

**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selena Marie Gomez's Motivational Speeches:
Obliterating the Stereotypical Construction of Social Stigma, Mental Health, and
Self-Acceptance**

Saira Abbas¹

Ali Hussain Bin Sadiq²

Corresponding Author: *sairaabbas7212@gmail.com*

Abstract

This research paper aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis of Selena Marie Gomez's motivational speeches. Selena Marie Gomez an American singer, producer, businesswoman, model, and activist, is renowned for her inspirational speeches that focus on themes of resilience, hope, mental health, and overcoming adversity. The study aims to explore how Selena Marie Gomez negates conventional construction of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance, and provides a novel insight in her speeches. The study employs qualitative and descriptive techniques to illustrate as well as evaluate the data. The present research employs a commixture of critical discourse analysis, and motivational theory's frameworks to analyze Selena Gomez's five speeches with reference to language, discourse, and social context to understand how she annihilates the stereotypical binary oppositions and reinforces certain social identities and power relations. The findings of this study have implications for understanding how motivational speeches reshape public perceptions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance for promoting more inclusive and empowering discourses in public discourse.

Keywords: *Selena Gomez, critical discourse analysis, Fairclough's three dimensional model, self-determination theory, mental health, self-acceptance, social stigma*

Introduction

Communication is a means of transmitting feelings and thoughts of individuals as well as of groups. There are several forms of communication. They are utilized to encode concepts and thoughts. An appropriate communication requires clarity of concepts and less ambiguous statements (Spitzberg, 2000). However, fruitful communication depends on the meaningful transmission of the concepts and ideas (Broadbent, 2013). Moreover, communication has power to influence as well as reshape the notions and perceptions of the people (Diehl, 2004). Speech is a remarkable source of communication. It is used for different reasons, such as to persuade, motivate, inspire, entertain, and provide information to the audience. Especially, speeches of motivational speakers are employed to motivate, inspire and encourage the listeners (Craig, 2006). Selena Gomez's speeches obliterate conventional notions and incarcerate a significant position in literary criticism. Her speeches give readers a new lens to visualize gender, mental health, and resilience. The focus of the current research is to examine Selena Marie Gomez speeches from critical discourse perspective, scrutinizing the ways through which textual

¹MPhil Scholar, DLC, UMT Sialkot Campus, Pakistan.

²PhD, Assistant Professor, DLC, UMT Sialkot Campus, Pakistan

features in Selena Gomez speeches nullify bromidic concepts of mental health and self-acceptance. Moreover, present study also explores themes that reveal Selena Gomez's affinity with socio-cultural discourse and how motivational stimuli and techniques help to motivate the audience.

There are several reasons that makes this research significant. First of all, it highlights a gap in the field of criticism because there is no relevant research available that analyze Selena Gomez speeches in the perspective of Fairclough's three dimensional model. Secondly, present research negates stereotypical notions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance after utilizing Fairclough's model. Moreover, it exhibits Selena Gomez's affinity with socio-cultural discourse. Thirdly, the current research highlights the ways through which Selena motivates and persuades the audience.

Consequently, the present research is expected to collaborate in the discipline of literary criticism and motivation. Moreover, it intends to revisit conventional concepts of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance.

Research Objectives

Current research organizes some objectives to accentuate critical discourse perspectives from the speeches of Selena Gomez. The subsequent research objectives ascertain the focus of the study:

- i. To demonstrate textual features from the speeches of Selena Gomez to obliterate stereotypical notions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance
- ii. To trace themes in Selena Gomez's speeches to depict her affinity with socio-cultural discourse
- iii. To highlight motivational stimuli and techniques projected in Self-determination Theory in Selena Gomez speeches

Research Questions

This work is devoted to find out the answers of the following research questions:

- i. How do textual features in Selena Gomez's speeches obliterate stereotypical notions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance?
- ii. What themes in Selena Gomez's speeches do depict her affinity with socio-cultural discourse?
- iii. How does Selena Gomez employ motivational stimuli and techniques projected in Self-determination theory to motivate the audience?

Significance of the Study

Previous researches on Selena Gomez have explored several features of figurative language embedded in her songs (Gunawan et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2020; Khamaduddin, 2021;

Varassictha, 2023; Mokoagouw et al., 2022; Sunariasih & Soetama, 2023; Halawa, 2023; Rizki, 2021; Ariningsih, 2022). Moreover, the features of social cognition are discovered by Rosmaria and Rozelin (2023) require further examination. Additionally, Rahmani (2018) has illustrated health journey of Selena Gomez; this domain also needs more exploration.

However, the research gap addresses the aspect that there is no research available that analyze Selena Gomez speeches in the perspective of Fairclough's three dimensional model. Moreover, current research refutes stereotypical notions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance. It also highlights Selena's affinity with socio-cultural discourse and introduces stimuli that she recruits to aspire the viewers. Consequently, present research precisely intends to fill this gap in rigorous manners.

Literature Review

Selena Gomez is not only a versatile actress but also an American singer and motivational activist. The great achievement of her life is her survival from lupus. Even, she experienced kidney transplant in 2017 and recovered from an adversity. She anticipates to reveal her health journey with the audience without any hesitation to motivate the viewers (Rahmani, 2018). Moreover, she is broadly acclaimed for social cognition in her speeches. In this regard she refers to employ figurative language in her discourse (Rosmaria & Rozelin, 2023). Similarly, a discourse analysis of Selena Gomez's "Ice Cream" accentuates that her song is a coalition of figurative language. Through these figurative devices, she anticipates to convey denotative and connotative comprehension of her song to the audience (Gunawan et al., 2021).

Comparably, a semantic analysis scrutinizes different kinds of figurative choices in Selena Gomez speeches. Her six songs are an amalgamation of figurative devices and the frequency of these devices in her songs is 44% holistically whereas, the percentage of figurative devices fluctuate. The highest frequency attained by the metaphor 48% but the hyperbole frequency was only 12%. Although, the prevalence of simile is 28% and repetition was only 12% (Simarmata et al., 2021). Similarly, another study explores figurative language in Selena Gomez's song. Approximately, six types of literary devices are used in her song and hyperbole is frequently employed as figurative device. She recruits hyperbole for fundamental reasons. Firstly, she prefers to highlight aesthetic beauty of her songs. Secondly, she contrives a comparison between literal and associative meaning in her songs (Dewi et al, 2020). Correspondingly, Khamaduddin's (2021) study indicates that Selena has a unique inclination towards the utilization of metaphorical as well as ideational meaning in her 17 songs. The chief cause behind the application of these two figurative devices is to develop a rigorous affinity with the audience. Through these devices, she aspires to inculcate her essence in the mind of the listeners. Contrastively, the research conducted by Varassictha (2023) caters a rigorous utilization of deixis in Selena Gomez's songs. In her 6 songs, she employs 5 types of deixis. In her songs there is a great frequency of individual deixis, temporal deixis and spatial deixis. Adversely, textual and social deixis are also in great strength. After using these deixis she strives to contrive her attachment with the audience. The semantic analysis of unearths the utilization of metaphor and themes in Selena Gomez song (Mokoagouw et al., 2022). She employs approximately three types of metaphors and several kinds of themes in her song. In the recent study, Sunariasih and

Soetama, (2023) corroborate that Selena Gomez loads her song with interactional implicatures. In this regard she adopts two categories of implicatures, such as general and significant. Moreover, the contemporary study of Halawa (2023) identifies the application of two affixes in ‘Gomez Revival Album’, such as derivation and inflection. Through derivation, she introduces novel word in her songs; and through the exertion of inflection, she desires to provide new meaning to her songs. Additionally, Rizki`s (2021) research vocalizes that some songs of Selena Gomez are amalgamations of figurative features. In her songs, there are several kinds of figurative language and each type of figurative language articulates different meanings. Likewise, Ariningsih`s (2022) study examines figurative language in Selena Gomez songs. It also scrutinizes several types of figurative language and their meanings in her songs. Selena implants various kinds of figurative devices in her songs, such as personification, hyperbole, metaphors, similes, and paradox. Moreover, 19 meanings of figurative language are also highlighted in her songs.

Theoretical Framework

The current research work is devised through the frameworks of Fairclough’s Model (1989) and Self-Determination Theory (1980). Fairclough's three dimensional model caters a theoretical framework that highlights the perplex relationship among discourse, power, and social practices. The model contains three interlace dimensions: textual dimension, discursive dimension, and social practice dimension. The first dimension ‘textual dimension’ stipulates the linguistic attributes of the text. Conversely, second dimension exposes power, refers to the social power functioning in developing and fabricating the text. The third dimension indicates towards its relationship with social practice dimension. The roots of this dimension are attached with power relation, social structures, and ideologies that are embedded in the text.

However, in the present study Fairclough’s three dimensional model bestows a theoretical framework to construct a deep apprehension about complicated interrelation among language, power, and social practice in a discourse. This approach has a rigorous affinity with socio-cultural discourse. However, the first dimension ‘textual dimension’ from Fairclough’s three dimensional model provides a theoretical framework that obliterates conventional notions, alerts stigmatization, and stereotypical perspectives of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance embedded in Selena Gomez’s speeches. It also highlights hollowness, trepidation, and superficiality of society that Selena Gomez highlights in her remarkable speeches.

Self-Determination Theory's framework (1980) provides complete comprehension about motivational and inspirational factors that anticipate individuals to chase their goals. It also throws light on congenital psychological needs, such as autonomy, independence, affinity, and competence. These needs motivate individuals' stimulation. The focal points of this theory are intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivations. Moreover, this theory provides a new lens to evaluate the text and investigates hidden motivational stimuli. This theory postulates that human beings feel more satisfied when the primary needs are achieved. It divides motivation into three portions: internal motivation, external motivation, and emotion. Furthermore, this theory is applicable for numerous fields. It not only pays attention to motivation but also gives importance to an individual's performance. Hence, self-determination theory’s theoretical framework provides different level of motivation, stimuli and techniques. Thus, the combined theoretical

framework, consisting of CDA's model and self-Determination Theory, are used to highlight how Selena Gomez motivates and develops coalition with the audience.

Research Methodology

In the baseline of qualitative research, descriptive study is opted to explore the textual features, themes, motivational stimuli, and techniques from the speeches of Selena Gomez. In this perspective, online resources were selected to incorporate in the study. The transcriptions of the speeches were collected through the official YouTube channel of Gomez. For the collection of data, the researcher preferred to copy the transcriptions of top six viewed speeches that were available in the description box of every video to render the analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The analysis in the present section draws on three segments. The first part of the exploration examines how Selena Gomez's speeches obliterate customary perspectives of social stigma, mental health, and self- acceptance through the utilization of textual analytical dimension from Fairclough's model. The second part appraises Selena Gomez's rigorous affinity with socio-cultural discourse in the wake of socio-cultural practices. This segment concentrates on the underlying socio-cultural themes in the discourse. The third step scrutinizes the motivational stimuli and techniques in her speeches after the adoption of Self-determination Theory.

Obliteration of stereotypical notions of social stigma, mental health, and resilience through the application of linguistic features

Selena Gomez's speeches are prominent in the field of criticism because her speeches are enrich with textual features that demonstrate multitudinous meanings and cater an authentic message to her audience. She anticipates to employ linguistic features, such as repetition, anecdotes, alliteration, pronoun I, hyperbole, and negative adverbs to deny the typical concepts of social stigma, mental health, and self- acceptance from every society. Moreover, she pays attention how she can dismantle stereotypical perception of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance through textual features.

Through the repetition of *pronoun I*, Selena highlights unique dimension of self-acceptance. In this regard, she shares her person journey of recovery with the audience. She also reveals perseverance and strength that help her to overcome adversities. As she proclaims,

"I'm not an activist, I have not changed the world or led a campaign, I'm here to just tell you my path so that you hopefully can take something from it".

Furthermore, she exhibits the splashes of self-empowerment and self-acceptance through the application of linguistic feature *hyperbole*. As she describes,

"I just got weird. I just got really complicated. And I started noticing that my life just became a story. And I was really, I was, I was just not OK with that because it was real and it was very real to me. That's the time I needed to just say, I'm not going to be part of this anymore. HOW am I going to not be afraid to share what I feel just because I'm mad at what the world doing?"

Correspondingly, she advises the audience to accept themselves in every condition. Likewise, she accepts herself. In this regard, she infuses *negative adverb* in her speech. As she narrates,

"I never stop loving me."

Additionally, she employs linguistic feature *repetition* to obliterate stereotypical perspectives of a self-acceptance and highlights the new dimension of self-acceptance. As she expresses,

"I never never let that happened because I still believe and hope. I hope for love and I hope for healing and I hope for change."

In addition, she occupies linguistic feature *anecdote* in her speeches. She employs this feature to annihilate conventional notions of mental health. People do not prefer to discuss their several psychological issues but anticipate hiding their mental problems. Moreover, there are still numerous stigmatization in the modern society that are associated with mental health. Contrastively, Selena nullifies these customary perceptions and discloses her mental health in front of the audience without any kind of hesitation.

"I am dealing with depression then find out everything you and when you have a relationship with depression as opposed to know you allowing it to keep sinking and inside of me it's it's a little bit more freezing. I think to understand yourself better I want to know what triggers me I want to know why I get depressed and start asking yourself questions to open up yourself."

Motivational aptitude and stimuli, proposed by the "Self-determination Theory" to persuade and motivate the listeners

Undoubtedly, Selena Gomez is an emblem of gratitude and inspiration. Her speeches contrive the reflection of own existence. She aims to motivate, influence, and stipulate her audience through her stimuli that she aspires to implant in her speeches. Persistently, her speeches revolve around numerous motivational stimuli and inclination, such as hope, mental health, self-acceptance, realism, trust on yourself, persuasive language, gratitude, support system, anecdote, pronoun I, and self-realization.

Moreover, Selena Gomez aspires to induce *mental health* as a motivational stimuli because through this tool she develops awareness about mental health in the audience and she also highlights the significance of mental health in an individual's life. In this regard, she mostly shares her personal experience of *bipolar disorder* without any embarrassment with the listeners. As she delineates,

"I am dealing with depression then find out every single thing you can about what that means and when you have a relationship with depression as opposed to you know allowing it to keep sinking and inside of you it's it's a little bit more freezing I think."

Furthermore, persuasive language is Selena Gomez's rigorous gadget to persuade the audience, fabricate a coalition with the audience, and infuse her essence in the mind of the viewers.

In addition to, another stimulus that Selena Gomez implants with a great dexterity is *realism*. With the help of this instrument, she advises her fans to confront realities rather than escapism. She emphasizes to face every situation with truthfulness and diligence. As she elucidates,

"Please stay true to yourself, please just real who you are."

However, *support system* is one of the rigorous stimuli that she inserts in her discourse. The root cause to infuse this stimulus is to enhance consciousness in the listeners and realize them that through their support system they can save the lives of their loved ones as well as other

individuals. She also enlightens the importance of support system. In this regard, she reveals her journey of recovery that how her family and friends supported her. As she articulates,

"That is also my family and friends learning how to live with it too."

Similarly, she describes,

"Sometimes you'll have moments where you'll feel weak. They are supposed to encourage you. They are supposed to motivate you and push you."

Moreover, she encourages *support system* because according to her point of view it is essential to spend a better life. In this regard, she stresses on the selection of support system. As she vocalizes,

"I would say making sure you surrounded yourself with great people."

Likewise, she promotes *support system* and illustrates,

"Please, please just be kind to each other and love and inspire people because let's do it. Let's do it, let's change the game let's change the game."

Furthermore, all her speeches have an extensive infusion of *anecdotes*. She implants these anecdotes in her speeches to develop a coalition and emotional bonding with the audience. She describes her physical health and develops awareness about disease as well as its treatment. As she articulates,

"Tonight my lupus community as many of you know I was diagnosed or might not know I was diagnosed with lupus five to six years ago I'm speaking out about my situation to raise awareness of the disease so people see doctor right away or if they feel they have any symptoms."

She recruits *Gratitude* in her speeches as a motivational stimulus. She employs this motivational stimulus to motivate the audience and compare her personal life's hardships and adversities. She also highlights her sense of thankfulness instead of disastrous and catastrophic situations in her life. She revitalizes sense of gratefulness in the minds of the viewers. As she describes,

"I feel incredibly lucky because I was not confused to feel like if said too much maybe I was not doing enough and honestly I couldn't be more grateful for the position that I've given in my career from 7 to 14 to now."

Themes in Selena Gomez's speeches expose her affinity with Socio-cultural discourse

Undoubtedly, Selena Gomez's speeches are matchless because her speeches pay attention to substantial societal issues, including social stigma, mental health, gender, self-acceptance, body shaming, self-belief, and social criticism. Through her themes, she persuades the individuals to obliterate social stereotypical perspectives of the society and spend their lives on their own individuality. Her themes do not give attention to specific society but articulate for all societies around the world. Her themes reverberate with the audience and interpret her message effectively to the listeners.

Almost in every speech, Selena Gomez employs the themes of the social stigma, self-acceptance, body shaming and self-belief because through these themes she breaks barricades of social stigmatization. She encourages the viewers to face their adversaries rather than becoming escapist. She guides the individuals to accept themselves rather than societal beliefs and restrictions. To provide a crystal clear comprehension, she brings to light her personal life. As she proclaims,

"You are not defined by an Instagram photo, by a comment that does not define you."

Furthermore, she highlights self-acceptance and describes,

“Always be yourself, there’s no one better than you.”

Additionally, she pays attention to self-belief and elucidates,

“What you think about yourself is much more important than what others think of you.”

She emphasizes the theme of “social stigma”. As she demonstrates,

“You can’t be afraid of what people are going to say, because you’re never going to make everyone happy.”

To spotlight social problem of *body shaming*, she articulates,

“I realize everybody wants what they don’t have. But at the end of the day, what you have inside much more beautiful than what’s on the outside.”

Moreover, she frequently utilizes themes of perseverance, realism, and resilience that disclose her positive approach towards adversities as well as complications of life. Escapism has become a social issue not in particular culture but in fact in every society. Individuals prefer to escape rather than identify their own strengths of resilience and perseverance to overcome adversities. These themes expose her coalition with socio-cultural discourse because she tries to pay attention to the individuals of every society and cultural. To highlight these themes, she also mentions her suffering and highlights how she recollected her energies, as expressed in the following:

“I become to face it head on as my mother faced my fears I saw how to help actually started to get the help that I needed and I got educated I talked to a lot of the people that were suffering with the same things. I read a lot about it.”

Additionally, she stresses on the theme of resilience. She delineates,

“You are not what happened to you, you are what you choose to become after what happens to you.”

CONCLUSION

Selena Gomez’s speeches bestow this world a multitudinous lens to observe things in entirely new dimension and obliterate conventional notions of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance. The application of linguistic features, such as anecdotes, vocabulary, pronoun, hyperbole, negative adverbs, alliteration, and repetition, provide her speeches overwhelming attributes as well as strength to obliterate stereotypical perception of social stigma, mental health, and self-acceptance. In addition, Selena Gomez speeches highlight her affinity with socio-cultural discourse as the utilization of thematic structure in her speeches is an ample instance of it. However the existence of motivational stimuli in her speeches, such as persuasive language, hope, gratitude, support system, self-acceptance, emotive language, anecdote, realism, and self-realization, highlights the ways through which she motivates her audience.

Future researchers may continue to explore the underlying ideas that are concealed in her speeches and they can use several models to sharpen the comprehension of the readers about Selena Marie Gomez’s speeches. Additionally, the use of alternative theoretical framework, such as Maslow’s motivational theory may also be used, which is related to socio-cognitive perspectives. Contrastively, Ruth Wodak’s model, which is related to cognition may offer a novel vision to Selena Gomez’s speeches and highlight broader social as well as cultural issues.

Reference

- Ariningsih, I. A., & Dwi, M. (2022). *An analysis of figurative language in Selena Gomez's album entitled "Rare"*. Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar.
- Broadbent, D. E. (2013). *Perception and communication*. Elsevier.
- Craig, R. T. (2006). Communication as a practice. In *GJ Shepherd, J. St. John & T. Striphas (Eds.), Communication as...: Perspectives on theory*, 38-47.
- Dewi, E. N. F., Hidayat, D. N., & Alek, A. (2020). Investigating figurative language in "Lose You to Love Me" song lyric. *Loquen: English Studies Journal*, 13(1), 6-16.
- Diehl, R. L., Lotto, A. J., & Holt, L. L. (2004). Speech perception. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 55, 149-179.
- Gunawan, S. T., Hidayat, D. N., Alek, A., & Husna, N. (2021). Figurative language used in Blackpink featuring Selena Gomez's song lyric "Ice Cream".
- Halawa, E. (2021). Derivation and inflection on selena gomez song lyrics in revival album. *Research on English Language Education (Relation Journal)*, 3(2), 33-41.
- Khamaduddin, M. (2021). *Exploring the ideational meaning in Selena Gomez's Rare Album*. Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim.
- Miftakhul Rizki, R. (2021). *A study of the meaning and message of the song lyrics in the "Rare" album by Selena Gomez*. Doctoral dissertation, Unsada.
- Mokoagouw, F., Liando, N. V., & Kumayas, T. A. (2022). Metaphors in Selena Gomez's song 'kill 'em with kindness': A semantic analysis. *SoCul: International Journal of Research in Social Cultural Issues*, 2(4), 610-617.
- Rahmani, G. (2018). Selena Gomez, lupus and the impact of celebrity health disclosure on public awareness. *Lupus*, 27(6), 1045-1046.
- Raval, R., & Trivedi, B. D. (2021). Authoring the self: An autobiographical and critical analysis of selected Selena Gomez songs. *Towards Excellence*, 13(3).
- Rozelin, D. (2023). Binocular of CDA at Selena Gomez's speech in Youtube. *Educational Journal of the Emerging World (EJEW)*, 2(1), 8-25.
- Schement, J. R. (2017). Communication and information. *Between communication and information*, 3-33.
- Simarmata, C. C., Herman, H., & Silalahi, D. E. (2021). Figurative language used in Selena Gomez's song lyrics: A semantic analysis. *JEELL (Journal of English Education, Linguistics and Literature) English Department of STKIP PGRI Jombang*, 8(1), 183-194.

- Sinaga, M. P. P. (2022). A multimodal discourse analysis on Selena Gomez's revival album Cover and Main Hit: A not-so-revival. *NIVEDANA: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Bahasa*, 3(1), 12-21.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (2000). What is good communication? *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*, 29(1), 7.
- Sunariasih, N. W., & Soetama, P. L. (2023). The implicature used by Selena Gomez in Zach song show related to mental health and finding happiness issues. *Linguistika: Buletin Ilmiah Program Magister Linguistik Universitas Udayana*, 30 (1).
- Varassictha, R. Y. (2023). *Deixis analysis found on the song lyrics in Selena Gomez "Revival" album*. Doctoral dissertation, STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo.