

# A Critical Discourse Analysis of Zohran Mamdani's Mayoral Victory Speech: Textual Dimensions and Political Rhetoric

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the linguistic strategies and ideological meanings embedded in Zohran Mamdani's 2025 mayoral victory speech by applying Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Through an exploration of the macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure, the study shows how Mamdani shapes a progressive political persona, builds a sense of shared agency, and contests the dominance of established power holders. On the macrostructural level, the speech is organized around five key ideas: the reclaiming of political power by working-class groups, the forging of broad-based solidarity, the portrayal of the election win as a historical turning point, the outlining of concrete policy proposals, and New York City's role in resisting nationwide right-wing movements. The superstructure analysis indicates that the speech combines typical features of victory addresses with rhetorical elements commonly found in social movements, such as collective emotional release and explicit challenges to political opponents. Meanwhile, the microstructural analysis reveals intentional lexical patterns, vivid depictions of labor, extensive use of inclusive pronouns, and recurring metaphors particularly those involving

grasping, breathing, and light that help construct its message of transformation. Collectively, the findings illustrate how Mamdani reshapes the victory speech genre into a platform for counter-hegemonic communication, offering a deeper understanding of contemporary progressive discourse.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Political victory speeches occupy a crucial role within democratic societies. They function not only as moments of celebration but also as performative acts that mold public consciousness, legitimize authority, and outline political visions. Scholars describe these events as "critical discourse moments" in which power relations, ideological orientations, and collective identities are revealed and shaped through language (Flowerdew, 2017). In an era marked by deepening economic inequality, democratic erosion, and heightened polarization, the linguistic strategies employed by progressive political figures merit close examination. Victory speeches, in particular, represent a transitional communicative space where politicians move from campaigning to governing, redefining their relationship with the electorate while setting out future agendas (Charteris-Black Jonathan, 2018).

Zohran Mamdani's 2025 election victory as the Mayor of New York City provides a compelling case for critical discourse analysis. As a democratic socialist, Muslim immigrant, and the youngest individual ever to assume this position, Mamdani's political rise disrupted established norms within U.S. politics. His speech was delivered amid intense polarization, economic precarity among urban working-class groups, and ongoing debates regarding the Democratic Party's direction. Framed as an alternative to both centrist establishment politics and right-wing populism, Mamdani's discourse advanced a vision rooted in class solidarity and multicultural democracy. This makes his speech a particularly valuable site for exploring how progressive leaders craft counter-narratives that reconcile identity politics with economic justice.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a methodological framework capable of uncovering the ideological work embedded in political texts. Van Dijk's multidimensional model is particularly useful, enabling simultaneous analysis across macro, meso, and micro levels of discourse. Such an approach illuminates the interplay between overarching ideological themes, organizational structures, and detailed linguistic features (Fairclough, 2023). Specifically, Van Dijk's framework delineates three textual dimensions: the macrostructure, which captures the

global meanings and central topics defining the text's "aboutness" (Van Dijk, 2014); the superstructure, which refers to the schematic arrangement and conventional format of the text (Huda et al., 2020); and the microstructure, encompassing lexical choices, syntactic constructions, rhetorical devices, and stylistic patterns shaping the surface meaning (Hart & Cap, 2014).

Recent analyses of progressive discourse have highlighted common strategies such as the use of inclusive pronouns to build collective identity, the framing of economic populism, references to historical social movements, and the negotiation between universalist and identity-based appeals (Lakoff & Wehling, 2012). However, relatively few studies have examined how these elements appear specifically in victory speeches, particularly within urban contexts where progressive candidates must unify diverse, multiracial constituencies while promoting transformative policy visions. Most prior studies have focused on campaign rhetoric or inaugural addresses, leaving victory speeches underexplored despite their importance as transitional moments between electoral success and governance (Maliara, 2025).

This study seeks to fill that gap through a detailed textual analysis of Mamdani's victory speech. It aims to answer three key research questions: (1) What macrostructural themes organize the discourse, and how do they produce political meaning? (2) How does the superstructural organization enhance narrative coherence and rhetorical effectiveness? (3) What microstructural linguistic features characterize the text, and what ideological functions do they perform? By addressing these questions, the research demonstrates how contemporary progressive politicians construct counter-hegemonic narratives and negotiate the complexities of political communication in urban America. This study contributes to both methodological discussions in CDA and broader understandings of progressive discourse in contemporary U.S. politics.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs qualitative critical discourse analysis approach grounded by Van Dijk's textual dimension framework. CDA is appropriate for analyzing political speeches as it treats discourse not as neutral communication but as social practice both reflecting and constructing power relations, ideologies, and social identities (Wodak, 2021). The analysis proceeded systematically through Van Dijk's three textual levels macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure to provide comprehensive examination of how meaning was constructed at multiple scales simultaneously.

The primary data consists of complete transcription of Zohran Mamdani's mayoral victory speech delivered at Brooklyn campaign headquarters following his election as New York City mayor in 2025. The speech comprises approximately 2,800 words delivered to live audience and subsequently circulated through media channels. As public political text, it represents both communicative act directed at specific audiences and broader intervention into political discourse. The transcript was obtained from official campaign sources ensuring accuracy and completeness of textual data analyzed.

This research continues a multi-stage analysis based on (Van Dijk, 2014) Critical Discourse Analysis framework to explore how Zohran Mamdani's victory speech constructs meaning and ideology through language. The process began with macrostructural analysis to identify the main themes and overall ideas that make up the speech's message. It then moved on to superstructural analysis, which examines how the speech is organized, how it follows or deviates from the general conventions of victory speeches (Charteris-Black Jonathan, 2018), and how transitions and narrative structure are used to engage the audience. At the microstructural level, the analysis examines word choice, metaphor, pronouns, syntax, and rhetorical techniques such as repetition and parallelism to reveal more subtle linguistic patterns. Finally, insights from all three levels are combined to show how the theme, structure, and language of the speech work together to express Mamdani's ideological stance and communicative goals. A detailed and systematic analysis was conducted, focusing only on the written text and excluding tone, gestures, and other aspects of delivery. The analysis is further limited to selected excerpts rather than the entirety of the speech. These constraints open avenues for future research to incorporate multimodal and comparative perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of political discourse.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Result

This section presents findings from the Critical Discourse Analysis of Mamdani's victory speech across three analytical dimensions: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure.

#### 3.1.1. Macrostructural Analysis: Dominant Themes

The macrostructure analysis identified five hierarchically organized themes that structure the discourse meaning. Table 1 presents these themes with their key content and organizational functions.

**Table 1** Macrostructural Themes in Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Theme	Key Examples	Macrostructural Function
Theme 1: Power Transfer from Elite to Working Class	“working people... power does not belong in their hands”, “we have grasped it,” “Yemen bodega owners, Mexican abuelas, Senegalese taxi drivers”	Superordinate theme, primary semantic macroproposition
Theme 2: Collective Identity and Solidarity	“This city is your city and this democracy is yours too”, “Your struggle is ours, too”	Specifies agents of Theme 1
Theme 3: Historical Transformation	Nehru quote: “step out from the old to the new”, “new age,” “generation of change”	Temporalizes Theme 1
Theme 4: Policy Vision as Material Change	“freeze rents,” “free buses,” “universal childcare”. “it will be felt by..”	Specifies content of Theme 1
Theme 5: National Resistance to Trumpism	“Donald Trump... Turn the volume up”, “show a nation... how to defeat him”	Contextualizes Theme 1 in broader struggle

3.1.2. Superstructural Organization of Mamdani’s Victory Speech

The superstructure analysis identified fifteen functional sections within the speech, some of which conform to conventional victory speech genre schemas while others depart from them significantly.

**Table 2** Superstructural Organization of Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Section Number	Section Title	Primary Function	Genre Conformity
1	Opening and Acknowledgment	Declares victory and announces power transfer	Conventional
2	Gratitude and Recognition	Thanks supporters and catalogs diverse constituencies	Conventional
3	Collective Catharsis	Provides emotional release through breathing metaphor	Unconventional
4	Personal Acknowledgments	Thanks campaign team, parents, and spouse	Conventional
5	Unity and Inclusion	Addresses all voters, including opponents	Conventional
6	Hope as Political Philosophy	Defines campaign meaning: “Hope is alive”	Moderately Unconventional
7	New Age Declaration	Announces historical transformation via Nehru quote	Unconventional
8	Policy Agenda	Specifies concrete commitments	Conventional
9	Social Justice Commitments	Addresses vulnerable groups and discrimination	Moderately Unconventional
10	Anti-Trump Resistance	Directly addresses national political opposition	Unconventional
11	Governing Philosophy	Subverts “poetry/prose” formulation	Moderately Unconventional
12	Identity Politics Reflection	Acknowledges unconventional candidate characteristics	Unconventional
13	Democratic Party Critique	Offers internal criticism and renewal call	Unconventional
14	Concrete Impact Vision	Humanizes policy promises with tangible scenarios	Conventional
15	Closing Invocation	Repeats slogans and transfers ownership	Conventional

3.1.3. Microstructural Analysis: Linguistic Features

3.1.3.1 Semantic Fields and Lexical Choices

The discourse draws from distinct semantic fields to construct specific ideological positions. Table 3 presents the primary semantic fields with representative examples and their rhetorical functions.

**Table 3** Semantic Fields in Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Semantic Field	Representative Examples	Rhetorical Function
Work and Labor	“working people”, “fingers bruised from lifting boxes”, “palms calloused from delivery bike handlebars”, “knuckles scarred with kitchen burns”	Class identification through embodied labor, metonymic catalog of working-class bodies
Power	“power does not belong in their hands”, “grasp power”, “halls of power” (12 occurrences total)	Foregrounds material contestation, rejects euphemistic alternatives like “leadership”
Temporal	“dawn,” “new day,” “new age”, “generation,” “future,” “past”	Construct before-after binary essential to transformation narrative

3.1.3.2 Metaphorical Domains

Table 4 presents the systematic metaphorical domains structuring political understanding in the speech.

**Table 4** Metaphorical Domains in Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Metaphor Domain	Representative Examples	Conceptual Mapping	Rhetorical Effect
Politics as Physical Grasping	“dared to reach for something greater”, “we have grasped it”, “The future is in our hands”	Politics = Physical Object, Political Action = Physical Seizure	Construct politics as material object that can be physically seized, emphasizes agency and effort
Breathing and Suffocation	“breathe this moment in”, “We have held our breath”, “air has been knocked out of our lungs”, “breathing in the air of a city reborn”	Political Exclusion = Suffocation, Victory = Restoration of Breath	Personalizes political experience, creates physiological urgency, organizes collective catharsis section
Light and Darkness	“see the dawn”, “lights shine again”, “political darkness”, “New York will be the light”	Knowledge/Hope = Light, Opposition = Darkness	Links progress to illumination, materializes through NYCHA hallway lights reference
Building	“built this campaign”, “build a city hall”, “build a shining city for all”	Politics = Construction, Governance = Building	Emphasizes collective labor, incremental progress, and permanence

3.1.3.3 Pronoun Distribution and Usage

Pronoun distribution reveals ideological positioning regarding agency, collectivity, and leadership. Table 5 presents the frequency and functional analysis of pronoun usage.

**Table 5** Pronoun Distribution in Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Pronoun Category	Specific Forms	Total Frequency	Primary Function	Representative Examples
First-person plural	We, us, our	156	Construct collective political agency	“we have grasped it”, “our struggle”, “us, too”
Agentive form	We	84	Emphasizes active capacity	“we will make”, “we chose hope”
Objective form	Us	21	Positions as recipient	“done to us”, “all of us”
First-person singular	I, me, my	32	Strategic individual positioning	“I will be sown in”, “I must say”, “I am young”
Second-person	You, your	45	Creates interpersonal connection, recognizes audience agency	“you have dared”, “you eroded the cynicism”

3.1.3.4 Social Actor Representation

The discourse exhibits asymmetrical representation patterns in how antagonists and supporters are specified. Table 6 presents this representational asymmetry.

**Table 6** Social Actor Representation Patterns

Actor Category	Specification Strategy	Representative Examples
Antagonists	Specified by power, class, and abstract categories	“the wealthy and the well-connected”, “those in city hall”, “the billionaire class”, “oligarchy”, “Donald Trump”
Supporters	Specified by occupation, ethnicity, and geography	“Yemen bodega owners”, “Mexican abuelas”, “Senegalese taxi drivers”, “Uzbek nurses”, “Trinidadian line cooks”, “Ethiopian aunties”

3.1.3.5 Modal Auxiliary Distribution

Modal auxiliary distribution reveals epistemic and deontic commitments in the discourse. Table 7 presents modal verb frequency and functions.

**Table 7** Modal Auxiliary Distribution in Mamdani’s Victory Speech

Modal Auxiliary	Frequency	Primary Function	Representative Examples
Will	47	High-commitment promises, construct certainty	“we will fight”, “we will prove”
Can	23	Possibility and capacity, counters impossibility narratives	“working people can love”, “we can respond to oligarchy”, “we can show a nation”
Must	8	Ethical and practical imperatives	“I must say this”, “we must chart a new path”

3.1.3.6 Classic Rhetorical Devices

The speech deploys classical rhetorical devices extensively. Table 8 catalogs these devices with frequency and function.

**Table 8**  
*Classical Rhetorical Devices in Mamdani’s Victory Speech*

Rhetorical Device	Definition	Representative Examples	Pattern of Use	Rhetorical Effect
Anaphora	Repetition of initial words/phrases	“Thank you to...” (4x), “We will...” (15+x), “It will be felt by...” (4x)	High	Creates rhythmic emphasis, structures audience expectation

Tricolon	Three-part parallel structure	“Hope over tyranny. Hope over big money and small ideas. Hope over despair”, “I am young... I am Muslim. I am a democratic socialist”	Moderate	Creates sense of completeness, provides rhetorical force
Antithesis	Binary oppositions	“the many and the few”, “campaign in poetry, govern in prose”, “done to us” vs. “we do”	Moderate	Constructs clear contrasts supporting transformation narrative
Apostrophe	Direct address absent to party	“So, Donald Trump, since I know you’re watching”	Strategic	Dramatizes conflict, positions speaker as unafraid
Allusion	Historical/cultural references	Eugene Debs (socialist tradition), Fiorello LaGuardia (New Deal liberalism), Strategic Jawaharlal Nehru (anticolonial nationalism)	Strategic	Constructs historical legitimacy, situates within progressive traditions

### 3.2 Discussion

This section explores how three levels of analysis; macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure work together to shape the meaning and persuasive power of Mamdani's victory speech. It looks at how certain language choices and structural patterns help speech convey ideas, inspire collective action, and express distinct progressive identities. By linking these findings to existing research on political communication, populism, and critical discourse analysis, this discussion positions Mamdani's speech as part of a broader progressive rhetorical tradition and also as something new within it. Ultimately, this shows how the speech served not only as a moment of celebration but also as an act of empowerment, a reimagining of the form of a victory speech, and a reflection of democratic socialist values.

#### 3.2.1. Macrostructural Themes

The macrostructure analysis identified five dominant themes organizing discourse meaning. Theme one establishes power transfer from elite to working class as primary semantic macroproposition. This theme appears in opening sequences stating “For as long as we can remember, the working people of New York have been told by the wealthy and the well-connected that power does not belong in their hands” progressing to “And yet over the last 12 months, you have dared to reach for something greater. Tonight, against all odds. We have grasped it.” This theme recurs throughout with increasing specificity, identifying marginalized groups claiming power including “Yemen bodega owners and Mexican abuelas, Senegalese taxi drivers and Uzbek nurses, Trinidadian line cooks and Ethiopian aunts.” The discourse constructs binary opposition between “the many” and “the few” positioning victory as vindication for former. Power transfer is framed not as gifted but seized, employing active agency rather than passive reception.

Theme two constructs collective identity and solidarity across difference as unified political subject. The speech performs intensive identity work repeatedly cataloging New York’s demographic diversity while asserting common cause. This appears in passages such as “To every New Yorker in Kensington and Midwood and Hunts Point, know this. This city is your city and this democracy is yours, too.” The discourse navigates tensions between recognizing particular identities and building solidarity through shared class position and democratic participation. Individual stories of Wesley the hospital organizer, woman on BX33 bus, and Richard the taxi driver function as synecdoche for broader constituencies while maintaining specificity of experience. The theme culminates in assertion “Your struggle is ours, too” performing a linguistic fusion of particular and universal.

Theme three constructs victory as historical transformation and temporal rupture. This is established through extended quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru stating “A moment comes but rarely in history. When we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance. Tonight, we have stepped out from the old into the new.” The temporal structure positions present as threshold between two eras with past characterized by constraint and suppression and future by possibility and expression. Phrases including “turn the page,” “new age,” and “generation of change” reinforces temporal rupture. Transformation is framed as both already accomplished through victory achieved and yet to come through agenda to be implemented, creating dual temporality celebrating while mobilizing.

Theme four translates abstract political change into policy vision as material transformation. The discourse specifies concrete commitments stating “freeze the rents for more than 2 million rent-stabilized tenants. Make buses fast and free. And deliver universal child care across our city.” These policy proposals are presented not as technical governance but as material improvements in daily life. The theme emphasizes tangibility and experiential

change with repeated formulation “it will be felt by...” creating semantic pattern linking policy to embodied experience materializing abstraction. Policy is constructed as transforming lived experience of grandparents staying in homes, mothers making work on time, and families affording childcare.

Theme five positions victory within national political conflict specifically as resistance to Trumpism and right-wing authoritarianism. This theme receives sustained attention stating “So, Donald Trump, since I know you’re watching, I have four words for you. Turn the volume up.” The discourse constructs dialectical relationship between local governance and national politics arguing New York’s progressive policies directly counters Trumpian politics through the assertion “if anyone can show a nation betrayed by Donald Trump how to defeat him, it is the city that gave rise to him.” This theme performs multiple functions elevating local victory to national significance, defining progressive politics through opposition, and claiming moral authority through resistance.

These five themes are hierarchically organized with theme one functioning as superordinate theme under which others are subsumed. Theme two provides agent of theme one. Theme five contextualizes theme one within broader political struggle. This hierarchical organization creates semantic coherence while allowing thematic development throughout speech.

The macrostructural findings are consistent with earlier studies that identify political speeches as instruments for constructing persuasive ideological meanings. (Nursanti & Triyono, 2022), for example, applied van Dijk’s three textual dimensions to a political speech and found that persuasive expressions are used to influence institutional audiences. The present study develops this perspective by showing that Mamdani’s dominant macrostructure is not only persuasive but also redistributive. The theme of power transfer represents working-class and marginalized communities as legitimate political agents rather than as passive recipients of political decisions. Thus, Mamdani’s speech transforms electoral victory into a collective claim to democratic ownership.

### 3.2.2. Superstructural Organization

The superstructure analysis revealed speech following modified victory speech genre schema while incorporating elements from other political discourse genres particularly social movement speech and inaugural address. The organizational structure comprises fifteen distinct functional sections. Opening and acknowledgment section declares victory and announces power transfer using the phrases “History made tonight” and “we have grasped it.” Gratitude and recognition section thanks supporters and cataloged diverse constituencies using specific ethnic and occupational identifications. Collective catharsis section provides emotional release validating struggle through extended breathing metaphor. Personal acknowledgments section thanks intimate circle including campaign team, parents, and spouse establishing authenticity and vulnerability.

Unity and inclusion section addresses all voters including who voted for opponents or abstained, promising representation and accountability. Hope as political philosophy section defines campaign meaning and counters cynicism through repeated assertions “Hope is alive” and “Hope is a decision.” New age declaration section announces historical transformation quoting Nehru and framing moment as temporal rupture. Policy agenda section specifies concrete commitments including rent freeze, free buses, and universal childcare defining governance vision. Social justice commitments section addresses vulnerable groups including immigrants, trans community, Muslims, and Jewish New Yorkers taking stands against discrimination.

Anti-Trump resistance section directly addresses national political opposition promising protection stating “To get to any of us, you will have to get through all of us.” Governing philosophy section sets expectations quoting Mario Cuomo’s “campaign in poetry, govern in prose” formulation while subverting it. Identity politics reflection section acknowledges unconventional characteristics including youth, Muslim identity, and democratic socialist ideology refusing apology. Democratic party critique section humanizes policy promises describing tangible changes felt by residents. Closing invocation section repeats campaign slogans and transfers ownership stating “This power, it’s yours. This city belongs to you.”

This organizational structure departs significantly from conventional victory speech schemas in several ways. Extended collective catharsis section representing therapeutic encounter is atypical for genre. Anti-Trump resistance section with direct address to political opponent transforms local victory speech into national political manifesto. Substantial space devoted to philosophical reflection and party critique violates genre norms emphasizing celebration over criticism. These departures signal transformative rather than incremental political orientation.

The speech employs narrative structure with three acts: struggle and exclusion in past, victory and transformation in present, and realization and building in future. This narrative arc follows heroic journey pattern with collective “we” as protagonist, established power as antagonist, and democratic participation as transformative ordeal. Notably, narrative resolution is deferred with victory achieved but “new age” remaining to be built creating ongoing narrative tension mobilizing rather than simply celebrating.

Transitions between sections employs several strategies including explicit transition markers such as “So before I say anything else,” “Now, I know that,” and “Standing before you.” Thematic repetition creates coherence across sections with “hope,” “new age,” “working people,” and “we” functioning as leitmotifs binding discrete

sections. Parallelism across sections uses multiple “This campaign is about people like...” structures, repeats “We will...” declarations, and triadic closing “together, New York, we’re going to...” pattern establishing rhythmic coherence.

The superstructural organization also extends previous research on political speech by demonstrating how conventional genre patterns can be modified for ideological purposes. While political speeches commonly include victory declarations, acknowledgments, and policy commitments, Mamdani’s speech gives substantial space to collective catharsis, identity affirmation, anti-Trump resistance, and criticism of the Democratic Party. These sections make the speech more than a conventional victory address. They position the electoral result as a broader political movement and allow Mamdani to connect immediate celebration with long-term ideological transformation.

### 3.2.3. *Microstructural Linguistic Features*

The microstructure analysis identified systematic linguistic patterns across multiple dimensions. Lexical choices draw from distinct semantic fields constructing specific ideological positions. The work and labor semantic field appears throughout including “working people,” “fingers bruised from lifting boxes,” “palms calloused from delivery bike handlebars,” and “knuckles scarred with kitchen burns.” These lexical choices perform class identification centering manual labor and bodily strain as markers of political constituency. The discourse specifies labor embodiment with progressing from fingers to palms to knuckles creating metonymic catalog of working-class bodies. Past participles “bruised,” “calloused,” and “scarred” emphasize injury and hardening constructing working-class identity through accumulated bodily toll.

The power semantic field is explicitly foregrounded with “power” appearing twelve times in phrases including “power does not belong in their hands,” “allowed to hold power,” “we have grasped it,” and “halls of power.” The repetition rejects euphemistic alternatives like “leadership” insisting on power’s materiality and contestation. The collocation “grasp power” employs force-dynamic verb suggesting active seizure rather than democratic transfer. The temporal semantic field constructs historical transformation through “dawn,” “new day,” “new age,” “generation,” “future,” and “past” creating before-after binary essential to change narrative. The past is selectively claimed invoking historical progressive figures while relegating recent political establishment to obsolescence.

Metaphor analysis revealed several systematic domains structuring political understanding. The “Politics as Physical Grasping” metaphor appears in “dared to reach for something greater,” “we have grasped it,” and “The future is in our hands” constructing politics as object that could be physically seized emphasizing agency and effort. The “Breathing and Suffocation” metaphor organizes emotional catharsis section through “breathe this moment in,” “We have held our breath,” “air has been knocked out of our lungs,” “we cannot afford to exhale,” and “breathing in the air of a city that has been reborn.” This extended metaphor constructs political exclusion as literal suffocation and victory as restoration of breath and life personalizing political experience while creating physiological urgency.

The “Light and Darkness” metaphor structures hope theme through “see the dawn,” “lights shine again,” “political darkness,” and “New York will be the light.” This conventional metaphor links knowledge, hope, and progress to illumination while associating opposition with obscurity. The specificity “make lights shine again in the hallways of NYCHA developments where they have long flickered” materialized metaphor connecting abstract illumination to literal infrastructure. The “Building” metaphor frames governance through “built this campaign,” “build a city hall,” and “build a shining city for all” emphasizing collective labor, incremental progress, and permanence contrasting with metaphors of political leadership as navigation or combat.

Pronoun distribution reveals ideological positioning with first-person plural “we,” “us,” and “our” dominating appearing 156 times constructing collective political agency. Distribution between “we” with 84 occurrences and “us” with 21 occurrences favors agentive form emphasizing active capacity over passive reception. First-person singular “I” appears strategically 32 times primarily in sections expressing gratitude, making commitments, and asserting identity. Modulation between “I” and “we” constructs leadership as representative rather than heroic with Mamdani speaking as individual but acting as collective agent exemplified in phrase “I will be sworn in as the mayor... and that is because of you” explicitly attributing individual achievement to collective action.

Second-person “you” appears 45 times directly addressing audiences creating interpersonal connection. Notably “you” often appears in recognizing actions such as “you have dared” and “you eroded the cynicism” rather than instructing, positioning audience as already-active agents. Third-person references constructs specific actors with antagonists specified by power rather than personal characteristics including “the wealthy and the well-connected,” “those in city hall,” “the billionaire class,” “oligarchy,” and “Donald Trump.” Conversely supporters are specified by occupation, ethnicity, and geography including “Yemen bodega owners,” “Mexican abuelas,” and “Senegalese taxi drivers.” This representational asymmetry constructs class-based conflict while celebrating working-class diversity.

Syntactic patterns employs varied structures for rhetorical effect. Short declarative sentences creates emphasis in climactic moments such as “We have answered those fears,” “Hope is alive,” and “This power, it’s yours.” The

brevity suggested certainty and finality. Longer periodic sentences build momentum through accumulation exemplified in "And while we cast our ballots alone, we chose hope together. Hope over tyranny. Hope over big money and small ideas. Hope over despair" with pattern delaying main clause completion creating anticipation and emphasis when resolution arrived.

Parallel syntactic structures creates rhythmic patterns including "Fingers bruised from lifting boxes on the warehouse floor. Palms calloused from delivery bike handlebars. Knuckles scarred with kitchen burns" with repetition of body part plus past participle plus prepositional phrase creating poetic cadence. Similar parallelism appears in policy commitments through anaphoric "We will" establishing rhythmic pattern signaling determination in statements "We will hire thousands more teachers. We will cut waste from a bloated bureaucracy. We will work tirelessly." Rhetorical questions are notably absent with discourse making assertions rather than inviting speculation constructing confident authority rather than dialogic exploration.

Modal auxiliaries reveal epistemic and deontic commitments. Future-oriented "will" dominates appearing 47 times in constructions such as "we will make," "we will fight," and "we will prove." This high-commitment modality constructs promises as certainties rather than contingent intentions. Modal "can" appears strategically 23 times in constructions of possibility including "working people can love," "we can respond to oligarchy," and "we can show a nation" emphasizing capacity and countering narratives of impossibility. Modal "must" appears in obligation contexts 8 times including "I must say this" and "we must chart a new path" constructing ethical imperatives rather than merely strategic choices. Modal "should" is largely absent avoiding tentative or advisory mode in favor of committed assertion.

Evaluative language constructs clear value hierarchies. Positive evaluation clusters around collective action using terms "unstoppable force," "bold vision," and "incredible" around working-class constituencies using "hardworking" and around progressive values using "justice," "compassion," and "excellence." Negative evaluation targets establishments using "bloated bureaucracy" and "broken system" conservative politics using "tyranny," "oligarchy," and "authoritarianism" and status quo using "mediocrity," "excuses," and "cynicism." This binary evaluative pattern constructs moral clarity supporting central power-transfer theme.

The speech deploys classical rhetorical devices extensively. Anaphora or repetition of initial words appears throughout with "Thank you to..." repeated 4 times, "We will..." repeated over 15 times, and "It will be felt by..." repeated 4 times creating rhythmic emphasis while structuring audience expectation. Tricolon or three-part parallel structure appears frequently in "Hope over tyranny. Hope over big money and small ideas. Hope over despair" and "I am young... I am Muslim. I am a democratic socialist" with triadic pattern creating completeness and rhetorical force. Antithesis structures multiple passages including "the many and answers only to the few," "campaign in poetry, you govern in prose," and "no longer would politics be something that is done to us. Now it is something that we do" with binary oppositions constructing clear contrasts supporting transformation narrative.

Apostrophe or direct address to absent parties appears in Trump section through "So, Donald Trump, since I know you're watching" dramatizing conflict while positioning Mamdani as unafraid to challenge power directly. Allusion invokes political lineage through Eugene Debs representing socialist tradition, Fiorello LaGuardia representing New Deal liberalism, and Jawaharlal Nehru representing anticolonial nationalism. These allusions construct historical legitimacy while situating campaign within progressive and anticolonial traditions.

The microstructural findings also correspond with previous studies of political discourse that identify modality, thematic structure, and lexical choices as important indicators of ideology. (Shinta et al., 2021) found that political speeches can use textual features, including modality and thematic development, to construct ideological positions on immigration. In contrast to exclusionary political discourse, Mamdani's speech uses inclusive pronouns, labor-related imagery, and future-oriented modality to construct a discourse of collective agency. The frequent use of "we," "our," and "will" presents political change as a shared responsibility and represents working-class communities as active participants in democratic transformation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study uses van Dijk's (2014) Critical Discourse Analysis framework to examine Zohran Mamdani's 2025 mayoral victory speech through macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. At the macrostructural level, the speech is organized around five main themes: the transfer of power from elites to working-class communities, collective identity and solidarity, historical transformation, policy as material change, and resistance to Trumpism. These themes present Mamdani's victory as a collective political shift rather than a personal achievement. At the superstructural level, the speech combines common features of victory speeches, such as gratitude, unity, policy commitments, and closing remarks, with less conventional elements, including collective catharsis and direct criticism of Donald Trump. This structure creates a clear movement from past exclusion, to present victory, and then to future political action. At the microstructural level, Mamdani uses labor-related vocabulary, inclusive pronouns, future-oriented modality, metaphors, repetition, parallelism, antithesis, and direct address to construct

working-class identity, collective agency, and confidence in political change. Overall, the findings show that the speech transforms a conventional victory speech into counter-hegemonic discourse that promotes collective ownership, progressive political identity, and democratic legitimacy. Future research may include multimodal analysis of tone, gestures, facial expressions, and audience reactions, compare similar progressive victory speeches, or examine audience responses through interviews and social-media comments.

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