



## **Power in Language**

**Strategies to achieve power in language used by President George W Bush**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Power moves in mysterious ways. This study treats the power behind and within language used by President George W Bush. I decided to do this analysis since the election for a new President in the United States was up at the time of writing. The purpose of this paper is to show how President Bush makes use of certain linguistic strategies of power. In my conclusion I present some of his combinations of powerful words and collocations as well as the use of politeness in order to stir up emotions and to set the proper atmosphere. Moreover I present the use of pronouns as well as paralanguage to underline his completeness as a communicator and a President capable of ruling the United States: he uses his power and the strategies of power to give the impression of it.**

**Keywords: President Bush, power, paralanguage, politeness, collocations, pronouns**

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## 1. Introduction

“Language acquisition is one of the most impressive and fascinating aspects of human development” (Lightbown and Spada 1). Moreover, language is utterly useful and can be used in impressive ways to achieve different purposes which have diverse impact. The degree of impact depends on how it is used and what is said, but also on who the orator is. When a speech or a statement is made by a person in a high position, such as the President of the United States, not only the statement or speech itself creates power but the powerful person also radiates power. Hereby an optimal situation in order to convince arises. This is important in election campaigns, especially when the President needs to convince the voters and of course to win their vote.

Another factor that is crucial is whether an orator is able to include the audience or not. This can be done by using politeness and by effective use of pronouns, *us*, *we* – to linguistically form a united group. These factors can be interpreted as a way of creating a relationship with the audience to win their vote. The selection of suitable pronouns underlines the capability and power that inhabits the orator.

Nevertheless, not only oral language creates power but also paralinguistics such as the strength of the voice, gestures with the arms and body movement. The facial expressions are also important factors. A face can be very revealing when certain utterances are made.

A skilful orator can reach far when he or she knows how to use these different strategies in combination with powerful words. Words gain meaning and power when used in combination with other words, in other words, when they customarily collocate with other words. An orator can increase influence when establishing collocations in the mind's of the listeners.

This study will examine how the President of the United State uses these above mentioned strategies to achieve and to maintain his power. It will focus on two words in particular; *terrorism* and *war* used in conjunction with other factors to exert power. Further, politeness will illustrate how important the atmosphere is when exerting power.

## **2. Rationale or Importance of the Problem.**

This analysis is important because it can shed light on how words and phrases in combination with paralanguage work in their power to convince people; especially when they are used by a powerful person. Since *terrorism* and *war* are words that appear frightening to most individuals, they are convenient to use as a vehicle to exert power over people. Moreover, it is significant to show whether the President is able to include the audience or not in order to create a relationship with them and how his body language and facial expressions are adjusted to fit the statements made which in turn leads to persuading the audience to vote in favour of him.

## **3. Research Question(s)/ Statement of the Problem**

The present study will investigate how President Bush creates power in his language with the use of different strategies such as the use of powerful words, the use of politeness and pronouns in order to create a collective feeling, which also establishes a relationship with the audience, and paralanguage. The use of powerful words will include the word *terrorism* and its meaning, tracing its etymology and how the word works in exerting power. In addition the study will look into how the President creates power by using some phrases containing collocations in special contexts. Specifically, I will investigate the power of collocations connected to *war* and

*terrorism* and how the President uses them. Moreover, I look at how he combines the different strategies above to achieve his purpose.

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1 Words and collocations**

Baker establishes that a word is “the smallest unit which we would expect to possess individual meaning” (11). The word has a specific value and its propositional meanings occur in its relation to what it refers to or describes on its own, or in an utterance. As speakers of the language we can judge whether it is true or false. Baker claims that “[w]hen a translation is described as ‘inaccurate’, it is often the propositional meaning that is being called into question” (13).

Of relevance to this analysis, she discusses collocations and how a word seldom occurs on its own but in the company of other words and how they together convey meaning. New collocations arise all the time due to events in society and in the world (Baker 63).

According to Arthur Asa Berger, a word can be a sign, an abstract sign, and its intent is to communicate. The orator or performer may want to “deceive the audience and trick the audience into having certain emotional responses. It is all done, not with mirrors, but with signs” (2). The systematic study of signs is known as semiology, which means, literally, ‘words about signs’. Semiologists look at signs both as “things in themselves and as ‘signs’ or indicators of other things” (Berger 3). Therefore they are rather complicated phenomena to deal with because they can have double valence.

In addition since signs can be very complex, those who use signs often modify them in various ways, for instance through repetition which means that the elements

are made stronger. Various modification techniques are necessary because we use signs in so many different ways for so many different purposes (Berger 173).

What is more, Berger states that there are many ways to analyze a joke based on which discipline or perspective it is viewed from. Sociologists make a distinction between manifest functions that are intended and of which people are conscious and latent functions that are not intended and of which people are unconscious. Hereby they build a sense of togetherness which integrates the listener and the teller into a group (Berger 226).

#### **4.2 Discourse and politeness**

The analysis in this paper departs from what Barbara Johnstone calls both conversational analysis and discourse analysis since they overlap. Both deal with spoken and written texts. Conversational analysis focuses mostly on the interaction between participants and discourse analysis on how the language is used, mainly through examining aspects of the form and function; both rely on real samples of language use (103).

Mesthrie et al. present reviews of research within the sociolinguistic field. They describe critical discourse analysis which stresses a 'problematized' view of language. Critical discourse analysts, including Norman Fairclough, point out that language and society are intertwined and that society can not be said to be 'out there' independent of a language whose task it is to reflect it. Rather than simply reflecting society, there is a sense in which language also represents or misrepresents the key social relations within a community. As stated in Mesthrie et al., "This approach is much more open to insights from sociology concerning social organisation, inequality, power and conflict" (317).

Mesthrie et al. also present approaches to analyzing interaction. Here they draw attention to differences in speaking practises between different groups. They emphasise that not everyone interacts in the same way (190). The interest lies in when it is deemed appropriate to speak, and when to be silent. Here they state that silence is an aspect of human communication rather than merely an absence of speech.

Moreover they bring politeness theory forth and claim that it is all about our ability to use language appropriately in different settings. "In interaction, speakers need to balance a concern for other people's face with a concern to protect their own" (189). This has to do with encoding relationships. According to Mesthrie et al, "usage [of politeness] may shift as relationships change, and may even vary in different contexts depending on which aspect of a relationship needs to be emphasised" (202).

Janet Holmes' research concerning politeness also shows how it can be achieved in diverse ways, "Language provides infinite resources for expressing meaning, and linguistic politeness draws productively on these resources" (8).

She further describes how different social groups vary their language and that the context is of great importance in how people convey meaning (10). Positive politeness is usually used in informal and intimate situations while negative politeness is used in formal situations. Depending on which politeness is used, distance is also established. Thus positive politeness refers to closeness and things people share, and negative politeness is equal to social distance. Determining social distance to people involves considering the roles people take in relation to one another in a particular situation, and how well they know each other (12).

### **4.3 Pronouns**

According to Adrian Beard it is worth looking at pronouns since they play a major part in how politicians are viewed. Pronouns give agency to actions and help provide cohesion to the overall speech (45). Thus the usage of pronouns influences what impact the speech has on the audience. In order to convince the audience and to achieve power in speeches, certain elaborate ways are used.

In English there are two sets of first person pronouns accessible. The singular forms, /I/me/myself/mine, show a personal involvement which can be favourable when good news is delivered and when the individual action or responsibility is called to attention. Thus the singular form can also be a disadvantage when the opposite manifests itself as well as if the agent is too self-important (45).

The plural forms, /we/us/ourselves/ours, have the advantage that they help share the responsibility when decisions are hard. In addition they obtain a collective feeling and may show in their broadest reference that the politician is in touch with all of the country and maybe even involved with the whole world. In contrast the personage will not be prominent when credit is given (45).

### **4.4 Paralanguage**

Angela Goddard describes different aspects of the language of advertising. Within this field, advertisements and pictures convey meaning through paralanguage. In addition however, paralanguage is used 'live'. Therefore Goddard also writes about how important the different gestures and voice pitches are for the addressee to be able to interpret the message conveyed. If we believe what we see, we will be convinced. It is important to consider these factors when analysing a speech as a type of 'performance'.

Another researcher who writes about paralanguage is Britt Backlund. She gives an overall view of communication. Among other things she states that non-verbal language is equally important as spoken language when it comes to communication and she deals with several paralinguistic features. These features belong to the innate knowledge we acquire in our relations with other people. According to Backlund this knowledge could be dangerous if a person deliberately uses signals which are on an unconscious level. On the other hand this knowledge is available for everybody, which also means that everybody has access to the same power (25).

Backlund argues that gestures and body posture are crucial to conveying verbal messages. There are certain recognized patterns about how to act and move. Our attitudes and devotions reside in our body postures and gestures (92).

In addition, voice pitch is of great importance for what we want to transmit. Backlund claims that it is boring to listen to someone who speaks in one tone all the time or without emphasis. It is variation within the voice, such as strength and stress, that convey meaning to the statements. An individual chooses to use either a low pitched voice or a high pitched voice due to context and situation (78).

Equally significant are facial expression and eye-contact. Backlund points out that "our face shows our emotions more than any other part of the body" (88). The eyes, for instance, mirror our souls. Furthermore, we have eye-contact approximately one third of the time during a conversation (85). Eye contact is like the usage of first names and physical contact: a way to get to an individual's strongest reserves.

Paralinguistic features satisfy both ear and eye and give an overall experience of the message.

The sources reviewed above all contribute to the method of analysis in the paper.

## 5. Methods

The data used in this project is a small corpus, collected October 9, 2004 from the second Presidential debate, set in the Field House at Washington University in St. Louis. Both the recorded debate from STV 1 and the transcript of that, taken from the Internet, will be used. The methods which are used are the ones of discourse analysis and also conversational analysis. I will look at specific words and collocations that recur in the debate. Furthermore I will ascertain how these words take on a symbolic meaning and therefore become useful as a tool to assert powerful language. I will also investigate how politeness strategies as well as pronouns are used by the President in order to create a collective feeling to establish a relationship with the audience, and additionally, how the President's paralinguistic features are used in order to emphasize and give power to his statements. I will apply these analyses to the written speech/transcript on the internet but also to some extent on the oral speech in the recording. My analysis is mainly qualitative discourse analysis. The quantities that will be mentioned are how many times certain words and collocations are used in this small corpus.

Dealing with words and their meanings can be difficult especially if it is done in another language than the writer's mother tongue. In a language, words cannot be used together randomly since they have a "certain tolerance of compatibility" which can be culture-specific (Mona Baker, 63). Languages differ in the way they choose to express certain meaning but not others. Therefore it is important to consider how well you know the target language before either translating or interpreting. In this study I have therefore relied, to some extent, on Mona Baker's book *In Other Words: a Coursebook on translation*. Here she deals with translation problems and strategies to avoid such problems. She discusses words both on their own and in context, such as collocations, in order to get the reader to realize what problems may arise.

## 6. Delimitations and Limitations

The only material that will be used is the data from the second Presidential debate, October 8, 2004, both the recording from the live debate between 03.00AM and 04.30AM on STV 1, broadcast by CNN, and the transcript from the National Public Radio website, collected October 9, 2004. What's more, it is the President's, George W Bush's, part of the debate in which he speaks that solely will be interpreted, not that of his opponent John Kerry.

Given that I have discussed powerful words and collocations in an earlier paper (Fröjd, 2004) and am now developing a bigger essay out of those, the material will be limited to the paragraphs where the words and collocations that will be interpreted appear, apart from the paragraph illustrating President Bush's joke.

I have marked only the words and collocations in colour since I want to emphasize their appearance in the text. What is more, due to not being a native speaker, I am relying on Mona Baker for much of my analysis.

Another limitation is that I will not analyse the whole speech in detail when it comes to politeness, pronouns and paralinguistic features. This is a detailed analysis, so only a few phrases and sentences in the above mentioned paragraphs will illustrate the analysis due to length restrictions.

## 7. Definitions

These definitions will be more clearly developed when they appear in context below.

**Deixis:** WordNet defines *deixis* as “the function of pointing or specifying from the perspective of a participant in an act of speech or writing; aspects of a communication whose interpretation depends on knowledge of the context in which the communication occurs”

**Discourse:** Johnstone states that “a definition of ‘discourse’ that most would probably accept might be ‘language in use’” (103).

**Hedges:** According to WordNet *hedges* mean “To avoid making a clear, direct response or statement.”

**Power:** Brown and Gilman define power as "a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour" (in Mesthrie et al.318).

**Terror:** WordNet defines *terror* as “1: an overwhelming feeling of fear and anxiety [syn: [panic](#)] 2: a person who inspires fear or dread; "he was the terror of the neighborhood" [syn: [scourge](#), [threat](#)] 3: a very troublesome child [syn: [brat](#), [little terror](#), [holy terror](#)].”

**War:** According to WordNet, *war* is “[a] state of open, armed, often prolonged conflict carried on between nations, states, or parties.”

**Paralanguage:** Angela Goddard states that it is “[a]spects of communication that work alongside verbal language: for example body posture, eye contact, facial expressions” (124).

**Politeness:** Holmes argues that “Politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others” (4).

**Propositional meaning:** Baker declares that the propositional meaning “of a word or an utterance arises from the relation between it and what it refers to or describes in a real or imaginary world, as conceived by the speakers of the particular language to which the word or utterance belongs” (13).

## 8. Findings

In this section I will analyse the paragraphs accounted for above, doing so with the help of the literature in the literature review. I have separated the analysis into four sections. First I will give a short introduction to state the function of President Bush's speech.

### 8.1 Bush's speech

The purpose of a Presidential debate is to be as convincing as possible in order to make people believe in what is said and discussed and of course to win their vote. As Adrian Beard states in his book *The Language of Politics*, "Whether they succeed in this aim depends [...] on how effective their language is; [but also] the political views and beliefs that each reader brings to the text will be crucial in deciding whether the persuasion works" (86). An analysis of the different strategies of power in language President Bush uses will now follow.

#### 8.1a Powerful words and collocations

What, among other strategies, are found in U.S. President George W Bush's language in order to exert power are certain collocations and words related to *war*. *War* appears 14 times in paragraphs<sup>1</sup> 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11 and 12. The importance of frequent appearance will however be discussed later. Mona Baker states that, "[e]very word in a language can be said to have a range of items with which it is compatible, to a greater or lesser degree. Range here refers to the set of collocates, that is other words, which are typically associated with the word in question"(49). Some of the words that appear frequently are forms of *terror* such as *terrorists* and *terrorism*. In the selected paragraphs words connected to the root *terror* appear 16

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<sup>1</sup> The paragraphs referred to are found in context in the appendix below.

times. (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12) The answer to why this word is powerful lies in its etymology.

According to Merriam-Webster online, terror comes from “Middle English, from Middle French *terreur*, from Latin *terror*, from *terr[e]re* to frighten; akin to Greek *trein* to be afraid, flee, *tremein* to tremble”. Therefore my interpretation for why the word in itself is powerful is that no one likes to be afraid or to be frightened.

The root *terror* generates the word *terrorist* which logically would mean someone who frightens people. The WordNet’s definition however says that it is “a radical who employs terror as a political weapon; usually organizes with other terrorists in small cells; often uses religion as a cover for terrorist activities”.

This definition would explain the way President Bush uses the word. According to the context where the word appears, his definition of a *terrorist* is mainly people who are a *threat* to the U.S. These *threats* are especially people who live in Afghanistan and Iraq like Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, “Saddam Hussein was a unique threat, and the world is better off without him in power” and also when he says, “That’s why I said to Afghanistan, if you harbor a terrorist, you’re just as guilty as the terrorist. And the Taliban is no longer in power, and al Qaeda no longer has a place to plan” (par<sup>2</sup>. 2).

The way President Bush connects *terrorists* to *threat* connotes fear, and as Baker states, “what a word means often depends on its association with certain collocates.”(53) *Threat* appears ten times and collocates with *great*, *unique*, *serious*, *grave* and *biggest*. (par. 1, 2, 10 and 12) These collocations underline the severity of the situation President Bush accounts for. Therefore they are very effective tools in a debate.

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<sup>2</sup> Paragraph/s will further on be referred to as par.

I will now interpret words used by President Bush as signs. According to Berger “*Signs are things which stand for other things or [...] anything that can be made to stand for something else.*”(1) When a word or a phrase is repeated it intensifies and the meaning is made stronger, which also underlines the power of this technique which President Bush uses throughout his speech (see Berger 171). The words and collocations above create a suggestive feeling when they are repeated over and over again. Thus they also give a symbolic meaning that connotes fear.

This is evident when President Bush uses the word *weapons* and the collocation *weapons of mass destruction*, which appear eight times respectively in the paragraphs discussed. (2, 3, 5, 10 and 12) (I do not count the word *weapons* separately when it is positioned in the collocation) All the words and phrases above are in the same context, which is related to the *war* in Iraq. According to Mona Baker “the tendency of certain words to co-occur has to do with their propositional meanings.” (47) Here the propositional meaning has to do with President Bush’s statements about a “country in a time of *war*”(par. 1) and “The *war* on *terror* is to make sure that these *terrorist* organizations do not end up with *weapons of mass destruction*”(par. 5) and therefore gives the context and the words within truth value since they all relate to, and collocate with *war* (Baker 13).

What’s more noticeable regarding the collocation *weapons of mass destruction* is the phenomenon Baker writes about, “[n]ew collocations often catch on, are reinforced by usage and eventually become part of the standard repertoire of the language. In turn, they can be used as a backdrop for communicating new meanings by creating new collocations, and so the cycle continues.” (Baker 52) This means that the frequent appearance of the collocation *weapons of mass destruction* would

probably have not been as frequent nor as powerful if it had not been for the *war* in Iraq.

According to critical sociolinguistics, Mesthrie et al. state that, “language creates, sustains and replicates fundamental inequalities in societies” (317). Subsequently, by using a certain language of power, power over people is automatically exerted. Strangely enough the denotation of power mentioned in Mesthrie et al, fits both a *terrorist* and a President: “In general terms, power denotes the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others” (319).

Regarding this quotation I claim that President Bush’s will is to generate fear in people by the use of repetitions of words related to the *war* in Iraq, emphasized by collocations and suggestive technique. Thus to prove he has made the right decision and taken the necessary precautions to save the U.S., even when opposed by others, because no one wants to be attacked by a *terrorist*. Consequently, words and language used in a powerful way by a powerful man become very convincing and exert power over people.

### **8.1b Creating relationship through politeness**

Apart from generating fear in the audience, the President is also able to create an agreeable atmosphere because in live Presidential debates such as this it is essential to be on an excellent footing with the audience; achieving a good relationship and a pleasant atmosphere is equal to power.

In order to create a relationship and camaraderie with the addressees and to gain their solidarity, it is important to use politeness. “Politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others. People may express concern for others’ feelings in

many ways, both linguistic and non-linguistic“(Holmes 4). Linguistically this can be done with several devices. One is the use of both formal and informal speech. As pointed out in Mesthrie et al., the style used says something about the kind of person [the speaker is, and constructs] a certain kind of relationship with others” (201). In other words, the same speaker may use both formal and informal styles, and the choice is related to and consciously affects the particular kind of relationship.

For example, President Bush acts very personal and intimate when he addresses either the host for the debate or the persons asking questions in the audience by his/her first name, such as “Charlie, thank you” (par 1), “Each situation is different, Robin[...]We all thought there was<sup>3</sup> [sic] weapons there, Robin” (par. 2) and “Hi, Linda” (par. 10). Here he is using a colloquial style of speech which reduces the social distance. It is therefore possible to say that he applies what Holmes calls positive politeness. “Positive politeness strategies express solidarity and also emphasise equality between participants”. (18) Moreover Holmes states that “[the] choice between first name [and last name] frequently reflects the relationships between participants” (16). My interpretation of this is that Bush wants to make the listeners feel that he really cares for them and is treating their participation and questions with respect but also familiarity since he uses first names<sup>4</sup>. Moreover he wants to convince them to join his cause.

“Positive politeness generally involves emphasising what people share [...] thus minimising the distance between them” (Holmes p. 14). An example of this is when President Bush very personally and intensely addresses a member of the audience “I really don't think your rights are being watered down [...] I hope you don't think that”

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<sup>3</sup> Probably due to President Bush's informal speech and his Texas accent.

<sup>4</sup>This is another power device, asymmetrical talk – he uses their first names but they (the audience) would probably only use President Bush. However, this will not be further developed in this essay. For further discussion of this, see Mesthrie et al. (203).

(par. 9). The impression of this is that the President appears genuine and it will certainly affect how the audience vote. In this passage, while he contradicts what the audience member presented, he expresses a personal concern that would have the effect of drawing them closer while reinforcing President Bush's perspective. The hedges soften his opposing perspective.

In case there is someone who feels imposed on when spoken to in an informal way, President Bush also uses negative politeness which includes a more formal conversational style. As stated in Mesthrie et al., "negative politeness' strategies involve not imposing on others or threatening their face" (p. 189). Doing this the possibility is high that President Bush is able to reach each and every one of the audience and therefore also ascertain his power. "Politeness requires consideration of the rights appropriate to one's role." (Holmes p. 12)

An illustration of negative politeness strategy is when President Bush respectfully greets some of the questions with, "I appreciate that" (par. 6, 9), before answering them. President Bush also applies negative politeness when talking about his opponent Senator Kerry, "Senator" (par. 1) and "opponent" (par.2, 4, 5 and 7), since negative politeness also expresses social distance by the use of third person or titles (Holmes p.16). However, while using his delicate negative politeness tactic, the way is paved for President Bush's ideas to be automatically forced onto the audience since this is the power behind politeness.

Another way that President Bush accentuates his good intentions of establishing a relationship is by making some jokes which cause the audience to fall into laughter. "[T]elling the joke helps build a sense of togetherness, helps integrate the teller and the listener into a group (those listening to the joke)" (Berger p. 226). This is important even in serious debates as this; if you do not seem human people will not

believe in what you say. Nor can a President be too merry; he would then, in my opinion, lose his credibility for not taking things seriously. The orator has to have a well-balanced speech. “The manifest function of telling the joke is to amuse others, to be looked upon favourably as someone who has a sense of humour, who is amusing and entertaining.”(Berger p. 226) President Bush makes a joke referring to a statement made by Senator Kerry, “I own a timber company? (Laughter.) That’s news to me! (Laughs; laughter.) Need some wood? (Laughter.)” (par. 8). This quotation also emphasizes President Bush use of an informal style of speech and implies distrust in what Senator Kerry says, belittling him.

The way President Bush mixes formal and informal conversational style is very skilful; thus he will reach most of the audience, people in all different classes of society, which in turn makes him extremely powerful.

### **8.1c The use of pronouns**

In addition to using politeness for creating relationship, the use of pronouns is very effective for this purpose, especially the use of the plural noun *we*. As Beard states, “[t]he first person plural forms can have a range of reference[.] [...] [T]hey can refer to ‘I’ plus the whole country; i.e. *we*” (45). This is evident when the President includes the audience in what he says and therefore achieves a collective feeling, “*we’ve* got a great country” (par. 6), and in paragraph 11, “*We’ve* been through a lot together as a country “,”And yet think about where *we* are” and “*We’re* on the move”, because it is vital for his purpose to win them over in a united interest.

The pronoun *we* can also stand for President Bush and his administration, “‘I’ plus a group; i.e. *we* = [cabinet]” (Beard 45). By using *we* in this way the President can show the audience what he and his people can do for them, “*we’re* going to find

Osama bin Laden. *We've* already got 75 percent of his people, and *we're* [on] the hunt for him.” (par.5), and that they are serious about it “[a]fter 9/11, we had to recognize that when *we* saw a threat, *we* must take it seriously before it comes to hurt *us*. In the old days *we'd* see a threat and *we* could deal with it if *we* felt like it, or not” (par. 2). The power behind these statements is striking since they show intent - *we're* - what the collective will do and what the collective has done - *we've*, which in turn depicts President Bush and his administration as thorough and efficient people.

In the latter paragraph President Bush also uses the pronoun *us* to make it more concrete that he is acting in a united interest. The same can be said about the use of the pronoun *our*,” *Our* law enforcement must have every tool necessary to find and disrupt terrorists at home and abroad before *they* hurt *us* again” (par. 6). In this quotation the pronoun *they* appears. The effect of the deixis underlines that it is crucial to show the distance to *they*, the enemy, and the threat that is dwelling over *us*, which is vital for the President's speech. Another example of this is, “the harm *they* inflicted on *us* with airplanes would be multiplied greatly by weapons of mass destruction” (par. 2). There is no question about it; the message is *us* against *them*, the good guy against the bad guy. President Bush hereby illustrates the danger *we* are exposed to by *them* which in turn creates tremendous power because it certainly points out the severity of the situation and the necessity of a steadfast and determined rule and that *we* must work together. Moreover, this is strengthened by a reference to weapons of mass destruction.

It is clear that Beard has a point when he writes, “[t]he pronouns politicians use in their speeches are worth looking at because they make a significant contribution to the overall effect” (44).

This is also noticeable when a situation becomes inconvenient and when the President wants to share the responsibility, “[t]he advantage of the plural pronoun forms (we/us/ourselves/ours) are that they help share the responsibility, especially when the decisions are tricky” (Beard 45). For example, “I saw a unique threat in Saddam Hussein, as did my opponent, because *we* thought he had weapons of mass destruction “(par. 2) and “*we* didn't find out he didn't have weapons till *we* got there” (par. 5). It is obvious that the President wants to include both his administration and his opponent since this is a sensitive matter in which different opinions have arisen since no weapons of mass destruction were found. To avoid that he solely will take the blame, it is tactical to say *we*.

Nevertheless, President Bush is not trying to blame everything on a *we* because, just as the pronoun *we* is central to forming a united involvement, the pronoun *I* is equally important to show personal involvement. With the use of *I* the President can show his responsibility for good decisions and that he is willing to take it, “*I* have made a lot of decisions, [...] *I'll* take responsibility [...] *I'm* human” (par. 10). Moreover he can underline that he is taking his Presidency humbly and in all seriousness, “*I* vowed to our countrymen that *I* would do everything *I* could to protect the American people” (par.2). In this case, he conveys a powerful message that he alone has protected the American people. According to Beard, “[t]he advantage of the singular forms (*I/me/myself/mine*) [is] that they show a clear sense of personal involvement on the part of the speaker” (45).

Nevertheless it is significant not to overuse the pronoun *I* since it could reflect that the politician is too self-important and thereby placing himself above or outside the collective responsibility of his colleagues (Beard p. 45). An example of this is when President Bush says, “*I* know how these people think. *I* meet with them all the

time. / talk to Tony Blair all the time. / talk to Silvio Berlusconi” (par. 4). All the same I would say that even though President Bush points out his self-importance, it is relevant for his cause; he is emphasising his abilities in contrast to his opponent’s, which is the main purpose of the debate.

The optimal usage of pronouns is a well balanced mixture of all the above mentioned types; looking at these can, according to Beard “give considerable insight into what [politicians] are saying and how they want to be viewed” (46). As a consequence of this President Bush wants to be viewed as a humble, serious, responsible, dependable and steadfast person who does everything in both his people’s interest and the world’s interest.

Moreover, his eloquent use of pronouns to construct such persuasive language provides President Bush with fantastic control and power.

### **8.1d Paralanguage**

Just as verbal language and words can be very convincing and powerful, so can paralanguage. Paralanguage is an umbrella term used for nonverbal communication such as body language, voice pitch and facial expressions used with words (Goddard 15).

The audience’s visual interpretation is crucial for their decisions. The orator knows this and therefore it is extra important that he use his whole register of signals, especially when addressing the audience members at close range. According to Backlund these signals are numerous and the possibilities for combinations practically unlimited. What’s more they will help us interpret the verbal statements made by the orator (24). If the audience interpret the signals the way intended, power is almost automatically achieved.

In the Presidential debate discussed here, President Bush is very cleverly holding the arena with his body gestures as well as facial expressions and voice pitch. He has an open body posture even though one arm is tied to the microphone. His free arm is repeatedly held away from his body. This is generally experienced as an embracing and welcoming gesture while at the same time it generates both security and safety. Moreover, this posture gives free passage for the vocal organ (Backlund 95). Throughout the whole speech he also keeps eye contact with the audience. A person who makes frequent eye contact is often taken for a natural, friendly, self-reliant, mature and extroverted individual, which in turn generates power (Backlund 87).

He raises his voice when he wants to accentuate what he is saying. At several occasions he stresses several words in the sentence. (The stress will be shown with capital letters). As in par. 1, “I don’t see HOW YOU CAN LEAD THIS COUNTRY IN A TIME OF WAR, IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY if you change your mind because of politics”, and in par. 2 “The hardest decision a president makes is EVER TO USE FORCE. [...] when we saw a THREAT, [...] we’d see a THREAT, [...] [a]nd that was a SERIOUS, SERIOUS THREAT.” While saying the latter two statements he also uses his left arm, which moves up and down as if Bush wants to beat time, in order to put extra weight and power in his statements and emphasize the word *threat*, already discussed above. According to Backlund the non-verbal signals underline the credibility of the statements (22).

Moreover he uses pauses in between every word in stressed phrases to emphasize his statements. This makes his statements sink in and the audience are able to consider what is said. As stated in Mesthrie et al., “[t]he focus is not on

silence as an *absence* of speech, but as something that has communicative meaning alongside speech” (186).

Another example when he uses a high pitched voice is when he says, “THE WAR ON TERROR is to make sure that these terrorist organizations do not end up with weapons of mass destruction” (par. 5). Moreover when he undermines his opponent by saying “I don’t see how you can win in Iraq if you don’t believe we should be there in the first place. I don’t see how you can lead troops if you say it’s the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time. [...] This war is a LONG, LONG WAR” (par. 7). As noticed here the use of a strong voice and sometimes also stressing the words emphasize the statements. Again, this adds to the power of the word *war*. In addition it is most powerful both as a tool when attacking the opponent and also to accentuate that the war is thoroughly carried out and not with haste. Moreover when President Bush stresses the phrase “We’ll make sure they do not end up with WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION” and “FREEDOM is on the march” (par. 12) in his closing statement the audience will remember those words especially well.

President Bush has a revealing face and eyes. In the debate he shows his emotions while speaking by either smiling a little bit or putting on a grave expression when certain matters are discussed. In the above mentioned quotations, where he stresses the words and uses a high pitched voice, his face is serious and his eyes intense. These signs underline the authority and power in Bush’s statements.

The experienced orator knows that it is not only the high pitched voice that is effective but also the low pitched voice. He can sometimes have even more of an effect when using a low pitched voice (Backlund p.78). How President Bush uses his low pitched voice is noticed among other places in paragraph 6 when he says, “we’ve

got a great country. I love our values.” While saying this he has an almost sacred look on his face. His eyes look gentle and he has the impression of a proud smile on his lips. Together this becomes very credible. The same tactic is used in his closing statement, “We've been through a lot together as a country. Been through a recession, corporate scandals, war. And yet think about where we are. We had 1.9 million new jobs for the past 13 months. The farm income in America is high. Small businesses are flourishing” (par.11). His eyes correspond with his smiles. They can reveal if a person means what he says or not. If Bush does not mean what he says, he is very talented in hiding that. As Berger states; “The fact that signs have a double valence and can mislead or ‘lie’ in addition to being truthful gives them great power and makes them rather complicated phenomena with which to deal” (p.4). Alongside verbal speech, the paralanguage becomes a powerful tool in getting the audience where he wants but also in establishing a relationship with the audience.

All of these powerful characteristics depict President Bush as utterly capable of ruling the U.S. or at least giving the impression that he can.

## **9. Conclusion**

In this essay I have looked at different strategies to achieve power in language. I have interpreted words and their meaning and impact in order to see how power is exerted. Specifically I have looked at words connected to *terror* and *war* and how they are used by President Bush. I have both counted the occurrence of words and collocations and interpreted them in their context. Moreover I have traced the etymology of some words in order to ascertain why they appear frightening.

However, since this analysis is very small I believe further investigation remains to be done in this field. Nevertheless my analysis sheds light on the connotations of fear that certain words give rise to.

What's more my interpretation of the words as signs shows how many ways words can be used in. The suggestiveness is evident when the words are repeated over and over again and become an effective tool in convincing people, which in turn underlines the power of the technique. In combination with its explicit meaning, collocations, repetition and context as well as situation, a word can be extremely powerful especially when it is used by a powerful person.

Albeit President Bush uses strategies of power to frighten the audience, he also wants to be on an excellent footing with the audience since the atmosphere is crucial. This is achieved with the use of politeness. I have shown that President Bush varies his speech style enormously trying to reach out to everybody. With the use of positive politeness he acts like a friend and with the use of negative politeness he expresses distance from Senator Kerry or shows that he does not want to impose. However, I claim that using this fine tactic itself shows that this is exactly what he does to the audience: they do not know what hit them; he has convinced them without their being aware of how he did it. Thus using this method he automatically transfers his point of view to the audience, which of course conveys a tremendous power.

What is more, I have demonstrated the pronouns' function, which is rather complex. The pronouns are factors relevant for including himself with or separating himself from the audience, Senator Kerry and even the terrorists. In this study President Bush moves back and forth with the eloquent use of pronouns. Hereby he establishes his competence as a President to the audience.

This is also illustrated by my analysis of paralanguage. In connection with using powerful words, gestures, voice pitch and facial expressions are equally important. Therefore I found it central to bring them in as well, especially in live debates like this. They also work to further emphasize the words and collocations I discussed earlier.

The gestures underline the verbal language and are, for example, used to beat time in order to emphasize what is said. Moreover the body posture depicts how self-confident the President is; my analysis further shows that his open body posture generates security and self-reliance, which also radiates power.

I have also listened to the President's voice pitch and I have described how he uses a high voice pitch, sometimes stressed, when he calls for attention. However, I have found that the low pitched voice, too, can be used for this purpose. In addition, the interpretation of President Bush's facial expression shows the significance of the smile and the grave expression as well as the importance of eye-contact when making a speech, and last but not the least: that it corresponds with the verbal language.

Finally I would dare to say that Bush is portrayed as a powerful person in every way. All of these characteristics depict President Bush as utterly capable of leading the U.S., or at least he has used his power and strategies of power to give the impression that he can.

The present study has investigated a powerful person's strategies to exert power over people. Since several Presidential debates have been held and will be held, I believe that further investigation of this kind will be made. It would be interesting to see if they show the same result as my analysis has come up with or at least similarities to it.

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## 11. Appendix

(Paragraphs are numbered 1-12, the highlights: red is threat, light blue is different collocations to threat, green is war, yellow is forms of terror, pink is weapons and grey is the phrase, weapons of mass destruction)

1. PRESIDENT BUSH: Charlie, thank you, and thank our panelists, and Senator, thank you. can -- and thanks Washington U. as well. I can see why people at your workplace think he changes positions a lot, because he does. He said he voted for the \$87 billion -- or voted against it right before he voted for it (sic). And that sends a confusing signal to [p]eople. He said he thought Saddam Hussein was a **grave threat**, and now said it was a mistake to remove Saddam Hussein form power. Now I can see why people think he changes position quite often, because he does. You know, for a while, he was a strong supporter of getting rid of Saddam Hussein. He saw the wisdom, until the Democratic primary came along, and Howard Dean, the anti-**war** candidate, began to gain on him. And he changed positions. I don't see how you can lead this country in a time of **war**, in a time of uncertainty if you change your mind because of politics. He just brought up the tax cut. You remember we increased that child credit by a thousand dollars, reduced the marriage penalty, created a 10 percent tax bracket for the lower-income Americans. That's right at the middle class. He voted against it, and yet he tells you he's for a middle-class tax cut. It's -- you've got to be consistent when you're the president. There's a lot of pressures, and you've got to be firm and consistent.

2. PRESIDENT BUSH: Each situation is different, Robin. And, obviously, we hope that diplomacy works before you ever use force. The hardest decision a president makes is ever to use force. After 9/11, we had to look at the world differently. After 9/11, we had to recognize that when we saw a **threat**, we must take it seriously before it comes to hurt us. In the old days we'd see a **threat** and we could deal with it if we felt like it, or not. But 9/11 changed it all. I vowed to our countrymen that I would do everything I could to protect the American people. That's why we're bringing al Qaeda to justice; 75 percent of them have been brought to justice. That's why I said to Afghanistan, if you harbor a **terrorist**, you're just as guilty as the **terrorist**. And the Taliban is no longer in power, and al Qaeda no longer has a place to plan. And I saw a **unique threat** in Saddam Hussein, as did my opponent, because we thought he had **weapons of mass destruction**. And the **unique threat** was that he could give **weapons of mass destruction** to an organization like al Qaeda, and the harm they inflicted on us with airplanes would be multiplied greatly by **weapons of mass destruction**. And that was the **serious, serious threat**. So I tried diplomacy. I went to the United Nations. But as we learned in the same report I quoted, Saddam Hussein was gaming the oil-for-food program to get rid of sanctions. He was trying to get rid of sanctions for a reason. He wanted to restart his **weapons** programs. We all thought there was **weapons** there, Robin (sp). My opponent thought there was **weapons** there. That's why he called him a **grave threat**. I wasn't happy when we found out there wasn't **weapons**, and we've got an intelligence group together to figure out why. But Saddam Hussein was a **unique threat**, and the world is better off without him in power. And my opponent's plans lead me to conclude that Saddam Hussein would still be in power, and the world would be more dangerous. Thank you, sir.

3. PRESIDENT BUSH: (Laughs.) You remember the last debate? My opponent said that America must pass a global test before we use force to protect ourselves. That's the kind of mindset that says sanctions were working. That's the kind of mindset that said let's keep it at the United Nations and hope things go well. Saddam Hussein was a **threat** because he could have given **weapons of mass destruction** to **terrorist** enemies. Sanctions were not working. The United Nations was not effective at removing Saddam Hussein.

4. PRESIDENT BUSH: Two days ago in the Oval Office I met with the finance minister from Iraq. He came to see me. And he talked about how optimistic he was and the country was about heading toward elections. Think about it. They're going from tyranny to elections. He talked about the reconstruction efforts that are beginning to take hold. He talked about the fact that Iraqis love to be free. He said he was optimistic when he came here, then he turned on the TV and listened to the political rhetoric, and all of a sudden he was pessimistic. This is a guy who, along with others, has taken great risks for freedom. And we need to stand with him. My opponent says he has a plan. It sounds familiar because it's called the Bush plan. We're going to train troops, and we are. We'll have 125,000 trained by the end of December. We're spending about \$7 billion. He talks about a grand idea; let's have a summit; we're going to solve the problem in Iraq by holding a summit. And what is he going to say to those people that show up to the summit? Join me in the wrong **war** at the wrong time at the wrong place? Risk your -- risk your troops in a -- in a **war** you've called a mistake? Nobody is going to follow somebody who doesn't believe we can succeed and somebody who says the **war** where we are is a mistake. I know how these people think. I meet with them all the time. I talk to Tony Blair all the time. I talk to Silvio Berlusconi. They're not going to follow an American president who says "follow me into a mistake." Our plan is working. We're going to make elections, and Iraq is going to be free, and America will be better off for it.

5. PRESIDENT BUSH: First of all, we didn't find out he didn't have **weapons** till we got there. And my opponent thought he had **weapons** and told everybody he thought he had **weapons**. And secondly, it's a fundamental misunderstanding to say that the **war on terror** is only Osama bin Laden. The **war on terror** is to make sure that these **terrorist** organizations do not end up with **weapons of mass destruction**. That's what the **war on terror** is about. Of course we're going to find Osama bin Laden. We've already got 75 percent of his people, and we're the hunt for him. But this is a global conflict that requires firm resolve.

6. PRESIDENT BUSH: No, I appreciate that. I -- listen, I -- we've got a great country. I love our values. And I recognize I made some decisions that have caused people to not understand the great values of our country. I remember when Ronald Reagan was the president. He stood on principle. Some might have called that stubborn. He stood on principle, standing up to the Soviet Union, and we won that conflict. Yet at the same time, he was very -- we were very unpopular in Europe because of the decisions he made. I recognize that taking Saddam Hussein out was unpopular. But I made the decision because I thought it was in the right interests of our security. You know, I made some decisions on Israel that's unpopular. I wouldn't deal with Arafat because I felt like he had let the former president down and I don't think he's the kind

of person that can lead toward a Palestinian state. And people in Europe didn't like that decision, and that was unpopular, but it was the right thing to do. I believe the Palestinians ought to have a state. But I know they need leadership that's committed to a democracy and freedom, leadership that'd be willing to reject terrorism. I made a decision not to join the International Criminal Court in The Hague, which is where our troops can be brought to -- brought in front of a judge, an unaccounted judge. I don't think we ought to join that. That was unpopular. And so what I'm telling you is is that sometimes in this world you make unpopular decision because you think they're right. We'll continue to reach out. Listen, there's 30 nations involved in Iraq; some 40 nations involved in Afghanistan. People love America. Sometimes they don't like the decisions made by America, but I don't think you want a president who tries to become popular and does the wrong thing. You don't want to join the International Criminal Court just because it's popular in certain capitals in Europe.

7. PRESIDENT BUSH: That's an odd thing to say, since we've -- tripled the homeland security budget from 10 (billion dollars) to 30 billion dollars. Listen, we'll do everything we can to protect the homeland. My opponent's right, we need good intelligence. It's also a curious thing for him to say since right after 1993 he voted to cut the intelligence budget by \$7.5 billion. The best way to defend America in this -- in this world we live in is to stay on the offense. We got to be right a hundred percent of the time here at home, and they got to be right once. And that's the reality. And there's a lot of good people working hard. We're doing the best we possibly can to share information. That's why the Patriot Act was important. The Patriot Act is vital, by the way. It's a tool that law enforcement now uses to be able to talk between each other. My opponent says he hasn't changed his positions on it. No, but he's for weakening it. I don't think my opponent has got the right view about the world to make us safe. I really don't. First of all, I don't think he can succeed in Iraq. And if Iraq were to fail, it'd be a haven for terrorists, and there'd be money, and the world would be much more dangerous. I don't see how you can win in Iraq if you don't believe we should be there in the first place. I don't see how you can lead troops if you say it's the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't see how the Iraqis are going to have confidence in the American president if all they hear is that it was a mistake to be there in the first place. This war is a long, long war, and it requires steadfast determination, and it requires a complete understanding that we not only chase down al Qaeda, but we disrupt terrorist safe havens as well as people who could provide the terrorists with support.

8. PRESIDENT BUSH: I own a timber company? (Laughter.) That's news to me! (Laughs; laughter.) Need some wood? (Laughter.) Most small businesses are Subchapter S corps, they just are. I met Grant Miliron (sp), Mansfield, Ohio. He's creating jobs. Most small businesses -- 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created by small business. His taxes are going up when you run up the top two brackets. It's a fact.

9. PRESIDENT BUSH: I appreciate that. I really don't think your rights are being watered down. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't support it if I thought that. Every action being taken against terrorists requires a court order, requires scrutiny. As a matter of fact, the tools now given to the terrorist fighters are the same tools that we've been

using against drug dealers and white-collar criminals. So I really don't think so. I hope you don't think that. I mean, I -- because I think whoever's the president must guard your liberties, must not erode your rights in America. The Patriot Act is necessary, for example, because parts of the FBI couldn't talk to each other. Intelligence gathering and the law enforcement arms of the FBI just couldn't share intelligence under the old law. And that didn't make any sense. Our law enforcement must have every tool necessary to find and disrupt **terrorists** at home and abroad before they hurt us again. That's the task of the 21st century. And so I don't think the -- the Patriot Act abridges your rights at all. And I know it's necessary. I can remember being in upstate New York talking to FBI agents that helped bust the Lackawanna cell up there. And they told me they could not have performed their duty, the duty we all expect of them, if they did not have the ability to communicate with each other under the Patriot Act.

**10. PRESIDENT BUSH:** (Laughs.) Hi, Linda.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I have made a lot of decisions, and some of them little, like appointments to boards you've never heard of, and some of them big. And in a **war**, there's a lot of -- there's a lot of tactical decisions that historians will look back and say he shouldn't of done that. You shouldn't have made that decision." And I'll take responsibility for 'em. I'm human. But on the big questions, about whether or not we should have gone into Afghanistan, the big question about whether we should have removed somebody in Iraq, I'll stand by those decisions because I think they're right. It's really what you're -- when they ask about the mistakes, that's what they're talking about. They're trying to say, "Did you make a mistake going into Iraq?" And the answer is absolutely not. It's a right decision. The Duelfer Report confirmed that decision today, because what Saddam Hussein was doing was trying to get rid of sanctions so he could reconstitute a **weapons** program, and the **biggest threat** facing America is **terrorists** with **weapons of mass destruction**. We knew he hated us. We knew he'd been a -- invaded other countries. We knew he tortured his own people. On the tax cut, it's a big decision. I did the right decision. Our recession was one of the shallowest in modern history. Now, you asked what mistakes. I made some mistakes in appointing people, but I'm not going to name them. I don't want to hurt their feelings on national TV. But history will look back, and I'm fully prepared to accept any mistakes that history judges to my administration, because the president makes the decisions, the president has to take the responsibility.

And a closing statement from President Bush.

**11. PRESIDENT BUSH:** Charlie, thanks. Thank you all very much. It's been enjoyable. The contest for the presidency is about the future -- who can lead, who can get things done. We've been through a lot together as a country. Been through a recession, corporate scandals, **war**. And yet think about where we are. We had 1.9 million new jobs for the past 13 months. The farm income in America is high. Small businesses are flourishing. Homeownership rate is at an all-time high in America. We're on the move.

**12.** Tonight I had a chance to discuss with you what to do to keep this economy going: keep the taxes low, don't increase the scope of the federal government, keep

regulations down, legal reform, a health care policy that does not empower the federal government but empowers individuals, and an energy plan that will help us become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. And abroad we're at war, and it requires a president who is steadfast and strong and determined. I vowed to the American people after that fateful day of September the 11th that we would not rest nor tire until we're safe. The 9/11 commission put out a report that said America is safer, but not yet safe. There's more work to be done. We'll stay on the hunt of al Qaeda. We'll deny sanctuary to these terrorists. We'll make sure they do not end up with weapons of mass destruction. It's the great nexus. The great threat to our country is that these haters under up with weapons of mass destruction. But our long-term security depends on our deep faith in liberty, and we'll continue to promote freedom around the world. Freedom is on the march. Tomorrow, Afghanistan will be voting for a president. In Iraqi (sic), we'll be having free elections and a free society will make this world more peaceful. God bless.

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