the speeches more vivid for listeners. Besides, the role of nouns, and specifically pronouns, it is important to denote closeness, social distance, and emphasis especially on the distinction between “I /we” and “they.” Apart from the pronouns, different strategies are employed to show contrast among the actors, being the most popular the significant use of positive propositions to describe the speaker and negative propositions to describe the outer group. The purpose, hence, is to emphasize the good practices of the speaker and how bad the others are.

Other aspects related to ideological discourse are the beliefs and ideas implicitly portrayed through discourse. This is probably the widest-reaching area of study since even a small speech may have an implicit message capable of manipulating the audience. These implicit ideas play a decisive role in each listener’s head and are open to interpretation; this is the reason why some people would never agree with Daenerys’ ideology. On the other hand, an analysis is required not only regarding the implicit beliefs but with respect to those ideas that are never topicalized by a powerful person. Usually the speaker suggests positive topics and avoids talking about negative aspects even when they are evident; the focus is always on the positive arguments.

Additionally it is essential to acknowledge the role of intonation and other prosodic elements in the analysis of discourse. Unfortunately this area could not be broadly studied since the language in which the speeches were given is an artificial one. However, there were some patterns evident such as the rising intonation to add emphasis and invite listeners to act. Moreover, there were several pauses that functioned as attention gatherings.

To conclude, it is evident that the speeches of Daenerys followed certain patterns of the above mentioned, and through those repeated structures she managed to convince entire armies to fight for her. It was through her discourse that she transferred her ideology to all her followers whose own ideologies were shaped by hers. On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge that this character was created by a writer and it is only a reflection of reality.

### Limitations and further research

While analyzing the semantic elements in discourse, it was difficult to separate these from other aspects related to semiotics or prosody. Therefore, it is considered that this study can be complemented by analyzing those aspects in order to have results from different perspectives and make a comparison. However, as stated before, the main reason why there was not a deeper analysis on suprasegmental aspects is because the speeches were given in an artificial language and therefore it is difficult to gain an accurate interpretation. It would also be useful to take some of the speeches of this character or another fictional character in power and compare them with the speeches of powerful peo-

ple in reality such as politicians. It is necessary to think that even when these types of studies are based on fictional characters, their discourse results similar to factual

rulers and therefore, they can be taken as the starting point to prove the elements that are shared, and contrast the impact that both have on society.

## Appendixes

- 1 Speech [1a] (S01, E10) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zYeN9z8XY> min 1:30 -1:59
- 2 Speech [1b] (S01, E10) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zYeN9z8XY> min 2:23 -2:43
- 3 Speech [2a] (S03, E04) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-jkVgYZB0aA> min 3:05 -3:22
- 4 Speech [2b] (S03, E04) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-jkVgYZB0aA> min 4:58 -5:30
- 5 Speech [3a], [3b] & [3c] (S04, E03) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cze5A4iyQGk&t=19s> min 0:02-1:23
- 6 Speech [4a] & [4b] (S06, E06) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRR0NleJy8> min 2:45- 3:52
- 7 Speech [5a] & [5b] (S08, E08) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbJcOHASdU> min 2:25 -4:55

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