Political Language in Zohran Mamdani's Victory Speech:
A Critical Discourse Analysis

Muhammad Nurfazri[1,*], Afita Nur Hayati[2], Sajidin[1], Dedi Sulaeman[1], Vini Rizki Nurodiah[1], Anis Khoirunnisa Syahrussalamah[1], Hanifa Mawadah[1], Nabiel Azhari Husaeni[1]

[1]Master's Program in English Education, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, Indonesia

*muhammadnurfazri.edu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines how progressive political discourse articulates ideology, constructs collective identity, and negotiates power relations between the public and political elites within the context of contemporary democracy. Using a critical qualitative design, the research was grounded in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework: micro, mezzo, and macro. The data were taken from Zohran Mamdani's victory speech published by the official ABC News YouTube channel. At the micro level, Mamdani frames the electoral victory as the result of a collective struggle through lexical, modal, metaphorical, rhetorical, and agency constructions that delegitimize elites and normalize demands for structural change. At the mezzo level, the speech reconstructs the victory speech genre by linking it to a narrative of ongoing struggle through historical intertextuality and media distribution strategies that position the audience as active political subjects. At the macro level, the discourse operates as an ideological intervention that challenges neoliberal and oligarchic hegemony by asserting democratic socialism as a response to inequality in contemporary democracy. Hence, the study concludes that critical discourse analysis provides a robust analytical lens for uncovering the role of language in both reproducing and contesting power relations, thereby contributing to a more critical understanding of political discourse in democratic contexts.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Democracy; Ideology and Power; Political Discourse; Zohran Mamdani

A. Introduction

In contemporary political dynamics, discourse operates not merely as a communicative medium but as a central site for ideological contestation and the construction of political legitimacy (Gormley, 2018). In the United States, the resurgence of progressive politics and democratic socialism has increasingly challenged the hegemony of mainstream political formations long dominated by economic and governing elites (Foner, 1984). Zohran Mamdani's electoral victory in a New York City local contest signifies a notable reconfiguration of these

power relations. His victory speech frames the electoral outcome not simply as a procedural success but as a discursive intervention that actively constructs collective agency, articulates class-based antagonisms, and advances ideological resistance to entrenched political hegemony.

To systematically examine these discursive mechanisms, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a rigorous analytical framework that conceptualizes language as a social practice that simultaneously constitutes and is constituted by power relations. Drawing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the analysis integrates the levels of textual analysis (micro), discursive practice (mezzo), and social practice (macro) (Fairclough, 1992). Within this framework, Zohran Mamdani's victory speech is approached as a dialectical process in which linguistic choices, methods of discourse production and consumption, and broader ideological formations mutually interact. Accordingly, this study addresses the research problem by uncovering how micro-level linguistic strategies are systematically linked to macro-level ideological transformations through a layered discourse analysis.

The study is intended three interrelated objectives: (1) to examine the linguistic strategies through which Zohran Mamdani constructs collective agency and class-based political identity; (2) to analyze the discursive practices governing the production, distribution, and consumption of the victory speech; and (3) to elucidate how these practices contribute to the articulation of counter-hegemonic discourse within contemporary progressive politics in the United States. Adopting a critical qualitative approach, the analysis is conducted across three analytical layers: micro, mezzo, and macro, to demonstrate how language functions as a strategic resource for forging collectivist relations and reconfiguring ideological meanings.

Numerous studies have examined political speeches through diverse analytical approaches and focal points. For instance, Siadari (2025) analyzed the Zohran Mamdani's victory speech by employing the concepts of message features (Bigsby & Shen, 2013) and narrative persuasion (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2013) to explain how Mamdani fostered proximity and identification with his supporters. The findings demonstrated that the speech effectively constructed collective identification, symbolically affirmed the victory of marginalized groups over the status quo, articulated an ideological opposition between progressive forces and the political establishment, and simultaneously generated debate over identity politics. In a related vein, Sosrohadi et al. (2024) examined the Indonesian President's Independence Day speech on August 17, 2024, using CDA, revealing that the speech functioned not merely as a vehicle of political communication but also as a mechanism for affirming power and nationalism through strategic linguistic choices and discursive structuring within an electoral context. Similarly, Dewangga et al. (2025) applied a CDA framework to Malcolm X's speech at the Oxford Union Debate, illustrating how discourse was mobilized to challenge and reconfigure power relations during the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Other studies included Ato's (2025) CDA-based analysis of Donald Trump's America First inaugural speech, as well as Kanwal &

García (2019) investigation of Hillary Clinton's campaign speeches, which demonstrated the strategic use of the frames of "struggle" and "family" to construct a gendered identity of a strong yet inclusive female leader.

Despite those contributions to understanding the nexus between language, power, and ideology in political discourse, no study to date has comprehensively applied Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model to Zohran Mamdani's victory speech. Through this research, we extend the study of progressive political discourse by addressing a clear analytical gap in previous research. Besides, we explore how linguistic strategies at the micro-level are dialectically connected to discursive practices at the mezzo-level and contribute to ideological transformations at the macro-level. This procedure makes this research significant in the context of the contemporary rise of progressive politics in the United States, where victory speeches function not only as symbolic events but also as strategic discursive arenas for converting electoral legitimacy into ideological mandates. Theoretically, these findings strengthen and expand understanding of Fairclough's model by providing empirical evidence that the relationship between text, discursive practices, and social practices is operational and mutually constitutive in political discourse. Practically, it enhances critical discourse literacy among the public and the media. Therefore, this research not only enriches critical linguistics studies but also provides a conceptual foundation for the development of political discourse analysis as a social practice that has the potential to drive structural change in democratic contexts.

B. Method

This research was built on the integration of complementary theoretical and methodological frameworks. Theoretically, this research drew on the three-dimensional CDA framework proposed by Fairclough (1992) to examine language as a social practice in the political realm. Within this framework, language was understood not merely as a means of communication, but as a mechanism for ideological production through which power relations were formed, negotiated, and contested. Therefore, the language used in Zohran Mamdani's political speeches was analyzed to uncover how collective identities were constructed, specific political interests are naturalized, and discursive strategies are formulated to challenge the dominance of established ideologies. Methodologically, this research employed a qualitative approach with a critical perspective, aiming to examine the role of language in social transformation and public welfare (Good & Diem, 2023). This approach allowed researchers to deeply explore the power dynamics and belief structures operating within political discourse, particularly in the processes of legitimizing and reproducing particular ideologies (Mullet, 2018).

1. Data sources and collection

The data were collected on November 14, 2025 from one of Zohran Mamdani's political speeches, published by the ABC News YouTube account under the title *"FULL SPEECH: Zohran Mamdani's victory speech following historic NYC mayoral win."* The selection of this content was based on significant discursive events in the United States' local political context, which contained ideologies and narratives of social change. Therefore, the data collection process involved several stages.

First, we watched the video repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situational context, argumentation flow, and patterns of emphasis. Second, the speech was transcribed using Google Gemini, then verified and edited by the authors to ensure accuracy. Third, the transcript example was analyzed using Fairclough's three dimensions. Fourth, a literature review was conducted to gather relevant theoretical and empirical references to strengthen the foundation for data analysis and interpretation.

2. Analysis procedure

Data analysis follows Fairclough's three-layer framework, but it was applied contextually to reflect the nature of political speeches.
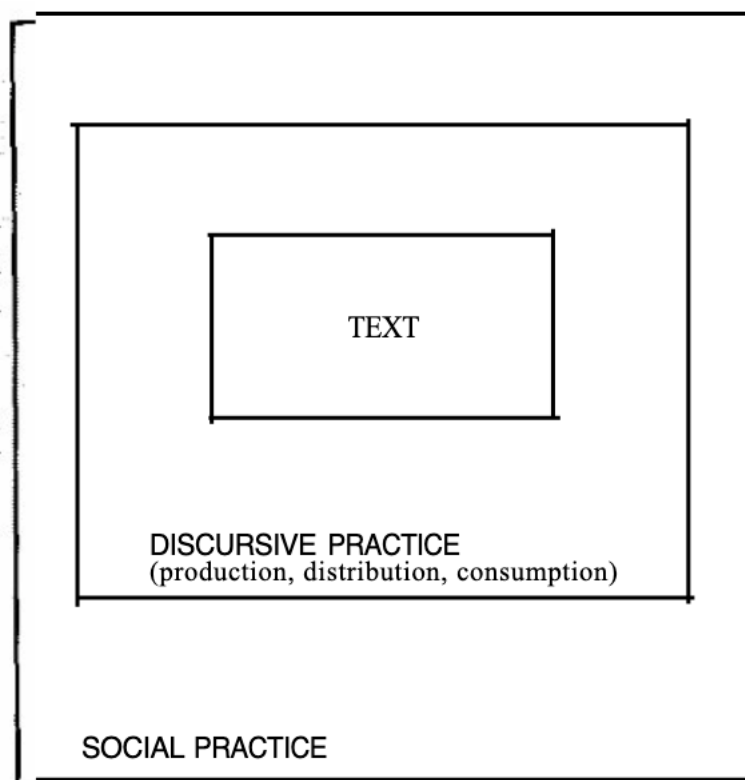

Figure 1. Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough, 1992)

Following Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional CDA framework, the analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. First, textual analysis examined linguistic features of the

speech, including lexical choices, syntactic patterns, modality, metaphors, and pronominal forms, to identify how language constructed social reality and positioned audiences ideologically. Second, discursive practice analysis focused on the processes of discourse production and audience orientation, as well as the rhetorical strategies and intertextual references through which meaning was generated within the speech. Third, social practice analysis situated the linguistic findings within the broader socio-political context, examining how Zohran Mamdani's discourse reflected class-based tensions, power relations in urban politics, and efforts to construct counter-hegemonic discourse in contemporary American society.

3. Validation

To enhance the validity of the findings, the analytical results were systematically compared with established CDA frameworks and relevant studies on political discourse. Besides, interpretations were continuously cross-checked against theoretical concepts to assess their coherence and consistency, thereby ensuring that the analysis was grounded in a robust theoretical foundation rather than individual interpretation.

C. Result

This section presents findings and discussions to uncover how Zohran Mamdani's victory speech constructs meaning, power, and ideology. The analysis is conducted through three main stages: textual (micro), discursive practice (mezzo), and social practice (macro) (Fairclough, 1992). Through this three-level approach, this study aims to examine the relationship among language choices, the processes of discourse production and interpretation, and the broader social and ideological context.

1. Textual analysis

According to Fairclough (1992), at the textual level (micro-level), the analysis focuses on the linguistic elements that make up the speech text, such as lexical items, grammatical structures, pronoun use, metaphors, rhetorical strategies, and specific identification based on examples or representations in the transcribed speech. This process aims to identify how ideas, interests, and ideologies are linguistically represented. Furthermore, the analysis includes ideational aspects related to the construction of meaning and ideology, relational aspects that show how the relationship between the speaker and the audience is built, and identity aspects that reflect how Zohran Mamdani positions himself and the group he represents in political discourse.

Table 1. Textual Analysis (Micro Level)

No	Feature	Example	Interpretation
1.	Lexical choice	*"wealthy and well-connected," "political dynasty," "billionaire class"*	Explicitly forming an identity of 'us' (the oppressed) against 'them' (the oppressive elite).
2.	Modality	*"we will build a city hall"*	Shows high modality that constructs political action as inevitable rather than optional.
3	Agency and transitivity	*"The future is in our hands," "we have toppled a political dynasty."*	Using the pronoun *"we"* as the primary active agent; emphasizing the collective agency of the people in achieving change.
4	Metaphor	*"dawn of a better day"* and *"city that has been reborn"*	Using transformative metaphors; symbolic rebirth of political order.
5	Rhetorical Style	*Repetition of "hope over…" (tyranny, big money, despair)*	Reinforcing the theme of "hope" as a firm political and moral choice against negative forces.
6	Specific Identification	*Calls "Yemen bodega owners and Mexican abuelas, Seneagalles taxi drivers and Usuzbck nurses"*	Constructing a concrete multi-ethnic/working class coalition identity, challenging the homogenous image of power.

As shown in Table 1, the excerpt from Zohran Mamdani's victory speech illustrates the deliberate and interconnected deployment of linguistic resources to construct socio-political representations, collective identity, and ideological legitimacy. Lexical choices such as *"wealthy and well-connected," "political dynasty," and "billionaire class"* serve as explicit markers of class antagonism, positioning economic and political elites as agents of structural inequality. These lexical items function not merely at a descriptive level but as forms of evaluative lexicalization that implicitly assess and delegitimize dominant power structures. In addition, the systematic use of inclusive pronouns *"we" and "our"* as central participants within the transitivity structure reinforces an antagonistic discourse by foregrounding collective agency. Active material processes, exemplified in clauses such as *"we have toppled a political dynasty" and "the future is in our hands,"* frame political change as the outcome of collective action rather than the initiative of an individual leader. Through this strategy, Mamdani foregrounds collectivist as the primary political subject, reflecting a socialist-democratic orientation that explicitly resists the personalization of political power.

On the other hand, the use of the modal verb *"will"* in statements such as *"we will build a city hall"* constructs political action as both unavoidable and inevitable, thereby reinforcing discursive authority and naturalizing the agenda of structural change as a logical outcome of

electoral victory. Legitimacy is further consolidated through the deployment of transformational metaphors, such as *"the dawn of a better day" and "a city that has been reborn,"* which frame the electoral outcome as a historical rupture and a symbolic turning point. These metaphors present political change as a moral and symbolic transition from an old order to a new one, positioning the progressive policy agenda not merely as a technocratic initiative but as part of a broader historical and ethical mission. In addition, the rhetorical strategy of repetition, particularly through the recurring phrase *"hope over …,"* plays a crucial role in intensifying ideological meaning by constructing hope as a political and moral choice set in direct opposition to despair and big money. This repetition enhances the persuasive force of the speech while simultaneously fostering emotional coherence, aligning the audience with Mamdani's vision of change. Moreover, the explicit naming of specific ethnic groups and professions, such as *"Yemen bodega owners, Mexican abuelas, Senegalese taxi drivers, and Uzbek nurses"*, articulates a collective and inclusive political identity. By foregrounding these groups, the speech avoids political abstraction and instead offers a concrete representation of a multi-ethnic working-class coalition. This strategy not only broadens the basis of political legitimacy but also repositions previously marginalized groups as legitimate actors within the emerging power structure. Accordingly, this textual analysis demonstrates that the speech does not operate in isolation but integrates these discursive elements to produce a coherent counter-hegemonic discourse.

From a CDA perspective, Table 1 shows that these textual features do not operate independently but function as an integrated system of meaning-making. While the interplay of evaluative lexicalization, inclusive pronouns, high-definite modality, metaphorical framing, and repetition effectively mobilizes collective identification and legitimizes counter-hegemonic discourse, it simultaneously narrows the discursive space for internal plurality. Moreover, the repeated construction of political agency through a unified *"we"* flattens ideological, social, and experiential differences within the diverse coalition it purports to represent. In this sense, the exact linguistic mechanisms that empower marginalized groups and authorize structural transformation can also simplify complex social realities by conflating multiple voices to normalize collective ideologies. Therefore, Table 1 not only maps the strategic coherence of Mamdani's discourse at the micro-textual level but also reveals the tension between mobilization and representational complexity that characterizes discursive power in progressive political communication.

2. Discursive practice

According to Fairclough (1992), at the level of discursive practice, this study examines how Zohran Mamdani's victory speech is produced, distributed, and consumed within the

broader sphere of political communication. Drawing on Fairclough's perspective, the analysis explores how the speech frames the electoral victory as an ideological mandate, mobilizes intertextual resources to construct historical legitimacy, and positions the public as active political subjects within existing power relations. Through the interrelated processes of production, distribution, and consumption, the meaning of the speech is not solely determined by the speaker. However, it is continuously negotiated, reinforced, and legitimized within the broader social arena.

Table 2. Discursive Practice (Mezzo Level)

No	Feature	Analysis
1.	Production	This speech is a victory speech, a genre that should be inspirational, mobilizing, and definitional. Its goal is to define victory as something more than just a seat won or a moment of social movement.
2.	Intertextuality	Explicitly referring to *"Eugene Debs"* and *"Fiorello LaGuardia",* it connects the movement to the established roots of socialism and progressivism in American and New York political history.
3	Distribution and interpretive context	It circulates through mass media as a symbolic moment of progressive resurgence. Also, this speech relies on readers (voters/public) to believe in the possibility of structural change that has not happened since the days of LaGuardia, demanding that they "breathe this moment in" after a long wait.
4	Consumption	The audience is positioned as the true holders of power and the recipients of a mandate to continue the struggle "*this city belongs to you*". This speech moves the audience from passive to active agents *"something that we do"*.

At the level of discursive practice, Zohran Mamdani's victory speech operates as a discursive event that is strategically produced, distributed, and consumed within the sphere of public political communication. While the content is structured within the conventional genre of a celebratory victory speech, it is discursively rearticulated into a mobilizing and definitional discourse. In addition, the speech functions not merely as an administrative confirmation of electoral success but as a mechanism for producing the meaning of victory as a collective moment within a broader social movement, thereby transforming electoral legitimacy into ideological legitimacy.

This discursive effect is further reinforced through deliberate intertextuality. Mamdani explicitly references historical figures such as *"Eugene Debs and Fiorello LaGuardia"*, not simply as acts of commemoration but as discursive resources that embed his speech within the established traditions of American and New York progressivism. As Fairclough (1995) argues, intertextuality enables speakers to legitimate contemporary projects by embedding them within recognizable ideological lineages. Through this strategy, the discourse constructs a sense of historical continuity, positioning Mamdani's movement as a legitimate successor to earlier

progressive struggles. Moreover, as the speech circulates through mass media and the public sphere, it functions as a symbolic moment of contemporary political revival. This way is supported by Wodak & Meyer (2009), discourse often operates within dominant media structures, resulting in a tension between ideological challenge and institutional mediation. This process of circulation expands the reach of the discourse, enabling it to be heard and interpreted as an ideological statement representing a collective effort to redirect the political trajectory of New York City. Consequently, distribution not only amplifies the message's visibility but also shapes public interpretation, framing the victory as a historically significant event rather than a transient political occurrence. Besides, declarative statements such as *"this city belongs to you"* signal a reconfiguration of the relationship between power and society, shifting from an institutional model of representation toward one grounded in collective participation. Added by van Dijk (2008), discourse consumption is a site where ideological meanings are negotiated, internalized, or contested depending on the audience's social positions. In this sense, New Yorkers are not passive recipients of political communication but active agents expected to sustain the political struggle beyond the electoral moment.

Furthermore, Zohran Mamdani links historical memory to the city's contemporary socio-political conditions and those of its residents. By invoking the progressive legacy of the LaGuardia era, he presupposes a shared sense of collective longing for long-deferred structural change, as articulated in his statement: *"I have one final request: New York City breathe this moment in … we have held our breath for longer than we know … we have held it in anticipation of defeat … held it because the air has been knocked out of our lungs too many times to count … held it because we cannot afford to exhale."* Through this formulation, Mamdani invites New Yorkers to interpret the electoral victory as the fulfillment of a historically sustained hope rather than a momentary political success. Through strategies of genre-based production, historical intertextuality, media circulation, audience positioning, and the shaping of interpretive contexts, the speech functions as a discursive mechanism that converts political victory into an ideological mandate. As a result, these mezzo-level discourses do not merely reflect political realities but actively shape how such realities are understood within the public sphere.

3. Social practice

According to Fairclough (1992), at the level of social practice, the discourse of the victory speech is situated within broader sociocultural, ideological, and political contexts. At this stage, language is understood not merely as a representational tool but as a social practice that simultaneously reflects and shapes power relations, ideological formations, and hegemonic configurations within society. Within the CDA framework, this macro level reveals how

discourse functions to normalize the ideological positions advanced by the speaker. In this context, Zohran Mamdani articulates a vision of socialist democracy, challenges oligarchic domination, and reconstructs political legitimacy through reconfiguring power relations and forming inclusive social coalitions within the American political landscape.

Table 3. Social Practice (Macro Level)

No	Feature	Analysis
1.	Ideological dimension	Reinforcing the ideology of Democratic Socialism and anti-oligarchy, this speech justified major policies (rent freezes, free buses) as inevitable responses to the cost-of- living crisis, normalizing bold state intervention.
2.	Power relations	Affirming the Reversal of Power. This speech openly challenges and delegitimizes the power of billionaires and figures like Trump and Andrew Cuomo, and positions immigrants and socialists as the legitimate holders of power.
3	Societal context	Legitimacy through Coalition. This speech comes at a time of heightened political polarization. By embracing diverse minority identities (Muslim, Jewish, and Black women) and connecting their struggles to class struggle, the speech seeks to establish a new, inclusive hegemony (consensual domination).
4	Critical perspective	Using Trump's threats to justify radical political action at the local level "if anyone can show a nation betrayed by Donald Trump how to defeat him it is the city that gave rise to him".

As a mayor-elect born in Uganda, Zohran Mamdani proposes a democratic socialist ideology that directly confronts entrenched power structures and the dominant ideological order in contemporary American society. Issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, economic inequality, and the marginalization of working-class communities are foregrounded as lived realities requiring structural transformation. Within this discourse, state intervention is discursively legitimized as necessary and purposeful, thereby challenging neoliberal assumptions that confine the state to a minimal role in welfare distribution. At the same time, Mamdani advances a clear reversal of power relations by delegitimizing the dominance of economic and political elites; it is represented through constructs such as the *"billionaire class"* and symbolic figures of authority, including Donald Trump and Andrew Cuomo, while repositioning marginalized groups, including immigrants, working-class communities, and socialist constituencies, as legitimate holders of political power. This reversal operates not only at the symbolic level but also at the structural level, as leadership is redefined in terms of collective interests and class-based struggle.

Furthermore, the coalition-building strategy became a primary source of social legitimacy. Through this approach, Zohran Mamdani elevates diverse minority identities, such as Muslims,

Jews, and Black women, linking them to broader class struggles. In this context, the coalition is not built on a uniform identity, but rather on a recognition of differences united by experiences of structural injustice. Furthermore, Mamdani also draws on figures like Trump to lend legitimacy to progressive political action at the local level. He links this victory to the national struggle: *"If we stop Trump, it's how we stop the next one."* In his powerful perspective, this victory scales political meaning from the city level to the national level. In other words, this strategy allows local agendas to be understood as part of the resistance against oligarchy, thus strengthening the claim that systemic change can and must begin in local government spaces. Therefore, this macro-level not only reflects social reality but also actively contributes to the restructuring of ideology, power, and political discourse in contemporary America.

To reflect the findings and discuss their social and political implications, the textual and discursive strategies identified in the victory speech function as interventions into broader structures of power, ideology, and social relations. At the textual level, the construction of collective agency, then channelled through discursive practices, contributes to strengthening social movements that actively challenge power frameworks that tend to depoliticize inequality and exclude previously unrepresented groups. Besides, this discourse affirms class antagonisms by positioning political legitimacy as the outcome of collective struggle, rather than as the product of elite authority. This process demonstrates the discourse's contribution to promoting the symbolic inclusion of marginalized groups and the working class by rearticulated them as legitimate political subjects, thereby reshaping dominant representations of who is recognized as part of the political community. In addition, the speech reframes electoral victory not as an endpoint, but as the starting point of a sustained project of civic engagement and resistance, fostering political mobilization beyond the realm of institutional politics. Thus, this discourse not only resists but also reshapes social reality, demonstrating how language operates as an arena in which power, ideology, and social change are continuously negotiated.

D. Discussion

Fairclough (1995) positions language as neither neutral nor static, but rather as a social practice that simultaneously shapes reality, social relations, and ideological structures. In this context, CDA assumes that discourse shapes and is shaped by the socio-political context. In other words, political discourse becomes a crucial arena for shaping ideology and legitimizing power (Reyes, 2011). Besides, CDA is divided into three levels: text (micro), discursive practice (mezzo), and social practice (macro) (Fairclough, 1992). These levels allow researchers to explore how concrete linguistic choices relate to the processes of discourse production and consumption. In addition, this method offers a different lens for analyzing political discourse because each level explains how language works and its implications for understanding power

relations, ideology, and social identity. Numerous contemporary CDA studies demonstrate that this method is highly productive in analyzing political speech, particularly in uncovering mechanisms of ideologization, legitimation, and the formation of collective identity (Alexandrovna & Andreevna, 2025; Rebollo-Bueno, 2024). Therefore, the analysis of Zohran Mamdani's victory speech in this study is not merely a textual understanding but an effort to understand how progressive political discourse operates across levels to challenge the established hegemonic order.

At the micro level, the lexical choices such as referring to the economic elite as the *"billionaire class"* and *"political dynasty,"* he builds antagonism between the people and the elite, thereby presenting social inequality as an ethical issue that demands corrective action. This aligns with Woolard's (2020) findings that language produces ideological meaning by naturalizing certain power relations while delegitimizing others. Also, this pattern aligns with Barasa et al. (2023), who assert that the *"we - they"* opposition in progressive political discourse plays a crucial role in building awareness of injustice. Moreover, Zohran Mamdani seeks to establish historical inevitability, not merely policy possibilities. In his statements, *"we will build a city hall",* this modality can strengthen support for Mamdani's moral legitimacy because the political policies he offers represent a form of resistance to unequal social conditions. This strategy relates to (Patrona, 2025), who explains that linguistic certainty in political speeches is often used to mobilize public support. Meanwhile, the dominance of the inclusive pronoun *"we"* positions the people as the primary actors of change, while the elite are reduced to objects of criticism. This transfer of agency is a crucial mechanism in the production of social and political identities (Ahmed, 2024; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, at this level, language not only represents social reality but also directs how audiences understand the political future as a space for collective action, as outlined by Zohran Mamdani.

At the mezzo level, discourse encompasses how content is produced, distributed, and consumed (Fairclough, 1992). Mamdani's victory speech not only represents a conventionally celebratory symbolic moment but also reconstructs the electoral victory as part of an ongoing collective struggle. This strategy is consistent with Ahmed's (2024) findings, which show that progressive political actors often use the victory speech genre to expand their political mandate. Furthermore, Mamdani reclaims a socialist figure (Eugene Debs) and a politician (Fiorello LaGuardia) to build historical legitimacy. Yates & Youniss (1998) state that the socio-historical context significantly shapes political identity and socialization. By referencing previous figures, this plays a vital role in forming a cohesive political identity (Benschop, 2009). Therefore, the distribution of Mamdani's speech through the media enabled this discourse to reach a wider audience, positioning them not as passive listeners but as active political subjects.

At the level of social practice, Mamdani plays an ideological intervention that explicitly challenges oligarchy in contemporary politics. The mentioned democratic-socialist discourse

not only justifies progressive policies, such as rent freezes and free public transportation, but also normalizes the state as the primary actor in ensuring social justice. This finding aligns with (Bian, 2024), who explains how discourse deconstructs neoliberal common sense through political policy analysis. In addition, Mamdani raises elite figures and symbols of old power, while immigrants, the working class, and minority groups are elevated as legitimate holders of political authority. According to critical political theory and sociology, the concept of elite is understood as a minority that systematically controls the economic, political, and symbolic resources of society (Mills, 1990). Mills (1990) explains how political, financial, and military elites are referred to as power elites. They are networks of power capable of determining the direction of public policy. Although democracy normatively grounds the legitimacy of power in the principle of popular sovereignty, there is a significant gap between this normative ideal and actual political practice. Added by Gilens & Page (2014), who investigate the preferences of average citizens quantitatively have minimal influence on public policy, while the interests of economic elites and organized business groups have a far greater impact. This condition highlights the paradox of democracy, in which the people are formally recognized as the legitimate holders of power but structurally marginalized from substantive decision-making, so that democracy operates more as a mechanism of procedural legitimacy than as a true manifestation of popular sovereignty. Therefore, this speech not only reflects social change but also actively reshapes the boundaries of political legitimacy and the public sphere's imagination of democracy.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that Zohran Mamdani's victory speech functions as a discursive practice that strategically articulates progressive and counter-hegemonic ideologies through linguistic operations at the micro-, mezzo-, and macro-levels. At the micro level, he frames the electoral victory as the result of a collective struggle through lexical, modal, metaphorical, rhetorical, and agency constructions that delegitimize elites and normalize demands for structural change. At the mezzo level, the speech reconstructs the victory speech genre by linking it to a narrative of ongoing struggle through historical intertextuality strategies that position the audience as active political subjects. At the macro level, the discourse operates as an ideological intervention that challenges neoliberal and oligarchic hegemony by asserting democratic socialism as a response to inequality in contemporary democracy. Theoretically, the finding of this study not only confirm the relevance of Fairclough's three-dimensional model for the analysis of political discourse but also provide concrete empirical evidence of how the dialectical relationship among texts, discursive practices, and social practices operates simultaneously in the production, circulation, and legitimation of progressive political

discourse. However, the limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single element, without linking it to an analysis of public reception. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across actors, to combine CDA with quantitative analysis, and to examine wider public reception to deepen understanding of the relationship between language, power, and democracy.

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