Persuasion in Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's Presidential Debates: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:

The present study aims to provide a critical discourse analysis of the persuasion tactics, power distribution, and the ideological stands in the American presidential debates of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. The methodology adopted in this study was based on Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (1995). The thorough analysis of the debates revealed strong dichotomy and contested ideological stands, dissimilar power distribution, and the use of varying persuasive tools of both candidates on all the issues of concern such as immigration, economy, human rights, etc. The author recommends further investigation of the presidential debates across varying cultures based on Fairclough's model of CDA.
Key Words: American Presidential Debates, Critical Discourse Analysis, Persuasion

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الاقناع في المناظرات الرئاسية للمرشحين هيلاري كلنتون ودونالد ترامب: دراسة في تحليل الخطاب النقدي

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ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل للخطاب النقدي لاستراتيجيات الاقناع وتقاسم السلطة والمواقف الأيديولوجية المتباينة في مناظرات الرئاسة الأمريكية للمرشحين هيلاري كلينتون ودونالد ترامب. استندت المنهجية المعتمدة في هذا التحليل إلى نموذج فيركلوف لتحليل الخطاب النقدي (1995). أظهرت نتائج التحليل الدقيق للمناظرات التي خلص اليها الباحث عن وجود انقسامات قوية بما يتعلق بالمواقف الأيديولوجية المختلفة وتقاسم غير متوازي للسلطة وأساليب اقناع متنوعة لكل من المرشحين في جميع القضايا ذات الاهتمام مثل الهجرة والاقتصاد وحقوق الإنسان وما إلى ذلك. اختتمت الدراسة بالتوصية بإجراء مزيد من البحث بما يتعلق بالمناظرات الرئاسية عبر الثقافات المختلفة اعتماد على نموذج فيركلوف لتحليل الخطاب النقدي أو أي نموذج آخر .

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناظرات الرئاسية الأمريكية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الإقناع.

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1. Introduction:

Language per se is a powerful tool through which humans establish meaningful communication. In pursuing such a communicative need, humans resort to a plethora of techniques that serve as cognitive and linguistic means aiming at fulfilling their desires. Stating, committing, promising, interrogating, and persuading are some of the numerous language functions that seem to play a pivotal role in humans' communication. It is the last of these functions; namely, persuasion which is the one to be under scrutiny in this research.

Persuasion is a linguistic phenomenon that is celebrated as a quintessentially human activity. The true nature of this linguistic phenomenon has long been debated and several definitions have been put forth for the sake of delimiting the term. These endeavors are dated back to Aristotle (II.1378a) who defined the term 'persuasion' by means of three main components: ethos (the nature of the communicator), pathos (emotional state of the audience) and logos (message arguments). Scholars provided definitions that aimed at showing how the topic at hand was dealt with from different angles. Andersen (1971: 112), for example, defines persuasion as a communication process in which the communicator seeks to elicit the desired response from his receiver. Bettinghaus and Cody (1987) added another dimension to the definition; namely, consciousness. As such, their definition was a conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitude, belief, or behavior of another individual or a group of individuals through the transmission of some messages. Finally, Perloff (2003: 8) defined it as the symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice.

Within the framework of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) propounded by Van Dijk (1998), Wodak (1989), and Fairclough (1995, persuasion aims at influencing and shifting the audience's attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings towards a specific political issue. Hence, persuasion plays an overriding role in this field. It is mainly considered as the key to success in many aspects of the political life. One of the most prominent instances of political discourse is the renowned debate of the presidential race in the United States of America. Politicians, linguists, and psychologists have always been involved in analyzing such texts with scrutiny and carefulness. To this end, they used different analytical models including Fairclough's model (1995) of (CDA).

This model takes the view that discourse mediates, influences and even constructs our experiences, identities, and ways of viewing the world. For Fairclough, the analysis of any political discourse should be conducted on the linguistic as well as the socio-political levels (Fairclough, 1989: 23). These two levels map and highlight the links between the 'micro' and 'macro' levels. As such, Fairclough (1989: 22-23) distinguished between text and discourse in which he argued that the linguistic text is not but a product of a bigger stretch of language which he referred to as "discourse" that is "a linguistic social interaction process".

Additionally, Fairclough (1989, 22) stated that "language is part of the society, and that the linguistic elements of the text reflect certain social realities". For him, Language is "a social process" and is "a socially conditioned process". Therefore, analyzing any text at the linguistic level includes the analysis of the text's interpretive processes based on the social context. Within this social framework, political debates are considered to be no exception to such analysis. These debates are designed purposefully with the aim of reflecting the social power of the debaters, their identity, and most importantly their persuasive tactics which are profoundly shaped and influenced by the social forces. Considering these factors as well as the recommendations of Van Dijk (1998), Wodak (1989), Wodak and Chilton (2005), Faiclough (1995), CDA is regarded as an appropriate approach to political discourse analysis. The reason for this belief is that CDA fulfills its goal of providing a descriptive analysis of the political texts in general and debates in particular by relating the textual constructions to the socio-political context.

2. Literature Review

The art of persuasion has been the interest of scholars for a long period of time. Thus, the study and practice of persuasion are not new to humanity. To start with, Rashidi and Souzandehfar (2010) analyzed the political speeches of the two major American political parties' (Republican and Democratic) candidates of the US presidential primaries of (2008) on the issue of the continuation of the war on Iraq. In the study, Van Dijk's (2004) framework on the 'positive self-representation' and the 'negative other-representation' was adopted. Evidentiality, hyperbole, implication, irony, lexicalization, polarization, presupposition, vagueness, and victimization were some of the persuasion strategies manipulated to mention some. The findings of the paper revealed that the candidates of each party utilized slightly different persuasive ideological techniques within their discourse in

order to justify their attitudes. They also revealed that the main persuasion techniques utilized included lexicalization, polarization and evidentiality appeared to be effective tools in persuasion and justification.

Similarly, Biria and Mohammadi (2012) investigated George Bush's (2005) second term and Barack Obama's (2009) first term inaugural speeches using the CDA model of Van Dijk (2004). The study aimed to explore the potential ideologies, the rhetorical strategies, and the devices utilized to reflect the political views of the presidents. The results indicated that both presidents possessed a rich repertoire of discursive mechanisms; namely, the positive self and negative other-presentation strategies for influencing the addressees. The study concluded that there is an intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology.

Cirugeda and Ruiz (2013) shed light on the rhetoric and figurative language as a means of electoral persuasion utilized by President Obama on addressing the Latino community. The speeches were analyzed based on the CDA model, and the Corpus Approach to Critical Metaphor Analysis. The findings showed president Obama's frequent emotional appeals (following Aristotle's pathos persuasion technique) to the Latino community, such as movement, justice, patriotism, and acknowledgment. Additionally, the researchers reported the president's persistent use of conceptual metaphors as a strong means of persuasion, such as personification, repetition, allegory, and synesthesia. Finally, the results revealed Obama's inclination to adopt polarization as a persuasion technique (Dijk's, 1999) in which he aimed at grouping himself with the Hispanic community.

Alayo (2016) conducted a study within the framework of (CDA) on the self-representation of Hillary Clinton in public discourse. This study was incorporated to delve deep into the self-characterization of Hillary Clinton as a woman and as a politician, and the way she was viewed in the media during her campaign. To that end, the CDA approach from a feminist perspective was adopted to pin down gender inequality in discourse and context. The findings of the study showed that gender stereotyping had been diminished greatly because of the progressive female presence in all fields of life. In addition, the findings revealed that Clinton used an array of sources and techniques in order to reinforce her public image as empowered women and a powerful candidate.

Darweesh (2016) explored the structural, lexical, and rhetorical persuasive strategies of the sexist language and ideology of Donald Trump in which he negatively represented and underestimated women. The

methodology adopted in the study was based on an eclectic approach to critical discourse analysis of Mill's (2008) and VanDijk's (2006). The findings of the study showed that Trump's evaluation of women reflected his ideology of the superiority of males over females. Additionally, the author indicated that his language was used to discriminate against, insult, abuse, and belittle women.

Jensen et al. (2016) investigated the underlying discursive structures in Clinton's campaign discourse with a focus on three issues: gender references, persuasive techniques, and aspects of social inclusion and exclusion based on CDA and corpus linguistics. The study revealed the following findings: first, opposite to the researchers' expectation, gender references were found to be implicit in a way that Clinton's discourse was found somehow neutral. Second, Clinton made use of varying rhetorical persuasive means, such as repetition, flattery, seduction, and intertextuality. Third, pronouns and person deixis seemed to play a social communicative function of inclusion or exclusion of people.

3. Methodology

Fairclough's model (1995) was used as a basis for analyzing the American political speech debates. Within the framework of this model, the researcher will stick to three main steps of Fairclough's analysis, namely, description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis), and explanation (social analysis).

3.1. Data

The data of this research is based mainly on the 2016 United States Presidential Election Debates of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump which were run by different moderators and in different places across the United States of America. The allotted time for the three debates was around four hours in which each candidate was given almost the same time of speaking (Trump: 120, 54 and Clinton: 122.01. Total: 244.55). The debates under investigation were collected through the internet in two forms: the video and the script.

The speech patterns of the opposing candidates at all linguistic levels of concern including vocabulary, grammar, semantics, and all the way through to the level of discourse were compared and thoroughly analyzed.

3.2. The aim of the Study and Questions

The aim of the present study is two-fold. First, it aims at identifying the strategies of persuasion that seem to prevail in political speech in general and in American presidential debates in particular. Second, it seeks to

investigate such strategies from (CDA) perspective. Therefore, the research at hand aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are the strategies of persuasion used in the political discourse of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's presidential debates?
2. Are there any differences in the ideological stands, power distribution, and persuasive inclinations of the candidates?
3. How both candidates reflected the differences in terms of the usage of linguistic tools such as (vocabulary, semantics, syntax, discourse…etc.)?

4. Results and discussion

Using Fairclough's model of CDA (1995), the speeches of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were analyzed at three levels, namely, the description level, the interpretation level, and the explanation level.

4.1. The description level

The description level is the micro level in which all linguistic elements of significance to the results are examined. Such elements include vocabulary items, grammatical constructions, and discourse. The analysis at this level is the starting point in uncovering the ideological stands of both candidates.

4.1.1. Vocabulary

According to Fairclough (1995), what is ideologically significant about the text is its vocabulary items per se. Obviously, the choice of words of both candidates indicated striking differences in their ideology when it came to the way they handled all the topics which were addressed in the debates such as the economy, immigration, gun control…etc. For the critical observer, it looked as if it had been a war of contested words that aimed at projecting a winner before the audience.

Both candidates tended to use their exclusive words that reflected their ideology and viewpoint in terms of the issues discussed in the debates. Clinton's choice of words, for instance, reflected her sympathy with immigrants, families, and women. Trump, on the other hand, used different and contested wording for addressing the same issues. Accordingly, he kept attacking immigrants, minorities, trade deals, and migration policies. He constantly focused on arousing the feelings of fear, terror, and intimidation in order to be persuasive in the eyes of the voters. This opposition in the use of vocabulary items clearly reflected the depth of the ideological dichotomy between the two candidates. For instance, on Health Care Act, Trump called such act as a "disaster", and he called for "repealing" it. He did even show his fear and skepticism of what would America be if Clinton would have

been the next president. Clinton, on the other hand, showed her staunch support and feelings of sympathy towards the highly disputed issues of immigration, families, human rights,…etc. For example, she stated, "We need a Supreme Court that will stand up on behalf of women's rights, on behalf of the rights of the LGBTs community that will stand up and say no to Citizens United". This usage may be viewed as strategic, influential, and persuasive. Finally, the most striking example that obviously reflected a stark difference in ideology is the slogans of both candidates. Clinton's slogan was "Stronger Together" which reflects the senses of unity, gatherings, loyalty, and attachment. Trump's slogan "America is great again" reflected the ideological inclination of restoring America's power and polarization in the world. The slogan also reflected fear and intimidation of other issues that threaten the status of America as a superpower worldwide.

4.1.2. Metaphors

It was noticed that both candidates skilled at utilizing metaphors as strong persuasive tools that allow them to manipulate and twist the minds of the audiences in a way that gets them to operationalize their vivid imagination vigorously. In doing so, the audience activates his/her faculty of imagination and draws specific mental representation in order to arouse certain expressive values of the matter at hand. Metaphors can appear in the form of single words or extended mental imaginations (allegories). Both candidates utilized metaphors in their speeches as persuasion tools.

To start with, Clinton stated, that "*I think if we work together, we overcome the divisiveness*". In this example, she allowed the hearer to visualize that "*divisiveness*" as a physical being which can be conquered if Americans get united. She also used personification in which she portrayed America as a human being that can do everything as shown: "*there's nothing in my opinion that America can't do*". In another occasion, she stated: "*what kind of future we'll build together*" in which she represented "*the future*" in the image of a building which can be built if all Americans worked together. Likewise, Trump applied this persuasive tactic throughout his speech. For instance, he called China "*a monster*". In addition to personal boasts, Trump was prone to exaggeration and dramatization: "*The whole world is blowing up*". All these examples reflected the decisive exploitation of figurative language by both speakers for the sake of augmenting the impact of the persuasive language which helped in twisting the opinions of the audience.

4.1.3. Grammatical processes

According to Fairclough (1995), grammatical processes address the ways in which the grammatical forms of language code happenings or relationships in the world. Both candidates recognize the impact of the grammatical distribution of certain linguistic elements such as the grammatical subjects and objects on the audiences. For example, in passivization, this effect appeared in forwarding the grammatical object or obscuring the grammatical subject. In reported speech, however, politicians appeal to authoritative voices of presidents, clergymen, scientists…etc in order to sound more persuasive. The following sections illustrate such usage.

4.1.3.1. Passivization

The determined grammatical voice was following a deliberate, decided and manipulative choice of the politicians. Accordingly, they aimed at obscuring the agent of the action at some instances and highlighting it in other occasions. The shift of focus is manifested by using certain grammatical modes, such as passivization. In certain utterances, the agents appear theoretically to dominate subject position whereas in reality they are obfuscated. Trump as well Clinton understood such usage and employed it strategically. For example, on building the wall with Mexico, Trump stated: "*Now, she never gets anything done, so naturally the wall wasn't built*". Likewise, Clinton resorted to the same approach when discussing using Chinese steel in Trump's buildings: "*In fact, the Trump Hotel right here in Las Vegas was made with Chinese steel*". Although both candidates resorted to this technique as a persuasive tool, their usage of it seemed to differ qualitatively and quantitatively.

4.1.3.2 Reported speech

Reported speech is another effective linguistic device that is skillfully employed by politicians with the aim of appealing to authoritative voice or testimony. In essence, politicians give the impression that they are more credulous, trust-worthy, and persuasive. The analysis showed that Trump seemed to utilize reported speech or quote people iteratively. For example, Trump reported that people who endorsed him for the position of the president, *"They said about him: "we think Mr. Trump is fantastic." One of them said, "he's a great man." One of them said, "he's a great man, I'm gonna vote for him." "I actually have friends, look, some of them said, "you've gotta be the nicest guy in the world if that's the worst."*

Trump's use of the voice of others is a technique which aimed at adding a special value to his credulous character and authenticity. Accordingly, by

resorting to reporting others, he tended to validate and enhance positive qualities of himself. Clinton, on the other hand, also seemed to manipulate the use of reported speech in her arguments. As such, she was found quoting some influential figures in the realm of politics such as President Obama and his wife Michele. For instance, in her response to Trump's accusations, Clinton quoted Michele Obama in the second debate in which she said: "*when they go low, we go high*".

4.1.3.3. Evidentiality

According to Saeed (1997), "evidentiality allows a speaker to communicate her/his attitude to the source of the information". In English, this function can be deployed by the use of a separate clause or parenthetic adverbials. In the presidential debates, evidentiality was employed strategically in order to make both speakers' points of view more plausible. Following to this premise, each candidate seemed to provide evidence and/or proofs for her/his opinions. For example, Clinton and Trump used the following sentences: *" I think about what we need to do, we have 33,000 people a year who die from guns". (*parenthetical evidentiality*).* In this type, Clinton is communicating her words to the source via the use of an embedding clause by using the verb "think". Trump used the verb 'believe' in: *"There's no doubt that I respect the Second Amendment, that I also believe there's an individual right to bear arms". "She was forced to apologize".*

4.1.3.4. Modality

The use of modals reflects the degree of certainty and commitment to the truth value of the speaker's statement. Grammatically speaking, modality is expressed either by modal auxiliaries, such as may, might, can, will…etc or by certain adverbs or tenses. The analysis of the debates indicated that both candidates employed a large number of obligational and epistemic modalities through the use of modals, adverbs, and verbs. Modals are exemplified in the use of "must, should, have to, need to, and had to". Adverbs employed include "certainly, and absolutely". Verbs used were "think, believe, and wish".

The use of modality in the debates analyzed can be seen as constituting a strong persuasive identity for both speakers. This persuasion effect is gained through the power position relations and authority. For example, the modals "must, have to, should, and had better" reflect the institutional as well as the societal power the candidates assume. In addition, it can be interpreted as a means for powerfully claiming political authority. This

finding of the use of modalities agrees with that of Aisyah (2012) who observes that the use of modal verbs and evaluation in Clinton's discourse is strategic. It also lends support to Klanicová (2013) who asserts that Clinton's statements are always strong, confident, and emphatic. In the following extracts, for instance, both candidates used the modal "have to, should", and the verb "think". In addressing the issue of gun control, Clinton stated: "*I think we need comprehensive background checks*. On nuclear weapons, she said, *"The bottom line on nuclear weapons is that when the president gives the order, it must be followed*. On trade deals, Trump said: "*we defend Saudi Arabia, we defend countries. They do not pay us. But they should be paying us*. On the economy, she said: *"China should solve that problem for us. China should go into North Korea. You have to be able to negotiate our trade deals*".

4.1.3.5. Pronouns

Both candidates used pronouns (deictic terms) strategically for the purpose of arousing a persuasive impact. For example, both Clinton and Trump used the first person pronoun (I) when referring to their own actions and what they would do if elected as presidents. It was generally used to emphasize identity and stress on self-glorification. In particular, the pronoun was used to stress her/his distinctive identity of being Americans, democrats or republicans and future leaders who can and want to improve the American people's lives (Fetzer, 2014). For example, Clinton stated, "*I want us to invest in you. I want us to invest in your future… How are we going to do it?*. Likewise, Trump reflected on his self-glorification by stating that "*Under my plan, I'll be reducing taxes tremendously*".

Moreover, both candidates excelled at using the pronoun "we" inclusively (to refer to themselves as part of the group) and exclusively (to refer to themselves excluding others). It was used to emphasize collectivity, solidarity, and group membership (Pavlidou, 2014). For example, Clinton used the inclusive pronoun "we" in the first sentence " *what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we'll build together*" to express solidarity. Trump, too, used the inclusive pronoun "we" so as to reflect his innate membership to the group as in: "*We have to stop our jobs from being stolen from us"*. Another example from Clinton is "*First, we* (exclusive) *have to build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top"*.

In addition to using their names, Clinton and Trump alike resorted to using the third person singular pronouns (he/she) for launching verbal attacks. The main goal for using the names or the pronouns (he or she) was

to intentionally undermining the authoritative tone of their rival. This effect allowed as well for the emergence of certain feelings of obscuring the presence of the opponent on stage. Furthermore, both candidates aimed at showing distance when it came to political positions and ideology. For instance, Trump used the pronoun (she) when addressing Clinton "*I will release my tax returns… when* **she** *releases her 33,000 e-mails that have been deleted. As soon as* **she** *releases them, I will release*".

4.2. The interpretation level

Fairclough (1995) stated that the interpretation level defines the relationship between the text, the subject matters (candidates, moderator, and the audience), the discourse type, and the social practices. Briefly, the overall interpretation process is associated with four levels of text interpretation and two levels of contextual interpretation. The textual levels aimed at producing surface structures of utterances, utterance meanings, locally coherent groups of utterances, and globally coherent texts. In the contextual interpretation, interpreters generate interpretations of the situational and intertextual contexts of the discourse. Additionally, and throughout the interpretation processes, the interpreters are equipped with particular interpretative procedures which are utilized consciously or unconsciously for the sake of arriving at valid situational interpretations of the speeches in the debates.

4.2.1 Text interpretation

Text interpretation starts with the ability of the interpreters (both candidates, the moderator, and the audience) to decipher the sounds of the spoken words and turn them into meaningful sentences.

4.2.2. Interpretation of context

The participants involved in this activity (the debates) were the presidential candidates, the moderators, and the audiences. The presidential candidates were the political figures who were in need of the votes of the audiences to be elected. The moderators were the instrumental tools and the channels who facilitated and eased the mechanism of the communication between the debaters and the audiences. Also, their institutional role mandated that they organize the debates with regard to asking questions, allotting equal time for the speakers and controlling the audience as well as the debaters. The audiences were the third part of this triangle who were the ones to listen to the debates and decided on the best candidate to vote for.

The dynamicity of the situation (the debates) mandated a thorough understanding of the social relationship between the participants in the

debates in terms of what power and the social distance they observe. The social relationship was easily defined in which the participants belong to two distinct social groups (politicians, and the public). As per power, it was also clear that politicians enjoy powerful tools in life over the public. Clinton and Trump showed dissimilarity in terms of the distribution of power. Clinton strong points were her long-standing history of being an institutionalized politician who gained wide experience in the realm of politics and world affairs. Trump's strong point appeared in his long experience of being a mogul and a businessman who is seeking to get elected for the sake of restoring the leading powerful role of his country and making *"America great again"*. Hence, the interpreter can reach to a comprehensible, and an explicit picture of the social order. In a nutshell, this social order is typified socially, or institutionally (Fairclough, 1989: 141).

Any plausible interpretation must not ignore the role of ideology and power relations distribution in delimiting the social order. The reason for this importance is the impact of ideology on peoples' understanding and interpretation of critical issues such as feminism, immigration, politics, terror, etc. For instance, many followers supported the view that Trump was anti-feminist where Clinton appeared defending the feminist movement all the way until the end of the debate. Clearly, on many occasions, Trump seemed to abuse women verbally and sometimes physically. For example, he called Clinton a "disaster" and "nasty". He said," Because *she has been a disaster as a senator*". On the contrary, Clinton showed unprecedented support for them. She said, "*I am not going to slam the door on women and children*". For these reasons, the interpretation process is not limited to the textual and situational context, but it also overwhelms the interpreters to operate from the start with assumptions which can be further modified depending on the changes that take place on the text, the contextual elements, the ideologies and the distribution of powers.

4.2.3. Intertextual context

Intertextuality revolves around shaping the text and relating it to another text. This means that each text belongs to historical series, and the interpretation process must be anchored in historical backgrounds. For this matter, the intertextual context is revolving around deciding which series a text belongs to, and therefore what can be taken as a common ground for participants, or presupposed. With regard to the debates at hand, both candidates and even the audience resorted to intertextuality for the sake of reaching plausible interpretations (Fairclough, 1989: 152). Examples

include telling about past remarkable events such as stories of gun shooting, the recession, and certain sexual abuse allegations…to mention some

4.2.4. Presuppositions

A presupposition is defined, according to Hudson (2000: 321), "a presupposition" is something assumed (presupposed) to be true in a sentence which asserts other information". Presuppositions are cued in texts by quite a considerable range of formal features, such as the definite article, and the subordinate clauses like that-clauses after certain verbs and adjectives (regret, realize, point out, aware, angry, etc.). Additionally, the previous presupposed knowledge is another set of cues. As such, the interpreters endeavored to fact-check their presuppositions with their background knowledge so as to arrive at a better understanding of what was said. In so doing, their minds become open and susceptible to persuasion which is the goal of the candidates. Both candidates employed effective means for manipulating the audiences through attributing to their experience things which they want to get them to accept. For example, Trump kept defending his position on abusing women. For the interpreters, they presuppose that he used to subject women to abusing acts. He said, "*But I have tremendous respect for women*".

4.3. Explanation level

In developing an analysis in the sphere of social practice (explanation), Fairclough suggests a number of useful questions which can be asked about a particular discourse under investigation, as follows:

4.3.1. First: Social determinants: what power relations at institutional, situational, and societal levels help shape this discourse?

At the institutional level, Clinton and Trump with a varying degree came to the debate armed with a specific arsenal of power. Clinton who is an ex-secretary of state appeared more politically experienced, and very well institutionalized in terms of her 31 years of experience with the government, in politics, and the public service. Moreover, she came to the scene empowered by the ideological tenets of the Democrats who had served in the office for the last two terms, and who was evaluated positively in the eyes of the public. On the contrary, Trump came with low experience in politics as well as in the international affairs. Institutionally, Trump did not show his penchant towards this type of public work at all. Additionally, he seemed to defy the prevailing norms that have always been watched with scrutiny, and he even went further in showing a drastic discrepancy with the people of his own party. However, Trump gained a wide reputation for

success in the realms of business whereas Clinton seemed to be residing at the normal levels.

Socially, Clinton seemed to surpass her opponent in dealing and approximating the vision of the people in her country with regard to sensitive social issues such as families, youth, children care, immigration, minorities, homosexual rights, social security, health insurance …etc. Trump, however, seemed to have a lower interest in such issues and mostly addressed them from an economical stand.

4.3.2. Ideologies: what elements of background knowledge which are drawn upon have an ideological character?

The 2016 presidential race revealed a deepening ideological dichotomy between the presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Throughout their speeches, the two candidates (overtly and covertly) reflected a fierce struggle of ideologies on almost all issues which were addressed. They did not even seem to agree on almost all of them except for their love and loyalty to their country and their relentless desire to serve it.

The ideological dichotomy of the two candidates was revealed on the following issues. First, both candidates revealed dissimilar views concerning immigration policies in general. Clinton, for example, stated, *"we have to fix our broken immigration system."* Whereas, Trump vehemently stressed on "*deporting undocumented immigrants and required them to apply for legal status"*. Second, on the controversial issue of banning Muslims from entering America, Clinton's position was for accepting migrant Muslims in the melting pot. As per Trump, he stated, that "*Muslims should be temporarily barred from entering the country*".

Third, on gun control, the two candidates seemed at stark odds on this issue. Clinton pushed for imposing restrictions on gun's buyers and repeated the need for subjecting them to security screening in which she expressed her sympathy towards people who die for that cause: "*How many people have to die before we actually act?*" Conversely, Trump showed his defiance to any attempt to impose any control measures on weapons. He even described such attempts as "*a total failure.*".

Fourth, on Health Care, Trump staunchly opposed the Affordable Care Act (Obama Care) and on many occasions called it "*a total disaster*". He called "*Repeal and replace with something terrific*". Clinton, on the contrary, kept defending the Affordable Care Act and promised to overhaul and build on it. She stated, "*With deductibles rising so much faster than incomes, we must act to reduce the out-of-pocket costs families face*". Fifth,

on taxes, Clinton seemed to support the view that the "*wealthiest were to pay more"*. However, Trump focused on lowering taxes.

Sixth, on fighting (ISIS), both candidates positions seemed to harmonize with each other but differ in the mechanism. For example, Clinton called for accelerating the tempo of war to defeat (ISIS) by "*urging a no-fly zone with coalition forces to protect Syrians, conducting more airstrikes and expanding deployment of Special Operations forces*". Trump, however, called for surrendering all the financial assets of (ISIS) through targeting their oil supplies. And then he threatened forcefully, "*I would bomb the hell out of ISIS.*"

Seventh, on the economy, on her part, Clinton plan was mainly centered on her famous quote in which she pledged to "*make the economy work for everyone, not just those at the top*". She also called for "*the boldest investment",* which is mainly focused on the nation's transportation, Technology, and energy sectors. Furthermore, she seemed to back some trade deals such as North Atlantic Foreign Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Similar to Clinton, Trump chanted the slogan "*America First*". Trump, as a successful businessman, consistently pledged to lower taxes, and to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor through bringing huge investments and deporting all undocumented immigrants who he believed were stealing the American's wealth. Finally, he sturdily opposed trade deals such as NAFTA and the TPP in which he called "*another disaster done and pushed by special interests who want to rape our country"*.

4.3.3. Effects: how is this discourse positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional, and societal levels. Are these struggles overt or covert? Is this discourse normative with respect to MR or creative? Does it contribute to sustaining existing power relations or transforming them?

At the situational level, the debates appeared to be structured conversations that reveal some kind of struggle. Expectedly, the audiences who attended the debates recognized that the two contestants were struggling to win. Accordingly, it was part of the background knowledge of the speakers, the moderators, and the audiences that such a structured meeting entailed a conflict and some sort of showing power, hegemony and struggle (Yilmaz, 2017:1). This struggle reflected their overt and covert conflicting stands. For example, both speakers challenged and threatened each other in an outspoken manner. Trump was seen threatening Clinton to

send her to jail "*Because you'd be in jail"* if he were to be elected. In her turn, Clinton, on many occasions, accused Trump of "*not releasing his taxes returns or the amount of wealth he had*". Trump replied and challenged her to "*acknowledge and assume full responsibility for her emails*".

As per the creativity of both speakers, Trump appeared to defy the norms in this type of discourse (debates). He did not seem to follow the instructions of his counselors, nor did he stick to the rules of the debate in which he repeatedly interrupted his opponent and the moderators. Additionally, Trump seemed to use inappropriate words and sometimes mounted verbal attacks to his opponent and the audience. For example, he called Clinton "*nasty woman"* and accused her of being " *a liar*". Clinton, however, showed an institutionalized character and seemed to follow the rules and the norms of such type of discourse verbatim.

Moreover, the analysis showed that the audiences seemed to be influenced by both speakers' attitudes and sometimes showed enthusiasm pertaining to some replies of the candidates. For example, the audiences reacted by applauding, and sometimes they seemed to reveal some interjections such as (wow, oh…etc.).

The second form of struggle at the institutional level appeared by the endorsement at the governmental level, and their struggle to change, amend, draft, suggest and sometimes delete some laws and acts in the constitution. For example, on the economy, Clinton supported ObamaCare whereas Trump called for repealing it. Clinton supported trade deals such as NAFTA whereas Trump continually defied it. On Guns, Clinton called for reforming and amending Act 2, while Trump maintained that there was no need for any new laws on the same issue.

At the societal level, the candidates raced to ensure their interest in social issues and continually showed their creativity in terms of providing persuasive and viable solutions that echoed their views and ideologies. This is because such issues direly and directly touch on the life of the people, their welfare, and security. For example, on security, Trump showed strict ideology and inflexibility towards immigrants, refugees (Syrians), and ISIS. He resorted to the ideology of fear as a persuasive means in order to convince the voters. On the economy, Trump recognized the impact of the economic problems that the U.S had suffered from, such as the recession, unbalanced trade deals (NAFTA), Health Care Act, ...etc. Clinton, however, showed unprecedented care and utilized sympathy for human rights, children, minorities (Muslims, blacks, Latinos,…etc), refugees (Syrians),

health care, and immigration (Muslims, Mexicans). Her drive was to ensure her unshaken belief in the values of the American society.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present paper investigated the persuasive endeavor of the American presidential candidates in their pursuit to win the votes of the electorates. Fairclough's model of CDA (1995) was used to find the ideological stands, power distribution, and persuasive inclinations of the candidates. The findings of this study revealed the following conclusions: first, the speeches of both candidates showed a strong ideological dichotomy on all the issues of concern such as immigration, economy, human rights…etc. This dichotomy appeared in the stark discrepancy of the choice of vocabulary, grammatical constructions, figurative language and, discourse unity (cohesion and coherence). Obviously, the choice of words was the most dominant aspect that reflected this difference in ideological stands. For example, Clinton accused Trump of being a racist. She stated, "*he has a long record of engaging in racist behavior*". On another occasion, she called him "*a racist liar*". Trump also, never hesitated to mount verbal attacks against Clinton. Therefore, in several occasions, he called her several names such as *(nasty woman, liar, evil…etc)*, and on one occasion he even threatened to send her to jail if he were to be elected. He stated, "*Because you'd be in jail"*.

As per the figurative language, the speeches of both candidates reflected a decisive usage of metaphors as persuasive tools. Such metaphors included personification (*making America great again*), similes (*you are evil*) , and extended metaphors (allegories) (Anecdotes). Grammatical constructions such as the passive voice and reported speech added further linguistic persuasive influence. Both candidates skilled in using the passive voice so as to obscure the agent and augment the action. The usage of the reported speech, however, was mainly meant in order to authenticate and validate the speech of both candidates for credibility purposes. On pronouns, they were generally used by both candidates with a varying degree in order to emphasize identity, collectivity, solidarity, self-glorification, and group membership. As per Evidentiality, it was employed strategically in order to make both speakers' points of view more plausible. Apparently, both candidates resorted to such linguistic persuasion devices, however, they used them differently.

Additionally, the analysis revealed varying typologies of power distribution in terms of the participants. Both candidates raced all over the

debates to demonstrate on their powerful characteristics by augmenting on their experiences, credibility, and achievements. Also, they resorted to planned and decided verbal attacks in order to undermine the authoritative tone of the opposite rival. Finally, the study indicated the tendency of both candidates to resort to a plethora of persuasive techniques so as to impact the electorates. These techniques were mainly based on careful use of the language (vocabulary, grammatical constructions, metaphors, intertextuality…to mention some). Moreover, they both resorted to logic (logos), feelings (pathos), and credibility (ethos) in order to emphasize on their strong points and disqualify those of their opponent. For example, where Clinton seemed to rely more on (logos): figures, facts, and statistics, Trump manipulated the emotional aspect (pathos) in which he showed how weak America has become and accordingly he chanted his famous slogan "*Make America Great Again*" in order to save and restore the status of America. To conclude, the findings of this study appeared to be in harmony with the goals of CDA in uncovering hidden ideologies, revealing social inequality, and justifying social power distribution. the researchers recommend further investigation of the presidential debates in varying culture based on Fairclough's model or other models of CDA.

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