



## COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESSES OF FORMAL PRESIDENT JOHN AGYEKUM KUFFOUR AND JOHN EVANS ATTA MILLS

Grant Essuman<sup>i</sup>

Centre for Communication, Liberal and Research Studies,  
Anglican University College of Technology,  
Ghana

### Abstract:

This paper seeks to do a comparative critical discourse analysis of the State of the Nation Addresses (SONA) delivered by Ghanaian former presidents John Agyekum Kuffour and John Evans Atta Mills. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive devices and van Dijk's (2004) ideological discourse structure as the underpinning theory, the study seeks to identify cohesive devices and ideological underpinnings of the two addresses, that is how these formal presidents tried to rationalize their government's ideas and strategically persuade their onlookers by employing cohesive devices and subtle ideological discourse structures in their speeches. The text used in the study contains the addresses from 2008 and 2009 of the State of the Nation, obtained from [www.myjoy.com](http://www.myjoy.com).

**Keywords:** grammatical cohesive device, lexical cohesive device, lexico-grammatical cohesive device, anaphoric reference, associative reference, repetition, construct-based cohesion polarization, number game, evidentiality and hyperbole

### 1. Introduction

Political speeches are part of speeches rated high due to their influence in the ears of political fans and pundits. It is indeed sought after because of the level of political faces that give these messages and also the curiosity of citizens in a given country expecting to hear governmental ideas and policies from such speeches that pool crowds. Burns (1978. p.18) states in Kpeglo & Giddi (2022) that leading humanity is drilled when "*people with specific motives and goals deploy institutional, political, psychological, and other resources in competition or conflict with others in order to stimulate, engage, and satisfy the desires of followers*". Political leaders and heads of states play a key role in national growth and international politics in all types of political systems; be it democratic, fascist,

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [gessuman@angutech.edu.gh](mailto:gessuman@angutech.edu.gh), [gessuman24@gmail.com](mailto:gessuman24@gmail.com)

monarchical, autocratic, aristocratic, and so on. It is realized that the political field is meticulously ideological, and so are its political practices; hence, one needs to be a skilled communicator to appeal to the various interest groups that political discourse caters to. To preserve the self in a harmonious social order, politicians and political actors use communication tools to rally people behind them (van Dijk, 2006). Hence, politicians heavily rely on cohesive devices and ideologies in their speeches, which reflect their ideological stance, which means any attempt to make meaning on a political discourse platform must take into consideration the fact that the choices of the political actors will not be ideologically neutral (Logogye, 2020).

This paper aims at a comparative critical discourse analysis of State of the Nation's Addresses (SONA) delivered by Formal President John Agyekum Kuffour in 2008 and Late President John Evans Atta Mills in 2009 with the lens of analyzing cohesive devices and ideological strategies within the discourse structures in their speeches. Several levels will be observed: semantic macrostructures found at the topical level, local meanings and strategies, especially aimed at positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation in order to explain to what extent the speakers' partisan ideologies are reflected in his linguistic choices. The point that has to be tested is how the speeches conform to the laid down "*ideological square*", as presented by van Dijk (2004).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a cross-disciplinary study that has evolved in practically all humanities and social science disciplines, particularly since the mid-1960s (Wodak, 2002). It was first conceived in linguistics and literary studies, but it quickly expanded to sociology, psychology, communication research and other fields (Van Dijk, 2004). Discourse analysis can be summarized as the study of language in action. Discourse analysis is defined as the study of language in the context of society, culture, history, identity formation, politics, power, and every field that immensely utilizes human language, in turn, renders language meaningful in certain ways and capable of accomplishing certain goals (Gee & Handford, 2012). As a result, discourse analyzers are concerned and preoccupied with the use of language because the context in which language is used influences the interpretation or meaning of that discourse. Language, in turn, is used to define or create this situation. As the two are interconnected, this brings the interaction between language and context to the forefront of discourse analysts' work (Van Dijk, 2014).

### 2.2 State of the Nation Address

Political speeches may be diverse, encompassing manifestos, inaugural addresses, state of the nation address, campaign speeches and others. The most popular is the state of the nation address. It is observed that at the beginning of each session of the Parliament of Ghana, the President has to go to parliament to satisfy the constitutional requirement of

delivering to Parliament and the good people of Ghana a message on the State of the Nation, that is to report on how the nation is faring and to share the prospects that can be looked forward to in the year ahead, and so civil society, as well as political opponents, are always looking up to it to know the state of the nation from the 'the horse's own mouth', the president (Logogye, 2018). Listeners then try to contrast what is said and the realities on the ground, as well as what to expect in the coming years or plans of the government for the nation in the coming years.

In this type of speech, the president not only persuades the citizenry to continue to give his government their support but also tries to put in the electorate's confidence and hope in his administration. Language in this context can be seen as an embodiment of ideologies and, at the same time, an instrument of persuasion, a tool for controlling and consolidating power and a tool for acquiring power (Sharndama, 2015). Van Dijk (1993) is of the view that political leaders, in such speeches, try to influence the mental models, knowledge, attitudes and eventually even the ideologies of recipients using language.

### **2.3 Cohesive Device**

Considering the literature done on cohesive devices since their inception in 1976 to date, it is not hard to discern that the majority of the studies assigned cohesive devices the sole role of linking the various parts of the text together, and, quite understandably, this was tied to text quality. Within this inclination, a number of investigations looked at the impact of using cohesive devices on the quality of writing. Tahsildar and Yusoff (2018) considered the pedagogy of these tools by examining the impact of teaching them on language accuracy in L2 students' written texts. The study found that teaching cohesive devices had a positive impact as students' written productions improved, as was evident from the differences between the pre-test and the post-test scores. In the same vein, Liu and Brian (2005) found that there was an evident link between employing cohesive devices and the quality of argumentative writing produced by college students, a finding that was supported by two similar studies conducted seven years later (Mohamed and Mudawi, 2012; Yang & Sun, 2012). The role of cohesive devices in maintaining texture, or holding the various parts of the text together, and, therefore, in improving the writing quality of descriptive texts was also evident in Abdul Rahman's (2013) investigation of college students' descriptive writing.

### **2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The study employs CDA in identifying the underlying ideological strategies adopted by the president in his delivery of the state of the nation address. It aims at denaturalizing the hidden ideological processes embedded in the address. It seeks to uncover the discursive means of mental control; it also plays a crucial role in awakening people to the ideological strategies of politicians. It seeks to explore how language as a linguistic tool can be manipulated by persons, derived either by good or ill intentions, to persuade other people.

CDA is considered useful in the analysis of especially, political discourse because it affords scholars the ability to dissect a discourse, find distortions, go through it and discover the reality for themselves. Given that purpose, this paper adopts CDA as an aid to discover the underlying ideologies behind the 2018 state of the nation address delivered by President Nana Adu Donkor. The study investigates how the president tries to justify his (party's) ideas and persuade his audience by utilizing subtle ideological discourse structures in his speech. Van Dijk (1998a) sees Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field that is concerned with studying and analysing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias. CDA, therefore, constitutes an important tool in the analysis of political discourse. It primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through text and talk in a social and political context. In that vein, critical discourse analysts are preoccupied with the zeal to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality (Van Dijk, 1985, cited in Wang, 2010). CDA has, for a long time now, proven to be a valuable tool for the analysis of discourse in several fields of study, especially political genres. State of the nation addresses, inaugural addresses, parliamentary discourse, presidential campaigns, and political debates are all the fields of ideological battles. This explains why van Dijk (2004) contends, "*it is eminently here that different and opposed groups, power, struggle, and interests are at stake*". According to him, political groups, therefore, need to be ideologically conscious and organized to be able to compete. A key factor that determines the success of politicians in reaching their goals and winning the public consensus in this continuous power struggle is their ability to persuade and impress their audience.

Teittinen (2000, p.1) contends that the winner is a party whose language, words, terms, and symbolic expressions are dominant once reality and the context have been defined. There is, therefore, the need for critical listening and reading of political discourse to realize what reality is and to understand the skillful use of language in political genres. A prominent focus in CDA is the ideological concern and its relation to power (Van Dijk, 2000). In fact, "*when we speak or write, we always take a particular perspective on what the world is like*" (Gee, 1999: 2). In *Language in the News*, Fowler (1991: 101) said: "*anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position*". Ideologies then serve as the basis for constructing the social manifestations of the beliefs shared by a group and fostering new social opinions, and spreading them in society. O'Halloran (2005: 1946) holds the view that CDA, as an important branch of Discourse Analysis (DA), focuses on relations between ways of thinking and ways of talking and highlights "*the traces of cultural and ideological meaning in spoken and written texts*". At this point, Fairclough (1995) contends that CDA includes the larger socio-political and socio-cultural contexts within which discourse is embedded, as it is at this macro-level of analysis that we are able to unpack.

## **2.5 Empirical Studies on Political Discourse**

Several studies of language analysis of political speeches have been conducted, particularly outside Africa. Many people have looked at the discourse for communicative tactics used in those speeches, as well as analyzing the ideologies of the political individuals who delivered them. Even with these, a large portion of the data consists of non-African leaders' remarks. Rachman and Yuniarti (2017) examine Donald Trump's address at the Knoxville Convention Center on November 16, 2015 during his presidential campaign. Skoniecki and College (2004) looked at President Ronald Reagan of the United States of America's speech to the people of West Berlin and the globe, in which he called for action against communism. Rudyk (2007) investigates power relations in Bush's union speech in a linked paper. In a parallel study, the public discourses of previous US presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, are examined using Critical Discourse Analysis from a postcolonial viewpoint (Viberg, 2011). These are only a few examples of investigations conducted outside Africa.

In politics, ideologies play a role in defining political systems, political practices, and political cognition, all enacted or reproduced by political discourse (van Dijk, 2004). Krugman (2015) is of the view that underlying political ideologies are typically expressed in political discourse by emphasizing Our good things and their bad things and by de-emphasizing Our bad things and their good things. Such a general strategy may be implemented at all levels of political discourse. The framework adopted in this study is that of van Dijk's (2004) ideological strategies supported by CDA. This framework consists of two main discursive strategies of 'positive self-representation or in-group favoritism; a semantic macro-strategy used for the purpose of 'face keeping' or 'impression management' (van Dijk, 2004) and 'negative other representation or semantic macro-strategy of derogation regarding out-groups, that is, their division between 'good' and 'bad', superior and inferior, US and THEM.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted the qualitative research design as well as adapting content analysis as an approach. The study is exploratory in nature due to the design and the approach; hence analysis captures deep understanding of the texts.

### **3.2 The Data and Data Source**

The texts used in this study are the 2008 and 2009 state of the nation's addresses of former presidents John Agyekum Kuffour and the late Prof. John Evans Atta Mills. These speeches used for this study were obtained from [www.myjoyonline.com](http://www.myjoyonline.com), one of the official websites of the Multimedia Group Limited in Ghana.

### 3.3 Sampling and Procedure for Data Analysis

The study used the convenience sampling technique to select two states of the nation's addresses, former President John Agyekum and the late John Evans Atta Mills. The choice has no political underpinnings. It was accessible and retrievable at the time. The text is analyzed using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive device and van Dijk's (2004) ideological analytical strategies. The study uses CDA to fish out cohesive devices and also to determine the ideological strategies that are employed in the speech. The results are then categorized and analyzed. The study applied interpretative content analysis to investigate the communicative functions and ideological underpinnings of the linguistic choices made in the address.

### 3.4 Coding

To make referencing specific passages in the speeches as easy as possible, all quotations in the speeches include coding in Case books and in Excerpts. For easy analysis, Formal President John Agyekum Kufuor's name is coded with JAK and Late Professor John Atta Mills' name is coded with JAM, respectively, in this paper.

### 3.5 Procedure of Data Analysis

The initial step which was carried out was a thorough reading of the speeches to become well accustomed to the text in order to aid smooth identification of cohesive devices and also to see the discursive construction of ideology enacted through the linguistic choices. The data was then categorized into various cohesive devices and ideological strategies as described by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive device and van Dijk's 2004 ideological strategies. The various cohesive devices and ideological strategies were identified and categorized. Recurrent patterns were counted and presented. This act was followed by a critical description and comparative analysis of cohesive devices and the strategies to determine the underlying ideological strategies employed in the speeches.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Cohesive Device found in SONA 2008 by Formal President John Agyekum Kuffour (JAK)

**Case Book 1:** Cohesive device in SONA 2008 by JAK

Main Category	Type	Excerpt/Example	Number of occurrence(s)
Grammatical cohesive device	1. Associative reference	1.1 ...in accordance with the <b>Constitution of the 4th Republic.</b>	58
	2. Anaphoric reference \	1.2 My account will, therefore be restricted to the State of the Nation as <b>I</b> found.	8
	3. Conjunction	1.3 <b>For this reason</b> ...	35

		Further evidence of the consistent progress	
Lexical cohesive device	Repetition	1.4 <b><u>Mr. Speaker</u></b>	75
Lexico-grammatical cohesive device	Construction based cohesive device (Abu-Ayyash, 2019)	1.5 The <b><u>undeniable truth</u></b> was that the country was broke.	10

### 1.4.2 Cohesive Devices found in SONA 2009 by John Atta Mills (JAM)

#### Case Book 2: Cohesive devices in SONA 2009 by JAM

Main Category	Type	Excerpt/Example	Number of occurrence(s)
Grammatical cohesive device	1. Associative reference	2.1 Let me also acknowledge our first President, <b><u>Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah..</u></b>	82
	2. Anaphoric reference	2.2 We will encourage development of common telecom facilities that will enable <b><u>us..</u></b>	14
	3. Conjunction	2.3 <b><u>Additionally</u></b> GIFTEL will embark upon a schools connectivity project and so many more..	46
Lexical cohesive device	Repetition	2.4 <b><u>Madam Speaker</u></b> , As the first Lady Speaker of Parliament	87
Lexico-grammatical cohesive device	Construction based cohesive device (Abu-Ayyash, 2019)	2.5 ... <b><u>to depart from the vilification, back biting, political mischief making and divisiveness which have be devilled politics in this country</u></b>	8

The cohesive devices outlined in Case Books 1 and 2 consist the cohesive devices found in SONA 2008 and 2009 delivered by JAK and JAM. It is empirically observed that, majority of those devices were developed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and the rest were suggested by other authors. A word on each type merits consideration at this juncture, and the numbers and excerpts in the case books 1.0 and 2.0 will be used as illustrations for analysis. It is realized from both SONA, as identified in Case Books 1 and 2, that major cohesive devices identified were categorized under Grammatical cohesive device, Lexical cohesive device and lexicon-grammatical cohesive device.

It is seen from Case Books 1 and 2, respectively, that three types of grammatical cohesive devices were identified from SONA by JAK and JAM. Case books 1 and 2 show that excerpts 1.1 and 2.1 mark associative cohesive device, and it occurred 58 times in Case book 1, which represents JAK and 82 times in Case book 2, which represents SONA by JAM. Anaphoric cohesive devices were also identified under grammatical cohesive devices, and this is shown in Case Books 1 and 2, excerpts 1.2 and 2.2, anaphoric devices occurred 8 times in Case Book 1, whilst in Case Book 2, it occurred 14 times. It is observed from the case books 1 and 2 above that conjunction falls under a grammatical cohesive

device, and this is illustrated in excerpts 1.3 and 2.3, respectively. It occurred 35 times in JAK in Case Book 1 and 46 times in JAM.

It is also observed from Case books 1 and 2 above that repetition, which falls under lexical cohesive devices, is found in both SONA delivered by JAK and JAM. Repetition, which is shown in excerpts 1.4 and 2.4, occurred 75 times in JAK and 85 times in JAM, which suggests that JAM deployed lexical cohesion more than JAK.

It is further observed in case books 1 and 2 that a construction-based cohesive device (Abu-Ayyash, 2019) is realized under a lexico-grammatical cohesive device. This is illustrated in excerpts 1.5 and 2.5, respectively, which occurred 10 times in JAK and 8 times in JAM. This means that JAK deployed more lexico-grammatical cohesive devices in his SONA 2008 than JAM in SONA 2009.

### 1.4.3 Ideological Strategies in the Texts

The data analyses are underpinned by van Dijk's 2004 ideological strategies. The main ideological strategies used in the addresses are positive self-representation for both JAK and JAM and their government and negative other representation for past governments who has been in opposition. In both addresses, positive self-representation has been tied up with negative other representation. The two major strategies are manifested in both speeches through the use of some frequent minor ideological strategies, such as polarization, evidentiality, number game, hyperbole, and citing of authority.

**Case Book 3: Frequent Ideological Strategies and Themes in SONA 2008 by JAK**

Discursive moves Minor IS	Themes	Major Strategy Major IS	Number of occurrences
Polarization	Macroeconomy 7 Human resource development 7 Infrastructure 8 Good governance 7	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	29
Number game	Economy 5 Energy 4 Private Sector 5 Public Sector 4	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	18
Evidentiality	Education 5 Economy 5 Unveiling future plans 5 Agriculture 4 Infrastructure 4 APRM 4	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	27
Authority	Economy 4 Energy 4	Positive self-representation	8
Hyperbole	Economy 3 Infrastructure 4	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	7
<b>Total</b>			<b>89</b>

**Case Book 4: Frequent Ideological Strategies and Themes in SONA 2009 by JAM**

Discursive moves Minor IS	Themes	Major Strategy Major IS	Number of occurrences
Polarization	Challenging global economy development 3 Private sector development 3 Agriculture 4 Transport infrastructure 4	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	14
Number game	Education 5 Energy 4 Technology 2 Health 3	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	14
Evidentiality	Education 2 Economy 2 Unveiling future plans 8 Agriculture 2 Transport infrastructure 2	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	16
Authority	Education 2 Energy 4 Health 2	Positive self-representation	10
Hyperbole	Technology development 3 Economy 4 Education 4 Governance 6 Agriculture 4 Infrastructure 4	Positive self-representation/ Negative opponent representation	25
<b>Total</b>			<b>77</b>

From Case books 3 and 4 above, polarization occurred 29 times in JAK, and Hyperbole occurred 25 times in JAM. It is realized in Case Book 3 that JAK employed discursive strategy 7 times in the economy, 7 times in human resource development, 8 times in infrastructure, and 6 times in good governance, whilst in Case Book 4, JAM employed hyperbole as a discursive strategy, 6 times in governance, 4 times in agriculture, 4 times in transport infrastructure and 6 times in education. They present a positive image of their government in all those sectors of government and, at the same time, present a negative image of past opposition governments. The various themes in the address are discussed under the discursive moves below.

#### 1.4.5 Polarization

In the speech, the presidents deployed the strategy of polarization and made a positive self-representation of his government and a negative representation of past governments by hitting on issues related to the economy, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. JAK adopted this strategy more than JAM to show that he has almost completed his mandate

irrespective of the weak economy he inherited because that was his last SONA, while JAM used it less times. After all, it was his first SONA; hence, he was very careful in showering blowing his horns, yet he used these strategies to prove to his audience that he has the ability as well as able men to lead the country with. The excerpts below 3.1 and 3.2 show the polarization of JAK and JAM in SONA 2008 and 2009.

**Excerpt 3.1**

*“Mr. Speaker, with the budget already presented and all the details of national policy clearly articulated, I propose only to give an overview of the period since 2001, and what remains to be done.”*

**Excerpt 3.2**

*“Madam Speaker, Over the last one month of assuming office, an economic management team has been reviewing our situation thoroughly.”*

**1.4.6 Evidentiality**

Evidentiality is the second-highest discursive strategy deployed to present the JAK and JAM government positively while painting a negative picture of past opposition political party in most sectors of government in the speech. Through this strategy, the presidents seek to prove themselves as competent leaders to their hearers. Excerpts 3.3 and 3.4 below show how JAK and JAM used evidentiality to score themselves above their opponents.

**Excerpt 3.3**

*“Mr. Speaker, the progress recorded in the past 7 years has proved beyond doubt that the decision “to go HIPC” was a master stroke.”*

**Excerpt 3.4**

*“Madam Speaker, all too often, we celebrate successful elections and cherish the growth and maturity of our democracy.”*

**1.4.7 Number Game**

The ideological strategy of the number game is also employed in the SONA to make a positive self-representation and negative other representation. The speech abounds with numbers and statistics to make the presidents leadership and administration appear relevant to political friends and their intended audience, especially in the area of the economy. JAK deployed it 14 times, whilst JAM used it 10 times. The following excerpts from JAK and JAM justify the point,

**Excerpt 3.5**

*“The economy was also entrapped by incredibly high levels of inflation of over 40% and interest rates of over 50%.”*

**Excerpt 3.6**

*“The fiscal deficit, meaning the excess of expenditure over revenue, was GH¢ 2.5 billion in 2008. This figure is over 15% of Gross Domestic Product.”*

**1.4.8 Citing Authority**

This strategy is adopted to back the claims and projections made in the address so that the president may appear to be competent and credible in the ears of listeners. The citing of authority which was deployed aimed at persuading the intended audience of the validity of the president’s claims on Ghana’s economic strides under his governance. Authorities are mainly cited to back claims of how the economy has been performing under a certain administration and leadership. It is shown in Case books 3 and 4 that JAK cited 8 authorities whilst JAM cited 10. The following excerpts, 3.7 and 3.8, clarify it.

**Excerpt 3.7**

*“Mr. Speaker, the House will be happy to learn that new FIFA rankings were released just yesterday, with Ghana ranked first in Africa and 14th in the world.”*

**Excerpt 3.8**

*“As promised in our Manifesto, we shall also introduce a Bill to amend the Public Office Holders (Declaration of Assets and Disqualification) Act, 1998, Act 550, in order to make it more functional and effective in ensuring probity and accountability.”*

**1.4.9 Hyperbole**

This is where a speaker exaggerates a statement or an event in his or her speech. This is realized in both addresses from Case Books 3 and 4, where it is realized that JAK used it 7 times and JAM used 25. This is because JAK came to give account on his eight-years mandate whilst JAM came to prove his competence level by hammering on some revealing promises and that contributed to the high level of hyperbolic expressions. Excerpts 3.9 and 3.10 give evidence of hyperbolic expressions in JAK and JAM.

**Excerpt 3.9**

*“Mr. Speaker, unemployment has bedeviled the nation’s economic efforts.”*

**Excerpt 3.10**

*“I pledged to make a difference in the politics of Ghana; to depart from the vilification, backbiting, political mischief making and divisiveness which have bedeviled politics in this country.”*

**5. Conclusion**

The study has discovered that all the three main categories of cohesive devices, namely grammatical, lexical and lexico-grammatical and the macro strategies of 'positive self-

representation and 'negative other-representation' are intimately deployed by politicians in their political addresses as exhibited in State of the Nation's Addresses of former President John Agyekum Kuffour and Late Professor John Atta Mills in 2008 and 2009 respectively. It is realized that all the cohesive and ideological strategies deployed in the addresses make it very appealing in the minds of their audience. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and cohesive theory were used to subject the addresses to linguistic analysis, and the issues presented were devoid of political lenses.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

I, hereby declare that I have no conflict of interest that influenced my sense of judgement or analysis in this academic paper as an author of this paper.

### **About the Author(s)**

The author is an Anglican Priest, and applied linguist who teaches Communications Skills and Critical Thinking lecturer at Anglican University College of Technology, Ghana. He holds B. A. Hons, Bachelor of Theology, Masters of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics and currently a PhD Candidate in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. His Research interests are Applied linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics (Post-Colonial pragmatics), Sociolinguistics, Stylistics, Language documentation.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5084-1302>,

ResearchGate: [www.researchgate.net/profile/Grant-Essuman](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Grant-Essuman),

Academia.edu: <https://uew.academia.edu/GrantEssuman>,

LinkedIn: <https://gh.linkedin.com/in/rev-d-fr-grant-essuman-095b5512a>.

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