Public speech as a tool for nation-building: An analysis of Thabo Mbeki’s speeches

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INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the discursive strategies used in major speeches in South Africa with distinct socio-political systems, which put nation-building in a central place, making the nation both the context and an analytical unit for the study of nation-building. The research question that needed to be answered was: to what extent does a presidential speech, as a tool, reflect South Africa’s nation-building objectives? This study specifically examined various discursive techniques used in the political language of former President Thabo Mbeki. Two speeches by former President Thabo Mbeki were collected from the GCIS website. A general textual description of the speeches is made in terms of lexis and syntax to uncover the underlying ideology in the speeches. Thematic content analysis was adopted. The analysis was predominantly qualitative, supported by some statistical data, on the assumption that a purely qualitative analysis would not necessarily yield reliable results. The occurrence of linguistic features was presented; each text was transcribed and marked for relevant linguistic features. The critical discourse analysis revealed that, on a macro-level, the text of the speeches can be viewed as a manifestation of larger socio-political processes within the country. The texts illustrate a type of political speech positioned in a society in transition, as there are references to building a cohesive society, policy implementation, new programs of government, job creation, and poverty alleviation. The speeches did serve as a nation-building tool, as they conveyed the steps undertaken by the South African government to strive towards an inclusive and all-encompassing approach in an effort to achieve nation-building.

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction

Nation-building is generally a means of creating or strengthening the psychological, political, social, and economic aspects of the people of South Africa. It refers to the development of institutions for sociological, political, and economic control and regulation with the goal of achieving, among other things, a rise in “national” power and wealth. It typically denotes a high level of national autonomy. Both an aim and a means, autonomy seemed to provide the ability to act autonomously in favour of the “national interest.”

Today, this road to nation-building may not have been closed altogether, but it continues to be a challenge that needs to be attended to until it is achieved.

With this understanding, presidential discourse plays a vital role in building national identity. This study investigated the discursive strategies used in major speeches in South Africa with distinct socio-political systems, which put nation-building in a central place, making the nation both the context and an analytical unit for the study of nation-building. Firstly, there is value in analyzing these presidential speeches regarding their respective focus and social programs. By using critical discourse analysis, the researcher has a clearer view of the original thought processes and formations of arguments to foster support for nation-building. Secondly, there are many other politicians and professionals who have spoken on nation-building issues; however, none have the audience or scope of the President’s office.

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According to the study, a presidential speech develops the interaction between the president, society, and its citizens through language. A presidential speech often has a narrational, linear form that includes greetings, congratulatory remarks, historical background, the presentation of prior accomplishments, the current state of society, and its future course, as well as the intentions of the government, its campaigns, and its programs in its nation-building effort. It does not have any unique linguistic characteristics on a language level, but it might have certain prototype non-exclusive characteristics, such as authorized forms of address.

The research question that needed to be answered was: to what extent does a presidential speech, as a tool, reflect South Africa’s nation-building objectives? This study specifically examined various discursive techniques used in the political language of former President Thabo Mbeki.

**Literature Review**

**Language and Politics**

De Wet (2010) says that politics, as the management of a state by the professional politician and political institution, is largely a word game, which means that the practice of politics is predominantly constituted in language, which is defined as the system of signs. As Adanlawo and Reddy (2020) rightly point out, no matter how one defines politics, there is a linguistic, discursive, and communicative dimension attached to it. Adanlawo and Reddy (2020) suggest that this communicative dimension of politics leads to the practices of political communication, which incorporate all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. According to Wolfsfeld (2022) and De Wet (2010), politicians gain power mostly as a result of their ability to persuade people and political elites. As a result, the primary characteristics of all languages are shared by the language of political persuasion. It is a technique for turning observations and thoughts into verbal and nonverbal symbols that may then be communicated to recipients who might be influenced by them if they are familiar with the symbol and codes used for the message (Kimura-Thollander and Kumar, 2019).

Language is not just a tool for understanding and communication (Adanlawo, Reddy, and Rugbeer, 2021; Park, 2016). By providing a conceptual framework, language enables people to comprehend and make sense of the outside world. People understand the world, represent it in their minds, communicate about it, and share knowledge with one another using words and meanings of this nature. Language, according to Chaka and Adanlawo (2022), mediates how people learn about and experience the world. In other words, language acts as a barrier between people and their environment, influencing, forming, and distorting how they see it. As a result, philosophers have consistently proposed that language serves as both the physical environment and the symbolic world in which humans exist (Cassirer, 2023). Language builds or shapes how individuals perceive and comprehend the world, including society, and it reflects societal ideals and cultural ideas.

**Speeches as political discourse**

According to Sharipovna et al. (2023), political discourse is an example of social contact aimed at influencing the country. Politicians' speeches serve their own purposes and serve as a realization of their intentions (Sharipovna et al., 2023). As a result, all speakers, even politicians, utilize language to advance a goal. As a result, it appears that language is a highly essential instrument employed by political communities to create a sense of community and draw voters by giving them a sense that their votes matter. The people, the voters, and the citizens must now be included in the political debate as both speakers and receivers. Politicians therefore make an effort to include all voters in the decision-making process. Politicians so cleverly employ their knowledge to persuade people to take part in political events by demonstrating the course they should take, such as by supporting a particular candidate.

Political speech is wholly dependent on individuals, according to Dunaway and Graber (2022), Chaka, and Adanlawo (2023b), because it is created by them. Thus, it differs between civilisations. According to Dunaway and Graber (2022), "politicians essentially view everyone as a potential voter, and as a result, the political representatives employ a variety of strategies to deal with would-be voters." Because of this, the way something is expressed has at least as much impact as what is said, and the style, topics, and length of the texts have the biggest impact on the outcome. Additionally, when writing a text, the speaker should at the very least take into account how the shared set of values defines cultural identity.

As a result, the speech is tailored to the listener's intellectual abilities, and the speaker becomes a part of the listener's worldview. In their perspective, this “approach is very useful for the speaker to produce a more persuasive text,” according to Ruiz-Madrid and Valeiras-Jurado (2020). More crucially, politicians vary their points of view to appeal to a wider audience by adjusting their speeches to the listener's intertextual or cultural knowledge and ideas. Politicians also attempt to impose their own worldview on the populace, leading them to believe that they are only attempting to assist those in need rather than oppressing or influencing them.

According to Rawls (2020), the primary goal of political speech should be to elicit support from or opposition from the populace. It is well recognised that a politician's ability to function greatly depends on interactions with other members of society. Politicians can participate in these interactions by giving speeches or by listening to them. According to Dunaway and Graber (2022), presidents can frequently influence a sizable audience by steering their speeches (texts) in the desired direction, which is frequently a technique of fostering broad stereotyped conceptions throughout the country, right from the start of their administration.
The State of the Nation Address and Inaugural Address

One of the best tools available to the president for persuasion is the State of the Nation Address. As Campbell and Jamieson (1990) put it, according to the constitution, the president "must report to and advise parliamentarians and representatives of the people that the presidency gives its occupant a unique, national vantage point". It is from this "vantage point" that the President is "confronted with the problems of the South African nation, such as unemployment, poverty, inflation, crime, race, and health care, to mention but a few. The State of the Nation Address ideally assures and, to some extent, affirms citizens that in the future, government will solve their problems" (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990).

Researchers have indicated that inaugural and state of the nation addresses should not be used to promote policy but rather the event that is being celebrated (Zhao and Zhang, 2017; Kellner, 2012). It would be foolish for the President to bypass such an event without addressing the concerns and problems facing the nation and possible solutions to such problems. The Constitution concedes that policy proposals are formed from the President's evaluation of the condition of the nation, which he is responsible for relating to the public in the State of the Nation Address. As a result, State of the Nation Addresses not only assess and recommend; they also articulate the values underlying the assessments (Chaka and Adanlawo, 2023a).

The presidential inaugural address is a discourse that gives the president a first "centre stage" opportunity to introduce his vision to the nation and the world. Duffy et al. (2018) acknowledge that, during inaugural addresses, "the nation listens for a moment as one people to the words of the man they have chosen for the highest office in the land. Comparatively, the Inaugural Address and the State of the Nation Address are delivered in order to fulfill presidential duties according to the Constitution. As discussed by Beck (2004), inaugural addresses contain "similar recurring stylistic and substantive responses to a similarly perceived rhetorical situation". The inaugural address is actually a catalyst for the information to be delivered in the State of the Nation Address through the presidential terms, as stated by Campbell and Jamieson (1990). It lays down the principles. In their State of the Nation Addresses, presidents revive the principles to which they committed their presidencies and show how those principles will be reflected in their legislative programmes of government. In order to analyse the use of speeches by presidents for the promotion of nation-building discussion, it is vital to evaluate speeches delivered by all President Mbeki under similar circumstances.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Speech act theory

Speech-act theory is the particular search for the (purely) "connotative (utterances that describe something outside the text and can therefore be judged true or false) that is prompted to direct attention to the distinction with so-called performatives. That is, utterances that are neither true nor false but which bring about a particular social effect by being uttered". For these performatives to have the desired effect, they have to meet certain social and cultural criteria called felicity conditions (Adanlawo and Rugberr, 2021; Ogborn, 2020).

There are three underlying components to each utterance: (1) a locutionary act, (2) an illocutionary act, and (3) a perlocutionary act.

i. The locutionary act, often known as the act of uttering, entails the actual speech creation of sound.

ii. The illocutionary act is the force or action that causes the locution, and

iii. The perlocution is the "consequential effects" of the locution on the addressee.

Speech-act theory recognises the power of words and utterances. Many theories have evolved to examine the potential of utterances. Contemporary scholars (Butler, 2021; Kaburise, 2011) have pushed the argument further, asserting that statements and speeches are purposeful rather than arbitrary. Hence, the roles of language in politics are immeasurable, and the common assertion is that language mirrors society.

Research and Methodology

The study addresses the discursive construction of nation-building in democratic South Africa. Two speeches by former President Thabo Mbeki were collected from officially recognised sources: the GCIS website. They were in their original form, written in English, and no other language or translated speeches were included.

The speeches selected were:

i. Mr. Thabo Mbeki’s Inaugural Speech (2004)

ii. Mr. Thabo Mbeki’s State of the Nation Address (2007)

There are certain factors affecting the speaker's lexical and syntactic choices in presidential speeches. A description of the data and a generalisation of the findings are then used to derive all underlying patterns and principles, which is known as the inductive approach. In order to find a theoretical framework that best fits the study's objectives, many critical discourse analysis methodologies were examined during the course of the study. The study combined two excellent methodologies suggested by Fairclough and van
Dijk, two discourse practitioners. Second, all data related to Thabo Mbeki’s presidential addresses was gathered for the analysis, which was carried out in two stages:

1. General textual description of the speeches is made in terms of lexis and syntax towards uncovering the underlying ideology in the speeches;
2. The second notable discrepancy is the focal point of each. Van Dijk (1998) is more concerned with macro structure analysis while Fairclough (2003) relies more on the multi-functional aspects.

Critical discourse analysis was adopted. According to Van Dijk (2015), critical discourse analysis is a powerful instrument because it articulates ideology in concrete words and formulations. Therefore, we examined the original versions of the speech and the State of the Nation address. The researcher began the analysis with thematic content analysis, which is the accepted method of investigating texts, particularly in communication research. Most content analysis results in a numerical description of the features of a given text or series of images, but this research study does not. Thematic analysis is similar to content analysis but pays greater attention to the qualitative aspects of the material analysed.

A careful examination of the Presidential State of the Nation Address was conducted to determine what themes were present in the speeches. We began by reading and coding text for emerging themes; grounded theorists refer to this as open coding, and traditional content analysts refer to it as qualitative analysis or latent coding (Belotto, 2018). They used a variety of methods to identify themes in texts, including: (1) word analysis (word repetitions, key terms, and key-words-in-contexts); (2) careful reading of longer texts (comparing and contrasting); (3) intentional analysis of linguistic features (metaphors, transitions, and connectors); and (4) physical manipulation of texts. To make sure that no other themes had been omitted, the speeches were read again. The concepts were then underlined and highlighted in different colours.

Thematic analysis was then grouped into 10 main themes. The main themes included: (1) economic growth and reform; (2) protecting the social welfare of South African citizens; (3) supporting the economy and transformation; (4) affordable health care; (5) poverty alleviation; (6) job creation; (7) social cohesion and nation-building; (8) human dignity; (9) justice and crime; and (10) non-racialism. According to Van Dijk (2015), situations, events, practices, and people that are the subject of a speech are represented by a writer’s themes.

Findings

The Second Inaugural Speech by Mr. Thabo Mbeki on April 27, 2004

The second term of President Mbeki’s second inauguration coincided with the tenth anniversary of South Africa’s first democratic elections.

Description and outline of Thabo Mbeki’s speeches

Inauguration and the 10th Anniversary of Freedom, Pretoria, April 27, 2004:

Thabo Mbeki’s speeches incorporate characteristics such as mental, material, and relational processes and modality verbs. For this analysis, we pinpoint and mention each characteristic as it is found in the speech. Thabo Mbeki’s speech is outlined in the following manner:

1. Salutation paragraph
2. The expression of gratitude and honour
3. A review of South African history and achievements in the past (after ten years of democracy)
4. An analysis of the contemporary situation in South Africa and on the African continent
5. A display and explanation of domestic policies and the African Renaissance (his stance on the African Renaissance)
6. Hopes for the beautiful and prosperous future of the country
7. Rely on God for help and blessing.

Beginning with a transitivity analysis, the ideational function in Mbeki’s speeches is represented in text by transitivity.

Material process

1. We will have to nurture
2. We carry out the solemn act,
3. Build a winning nation.

Mental process

1. Our country is in that period,
2. We share a common destiny
Relational process

History and circumstances have given us the rare possibility

Modality verbs

i. We surely must be haunted

ii. We will also work to rediscover and claim the African heritage.
   a. Remembering the nation's past: Mbeki uses Freedom Day to provide a platform to discuss the nation's history. This is fitting, given that it was ten years after South Africa's democracy began. He keeps talking about Freedom Day and the dreadful apartheid era that was a part of South African history.
   b. As he imagines the future, Mbeki gradually builds up to talking about the future of the nation. He discusses the present. “we have gathered here today, on Freedom Day”. He also speaks about South Africa being democratic and how a South Africa without democracy seems impossible.

The theme is envisaged as Democracy and beyond, Mbeki speaks about the future of the country and what needs to be changed in the country in order to keep democracy and equality in South Africa.

i. Setting a tone for the next five years, Mbeki encourages South Africans to fight and to maintain transformation structures within the country. He further states that a journey based on the five years he has already spent in office as President, South Africans must work to make up for the devastation apartheid inflicted to all of Africa.

ii. Unifying the audience: Mbeki, just like Mandela in his speeches, uses simple language that is not too sophisticated. The regular use of words such as “we” and “ours” also contributes to this audience's unity. Mbeki makes effective use of elocutionary techniques in this.

The use of personal pronouns:

i. We are an African,

ii. We, as a people
   a. Speaking in a common tongue: Mbeki speaks in easy-to-understand sentences, and more importantly, he is more concerned about speaking to the general public and less about rhetorical techniques. Discussing the topic of transformation is divisive. Mbeki was aware that he needed to communicate with his audience in clear, plain English. The reason for using English is that more people would understand it, and he took that into consideration.

Symbol of unity and reaffirmation of conventional values: Here, the idea that we are all Africans is to serve as a symbol of unification. Mbeki expresses his love for Africa through the use of language by referring to the continent as a being.

Uses words to elicit a response from his listeners (pathos): Instilling pride in Africa, a strong emotion, by saying that it is a place for human hope is another way he employs pathos.

In paragraph 1

Mbeki immediately opens his speech using imagery. He uses the good weather to embrace Freedom Day and to unite the people of South Africa. This is followed by an official welcome in paragraphs 2 and 3.

In paragraphs 4 and 5

He uses metaphors. These metaphors relate to apartheid and the idea of freedom, two sensitive subjects in the nation. His metaphors employ pathos by appealing to the emotions of his audience by emphasising the gratitude and joy the nation experiences as a result of the role performed by these official guests during apartheid. He further emphasises appreciation for the current status quo. Phrases such as “opportunities brought by freedom have given South Africans the possibility to begin the long walk to a life of dignity for all people”. In doing so, Mbeki is able to express his gratitude more fully by using these words and the feelings that go along with them.

Paragraphs 6-8 is developed from the metaphor mentioned above. It expands upon the level of independence that the nation once had. This valid argument, which shows the disparities that were pervasive in the nation, is presented as a logos inductive argument. It uses examples of race and gender to emphasise how having privileges that others do not experience depends on your race or gender. This argument includes emotive language, and Mbeki employs rhetorical techniques in order not to lose them through the points he is trying to make.

Paragraph 9 is continued with some imagery. Mbeki is referring to the fact that some (non-white) areas have to be sacrificed for the benefit of the more privileged white ones in this passage. Through the use of its descriptive words, which emphasise the argument being expressed, this imagery also employs pathos. Words like “decomposing rot,” “milling crowds of wretchedness,” and endless visions of a landscape covered with carelessly dumped trash are among them. Those in the audience who had personally seen what this image was describing may have felt feelings like wrath. In this paragraph, there is a more relational process and a process of being.
Mbeki is using the emotional expression in the manner discussed above as imagery. He emphasises that there was a significant gap between the rich and the underprivileged, even though it is carried out in a different way. Once more, this could evoke specific feelings in the audience, especially in those who identify with the disadvantaged group being described. The privileged people who are also depicted here would experience an upsurge in feelings, perhaps feelings of guilt.

Mbeki begins to inform his audience in Paragraph 13 of what would happen if someone attempted to challenge South Africa's norms before it was free of apartheid. Mbeki uses a metaphor to imply that those who defied the rules were killed or subjected to torture. He is also making an emotional appeal (pathos), particularly to fear, which is the fear of speaking out against injustice. To help the audience relate to the experiences of the apartheid era, Mbeki uses this feeling. As a result, the following paragraphs (paragraphs 14–24) go into further detail about this subject.

Paragraph 25 contains the use of metaphor. It refers to the vote cast by women in the most recent elections as a voice during this time. This strong metaphor introduces the organisational structure of government. It outlines the evolution of governance. The "ten years of democracy" section of Mbeki's speech, which addresses democracy, is introduced using this metaphor. Mbeki connects democracy to giving all South Africans their former sense of dignity. He understands that tackling the issue of poverty is necessary to restore dignity to the nation.

In paragraphs 31 through 36, Mbeki uses a mental process that involves feeling, thinking, and seeing to argue against poverty in this country. This method is more of a sensation than a thing to be done. It stands for internal experiences like "perception," "reaction," and "cognition." For instance, Mbeki used logos in the deductive form in this instance. This is a likely argument, and the reason it's a likely argument is because Mbeki's major contention is that all of the social issues facing the nation must be handled in the context of eradicating poverty and creating jobs.

This process makes a strong and clear connection between the audience's hopes and expectations and their political ideas and objectives. This stimulates and strengthens the audience's feelings of optimism and readiness to devote themselves.

**State of the Nation Address Mbeki 2007**

The 8th State of the Nation Address by President Thabo Mbeki was given on Friday, February 9, 2007. He revealed some suggested strategies for addressing the issues the nation was facing after outlining those issues. The speech started with him paying his condolences to the Tambo family just after Adelaide Tambo’s death. He also mentioned, in the same vein the Luthuli family remembering the tragic death of Inkosi Albert Luthuli that was reported 40 years ago. Mbeki said “His death was as shocking and mysterious as his life was a lodestar pointing us to the freedom we enjoy today”. Paragraph 3.

“We are encouraged that our general elections of a fourth night ago confirmed a determination of all our people, regardless of race, colour or ethnicity, to work together to build a South Africa defined by a common dream”. Paragraph 13.

Mbeki mentioned that the process of reviewing the nation's macroeconomic indicators has been completed. Concrete plans have been finalised for the implementation of the final stages of basic services programs to meet set targets. The cost of doing business in South Africa has also been reduced. Paragraph 13.

He acknowledged the difficulties the nation is facing. “None of the great social problems we have to solve is capable of resolution outside the context of the creation of jobs and the alleviation and eradication of poverty. This relates to everything from the improvement of the health of our people to reducing the levels of crime, raising the levels of literacy and numeracy, and opening the doors of learning and culture to all...” paragraph 14

He went on to say that “the struggle to eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be a central part of the national effort to build the new South Africa.” paragraph 17

He continued to outline plans for encouraging investment, establishing systems to address challenges with crime and security, stepping up initiatives to incorporate youth development into general government strategies, and stepping up the fight against HIV/AIDS. Paragraph 19-23.

Government economic policies have resulted in a comparatively high rate of economic development, but at the expense of job cuts, “downsizing,” and a rise in temporary employment. Unfortunately, economic policy, including the widespread black economic empowerment program seems to benefit only a small portion of the population, leaving the majority to suffer in poverty. The address made no mention of the strategies for dealing with the high interest rates and low-cost imports that are wiping out local industries. Paragraph 24.

Creating a foundation for industrial strategy, moving forward with land redistribution, and improving the housing programme. Paragraph 30.

He stated that the government must define a contributing, earnings-related retirement plan, the poverty matrix should be made apparent, anti-poverty programs should be improved, social cohesion plans should be finalised, and the monitoring and evaluation capacities of all three branches of government should be strengthened. Paragraph 40.
According to Mbeki, the EPWP sought to create up to one million jobs by 2009. Only 340 000 jobs were created three years later, and there is little reason to believe that 600 000 jobs will be generated in the next two years.

“…we cannot erase that which is ugly and repulsive and claim the happiness that comes with freedom if communities live in fear, closeted behind walls and barbed wire, ever anxious in their houses, on the streets, and on the roads, unable freely to enjoy our public spaces. Obviously, we must continue and further intensify the struggle against crime”. Paragraph 47.

In his speech, Mbeki listed the accomplishments made in the most recent year as well as overall since 1994. The government's goals were discussed, with a focus on accelerating the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative in South Africa (ASGISA) and social sector action. He concluded by sharing his thoughts on the crime issue. Paragraph 58.

The government’s plan is to introduce a mandatory, contributory social security system founded on the idea of social solidarity. Paragraph 69.

Conclusively, the address indicated that there is still more to be done. In his own words, Mbeki said, “We are not there yet. But no one, except ourselves, shall ensure that this dream is realised. And so, let us roll up our sleeves and get down to work, fully understanding that the task of building the South Africa for which we yearn is a common responsibility we all share. Paragraph 88.

**Speech Analysis results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Mbeki’s’ two speeches, there are about 10,330 words with 932 sentence lines.

The table reveals that in Mbeki’s speeches, the pronouns used indicate a 38% use of ‘our’, a 31% of ‘we’, followed by 19% of ‘all’. The use of ‘us’ with 10% is also seen in the speeches. This is interpreted as an attempt by Mbeki to form a stronger emotional tie with the South African citizens.

i. ‘…We are duty-bound to ask the question have we fully internalised our responsibility in building social cohesion and promoting a common sense of belonging, reinforcing the glue that holds our nation together. Paragraph 43.

ii. This year we shall complete concrete plans for the implementation of the final stages of our programmes to meet the targets for universal access to water in 2008, sanitation in 2010, and electricity in 2012. We shall also finalise the strategy and programmes to address matters of social cohesion, including the comprehensive and integrated anti-poverty strategy we have mentioned, as well as issues pertaining to national unity, value systems, and identity. Paragraph 74.

Table 2: Phrases used by Thabo Mbeki in speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>We will</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We must</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Phrases used by Thabo Mbeki in speeches

Table 2 indicates that words such as ‘we will’ and ‘the people’ are used frequently in Thabo Mbeki’s speeches. The underlying meaning of the speech on the phrase ‘the people’ is the need to be inspired and empowered by the ‘strength from our heroic past’, which should be used as a resort for rebuilding the nation. The table indicates that ‘we will’ is (48%) and ‘the people’ is 36%.

i. “We should indeed celebrate this great achievement”, We are proud. We are on course. We will continue to confront these challenges”. Paragraph 35.

ii. “Promoting peace and security will involve all people. It will build on and expand the national drive for peace and combat the endemic violence faced by Communities, with special attention to the various forms of violence to which women are subjected. Paragraph 45.

iii. ‘For us, it is not a mere cliché to assert that the success of our democracy should and will be measured by the concrete steps we take to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable in our society. Paragraph 68.

The quote portrays the country in a positive light and tells of the people’s contribution to the country’s development under apartheid. These words stand out in the quote. These are opportunities, resilience of ordinary people, ‘generosity of the people’, ‘ability as a nation to overcome’ and, ‘unique’. These words are all a positive description of the nation and its people, and they play on pride. It portrays the people of this country as great, generous, and unique. It relays a feeling that the citizens work in unity and that, most of all, they should be proud to be South African citizens.

In the text, history is interpreted as an endless source of inspiration and as an endless source of South Africa’s timeless virtues of sacrifice, selflessness, and freedom. ‘The people’, focuses on the nation and hence constructs a national identity through the addresses in the texts.
Table 3: Words used by Thabo Mbeki in speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation-building</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 3, Mbeki developed a strategic idea to establish the basis for peaceful unification of the nation and to prepare for the development of a common society pursuing mutual prosperity with words such as ‘together’ (44%), and ‘democracy’ (19%). This is interpreted as an attempt by Mbeki to form a stronger emotional bond with the citizens. His approach to the speeches created a cognitive connection with the audience, which is one of the reasons why ‘together’ was used so often.

Table 4: Words used by Thabo Mbeki in speeches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the words used by Thabo Mbeki, the table 4 reflects a more prominent use of the word’s ‘government’ (55%). This is followed by the word ‘poverty’ with (11%) and ‘jobs’ with (10%) appearing in the speeches.

The following excerpts reveal the words:
i. "The National Cabinet which stands at the pinnacle of the system of governance over which we are privileged to preside, reflected on the fact that its meeting marked the mid-term of the life of the government born of our last, 2004, elections”.

Paragraph 6.

ii. "The government of the people of South Africa, on whose behalf I speak here today. Paragraph 5: ‘Our government committed itself, working with all South Africans, to implement detailed programmes”. Paragraph 18

Discussions

The interpretation of the results based on the frequency and connotations of the speeches has shown that former President Mbeki used words differently in his presidential discourse. The analysis has revealed that the texts are clear and represent three different discourses, each with its own linguistic features, in an effort to construct a national identity, national cohesion, and social relations between presidents and their citizens using different approaches. The texts illustrate a type of political speech positioned in a society in transition, as there are still references to building a cohesive society, policy implementation, new programs of government, job creation, and poverty alleviation, to mention but a few. This relates well to events by the government to create a new beginning and suggest processes of extensive societal democratisation and a better life for all. There is prominent use of the phrases the people’, ‘South Africans’, ‘we, and our’ in the speeches. These trends and examples illustrate that the role that South Africans play in presidential discourse is tied to the tone with which the president and political actors are likely to construct a united nation.

According to transitivity analysis, the material process of doing has been used most in his speeches. This process showed what the government ought to achieve, what they are doing, and what they will do. The speeches also reflected the importance of government in deracialising and democratising the economy and creating the jobs that people need to combat social pathologies such as widespread poverty. The topic of economic stabilisation was not elaborated on in the speeches, but they mentioned a plan within the context of a policy aimed at building a strong and growing economy that will benefit all the people. The speeches highlighted issues of health, the well-being of society as a whole, and the preservation of a healthy environmental future even for generations not yet born.

Conclusions

This study was based on various verbal realisations with the aim to analyse different ways of incorporating values into a text in order to gather interest from the public as well as to gain political support. The study highlighted the main values hidden in the speeches, and the possible implications they had for constructing a national identity, developing unified relationships and, above all, creating democratic momentum. The critical discourse analysis of the text revealed that, on a macro-level, the text of the speeches can be viewed as a manifestation of larger socio-political processes within the Republic of South Africa. The text is set within a pronounced political context, and the country’s nation-building is being reshaped to incorporate allegiance to democracy.

The speeches are also a discourse between the government and its people, as well as a discourse between the country and the world. As the format of a speech does not allow for a dialogue, there are no different discourses competing for power, leadership, or influence in the text analysed. The events and processes described in the speeches are viewed exclusively from the South African government’s standpoint, and the speeches were also found to have been written from the perspective of the South African people as a whole. Thus, the President positioned himself as a steward, delivering the message of the South African nation to the world through public addresses in terms of the Inaugural Speech and the State of the Nation Address.
Conclusively, the results of the analysis have shown that the key ideological components of the presidential speeches are summarised into the following concepts: rationality/pragmatism, tolerance/liberalism, inclusiveness, unity, and diversity. The results of the text analysis have shown that the most prominent words employed by President Mbeki are, among others, nation, we, and South Africa, with an overall dominance of the personal pronoun we, which is evidence of the president’s inclusive intention of the country’s need for unity as necessary in times of national threat or peril. This study has demonstrated that presidential addresses carried multiple messages that were in line with the government’s nation-building efforts. The dominant ideology identified in the speech was liberal-democratic ideology. This qualitative research approach revealed that the presidential discourse received a positive evaluation. It is clear that the speeches did serve as a nation-building tool, as they convey the steps undertaken by the South African government to strive towards an inclusive and all-encompassing approach in an effort to achieve nation-building. Future research could consider comparing President Mbeki’s speeches with those of other South African leaders or political figures to provide a broader perspective on the use of discursive strategies for nation-building.

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References


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