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GESTURES AND WORDS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF THE OBAMA-MCCAIN ENCOUNTER

Our purpose in the present paper is to analyse the discourse strategies, both verbal and nonverbal, used by the Senators Barack Obama and John McCain in the last presidential campaign in the USA (14th October 2008).

In a televised political debate everything counts: words, the way words are organised into sentences (syntactic and thematic structures), expressions of (dis)agreement, equivocation strategies, terms of address, physical appearance, facial gestures, body movements, hand movements, eye contact, pauses, silences, initial and final handshakes, and even the politician's sweat. For this reason, our analysis will focus on the interplay between Obama's and McCain's verbal and nonverbal discourse strategies used to defend their faces and their nonverbal behaviours. Politicians know that being a good orator is not enough because the audience will decode not only what they say but also the way they say things and the way they behave. Conscious though they are of the importance of all the above-mentioned verbal and nonverbal devices, they are not always in control of all of them. Consequently, what they say verbally does not always coincide with what they express nonverbally and, in some occasions, the audience may get much more information from decoding what politicians do than from decoding what politicians say. Analysing nonverbal devices, we can know much more about politicians' intentions, feelings, or even know whether they are lying or telling the truth.

KEY WORDS: gestures, political discourse, discourse strategies, political debate, equivocation, (dis)agreement, election campaign.

Introduction

During the election campaign in the United States, the popular televised political debate event becomes one of the most definite key factors for the final outcome of this "adventure". According to Coleman (2000, p. 9), there are four main reasons for "regarding televised leaders' debates as a means of enhancing the democratic process". Basically, these four main reasons

are: (1) they are the best way of reaching a large audience of voters; (2) they have an educational impact; (3) they help to equalise access to the mass media; and (4) they allow the public to come as close as they can to auditioning the candidates for national leadership.

Nevertheless, this could be a double-edged sword. Great orators with poor telegenic qualities might be defeated by others

who are not so good orators but who are more attractive to the audience (Nixon, considered a very good orator, was defeated by an attractive Kennedy). As Coleman (2000, p. 7) points out “Nixon was deemed by those who only listened to the debate on the radio as the ‘winner’. For this reason, in our study of the Obama-McCain debate (14th October 2008) both verbal and non-verbal (visual and acoustic) signals will be considered. Specifically, our analysis will focus on the interplay between Obama’s and McCain’s discourse strategies used to defend their faces and their nonverbal behaviours. In a televised political debate everything counts: physical appearance, facial gestures, body movements, hand movements, eye contact, pauses, silences, initial and final handshakes, and even the politician’s sweat, hesitancy in their voices betraying their nervousness, etc.

The debate analysed here is the first of four debates, three presidential and one vice-presidential. In contrast to the second and the third presidential debates, this first presidential debate had a podium format. In this type of debate the candidates are standing behind their individual podiums. The second presidential encounter was a Town Hall debate and in the third the two candidates were seated at a table. The setting of the debate will obviously condition the two candidates’ verbal and nonverbal behaviour.

In contrast to political interviews, debates consist of journalists’ questions directed to panels of candidates. The number of candidates in American presidential primary campaign debates is reduced to the two candidates most likely to run through the primaries, in this case Senators John McCain and Barack Obama. Although presidential primary campaign debates

are a genre of discourse, Adams (2008, p. 1) explains that they are “[...] motivated by the communicative form and culture of interview-based information-seeking journalistic discourse, rather than the rhetorical form and culture of deliberate and argumentative discourse”.

In debates, candidates stand as bearers of conflicted positions and the goal of this debate is to respectfully negotiate these differences of opinion. According to Adams (2008, p. 3), “The winning candidate is able to effectively persuade the majority of the electorate that their opinions represent the best judgment. The winning candidate’s positions are therefore taken to represent the will of the majority.”

According to Cattani (2008, p. 119), “Persuasion and conviction are intimately connected with debate.” It is perhaps for this reason that televised leaders’ debates are so popular since the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960. Cattani (2008) distinguishes three different and general dimensions in debates: (1) the logic and epistemic dimension; (2) the rhetorical and dialectical dimension; and (3) the behavioural and moral dimension. Cattani (2008, p. 119) explains the requirements and implications of each dimension in the following way:

- Logic and epistemic requirements and implications:

There are two theses and two opponents confronting on a rational investigation. We apply the rules of convincing-demonstrative reasoning. Confrontation occurs at the epistemic level.

- Rhetorical and dialectical requirements and implications:

There are two parties, both of them employing all their reasoning tools to win the debate. We apply the rules of persuasive reasoning and argumentation. Confrontation occurs at the dialectical level.

- Behavioural and moral requirements and implications:

Debate takes place in conformity with specific behavioural rules. We apply the code of politeness and the so-called “golden rule” of universal moral validity which says: “Treat others as you would like to be treated”¹. Confrontation occurs at the ethical level.

Methodology

The first step we took when analysing these data was to divide the debate into three main sections, which, from now onwards, will be referred to as:

- Opening.
- Body.
- Closure.

The Opening part is a 1-minute and 20-second period in which the moderator, Jim Lehrer, introduces the debate by saying this is the first of four debates, three presidential and one vice presidential, and he presents the main topic of discussion, foreign policy and national security. He also gives a brief account of how the debate will develop and points out that the order in answering the questions has been determined by a coin toss and that the audience present in the hall will remain silent during the debate. This explanation gives an idea of the importance of the aspects mentioned by the moderator in any political debate: candidates’ turns in opening and closing the debate, the audience’s reaction towards the candidates’ words, etc.

The Body part is divided into eight 9-minute segments, even though the mod-

erator mentions at the beginning that there will be nine 9-minute segments. The reason for this reduction is that there is an extension of Question 3 and consequently the moderator decided to reduce the final number of lead questions from nine to eight. The moderator, Jim Lehrer, introduces each segment with an issue and gives each candidate two minutes to answer. After the two Senators, John McCain and Barack Obama, have responded, then there is a five minute section for discussion between the two candidates.

The eight 9-minute segments (Sn), which are introduced by the moderator’s eight lead questions (Qn), are the following ones:

S1: Q1- Financial recovery plan.

S2: Q2- Differences between McCain’s and Obama’s approaches to go out of the financial crisis.

S3: Q3- Financial rescue plan.

S4: Q4- Vietnam.

S5: Q5- Afghanistan.

S6: Q6- Iran and USA security.

S7: Q7- Relationship with Russia.

S8: Q8- Likelihood of another 9/11-type attack.

Then Jim Lehrer allows each candidate two minutes to comment. After that, he facilitates an open discussion of the topic for the remaining 5 minutes.

This means that each question in the segment is followed by two clearly different sections. The structure of the first section looks like the typical sequence of an interview and the second section has the typical structure of a debate. Consequently, from now on, they will be termed ‘interview-type section’ and ‘debate-type section’, respectively.

In contrast to debates, the formal struc-

¹ This rule has originally been formulated as positive (“Do to others what you would have them do to you” – Matthew 7, 12, Luke 6, 31) or as negative (“Do not do to others what you wouldn’t the others do to you”).

ture of interviews² is as follows (Heritage et al. 1991, pp. 98–9):

- IEs are confined to responsive activities. This has the corollary that interviewees cannot properly open or close interviews, this task is exclusively allocated to interviewers.
- The turn-taking system makes no provision for interviewees to allocate next turns among the speakers or, with the exception of a particular contingency, to select themselves to speak next, in contexts where there are more than two parties (that is, two or more interviewees and/or two or more interviewers).
- IR questions have ‘agenda setting’ characteristics which may require interviewees to engage in complex courses of action if they are to challenge or evade IR questions within a turn-taking framework that essentially confines them to responses to interviewers’ questions.

Moreover, interviewers should maintain a neutralistic stance towards the interviewee’s statements and positions. Therefore, interviewers should avoid “making statements – whether hostile to or supportive of an interviewee’s stated position – that could be construed as a personal opinion or as the position of their employers” (Heritage *et al.* 1991, p. 107).

At first sight, it could be agreed that the second section, the debate-type one, should be expected to me more natural than the first one, even though, in Oscar Wilde’s words (2000, p. 8), “being natural is simply a pose”.

The Closure part is a 20-second period where the moderator brings the debate to an end. He announces the date for the next debate, the vice-presidential one at Washington University in St. Louis, and thanks the senators and the audience:

(1) **LEHRER:** And that ends this debate tonight.

On October 2, next Thursday, also at 9:00 p.m. Eastern time, the two vice presidential candidates will debate at Washington University in St. Louis. My PBS colleague, Gwen Ifill, will be the moderator. For now, from Oxford, Mississippi, thank you, senators, both. I’m Jim Lehrer. Thank you, and good night.

In this article we will focus on the analysis of the second section, the Body-part.

Discussion

As far as the use of rhetorical devices is concerned, Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain show two completely different styles. Additionally, the devices they use in the “interview-type section” contrast the ones they put into practice in the “debate-type section”.

Firstly, whereas we can only find 4 examples of disagreement in the “interview-type section”, there are 17 in the “debate-type section”. This difference is even more apparent if we take into account who utters most of them: 20 of them are produced by Senator Barack Obama. For example, in the “debate-type section” right after the question about Vietnam and Iraq, Senator Barack Obama disagrees with Senator John McCain in a categorical way:

(2) **MCCAIN:** I’m afraid Senator Obama doesn’t understand the difference between a tactic and a strategy. But the important – I’d like to tell you, two Fourths of July ago I was in Baghdad.

² In this paper Heritage et al. (1991) examine the main features of news interviews.

General Petraeus invited Senator Lindsey Graham and me to attend a ceremony where 688 brave young Americans, whose enlistment had expired, were reenlisting to stay and fight for Iraqi freedom and American freedom. I was honored to be there. I was honored to speak to those troops. And you know, afterwards, we spent a lot of time with them. And you know what they said to us? They said, let us win. They said, let us win. We don't want our kids coming back here.

And this strategy, and this general, they are winning. Senator Obama refuses to acknowledge that we are winning in Iraq.

OBAMA: That's not true.

MCCAIN: They just passed an electoral...

OBAMA: That's not true.

MCCAIN: An election law just in the last few days.

It is also very interesting to note that 6 of these 20 disagreements should be called "pseudo-disagreements" because Senator Barack Obama's strategy is to start with an agreement in order to finish with a clear disagreement. For example, when Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain are asked about the financial recovery plan, Obama says the following:

- (3) **OBAMA:** Well, I think Senator McCain's **absolutely right** that we need more responsibility, **but** we need it not just when there's a crisis. I mean, we've had years in which the reigning economic ideology has been what's good for Wall Street, but not what's good for Main Street. (...)

According to Pomerantz (1984, p. 70) "A substantial number of such disagreements are produced with stated disagreement components delayed or withheld

from early positioning within turns and sequences." This is one of the functions of "well" in a turn-taking sequence, to delay a disagreement. So, even though he says "I think Senator McCain's absolutely right", we should be ready to expect a "but" utterance.

In contrast to Senator Barack Obama, Senator John McCain only disagrees with Obama in one instance, and he is "forced to". At the end of the first "debate-type section", the moderator explicitly asks:

- (4) **LEHRER:** So, Senator McCain, do you agree with what Senator Obama just said? And, if you don't, tell him what you disagree with.

Senator John McCain does not express any (dis)agreement with Senator Barack Obama and for that reason the moderator forces him to explicitly make clear his position. Senator John McCain answers in the following way:

- (5) **MCCAIN:** No, I – look, we've got to fix the system. We've got fundamental problems in the system. And Main Street is paying a penalty for the excesses and greed in Washington, D.C., and on Wall Street. (...)

This short and concise "No" is in sharp contrast to the type of disagreements used by Senator Barack Obama: "that's not true"; "there is a fundamental difference"; "you were wrong"; "that is not the case"; "I do not agree with Senator McCain"; "this is a major difference I have with Senator McCain"; "obviously, I disagree with this notion"; etc. And he even repeats his expressions of disagreement several times in the same turn. We can see one example in the following extract ("debate-type section" to Question 2):

(6) **MCCAIN:** (...) He has voted in the United States Senate to increase taxes on people who make as low as \$42,000 a year.

OBAMA: **That's not true, John. That's not true.**

MCCAIN: And that's just a fact. Again, you can look it up.

OBAMA: Look, **it's just not true.** And if we want to talk about oil company profits, under your tax plan, John – this is undeniable – oil companies would (...)

We also have to mention that Senator Barack Obama explicitly agrees with Senator John McCain in 4 instances. When they are asked about the financial rescue plan, Senator Barack Obama says in the “debate-type section”:

(7) **LEHRER:** Not willing to give that up?

OBAMA: Not willing to give up the need to do it but there may be individual components that we can't do. **But John is right** we have to make cuts. We right now give \$15 billion every year as subsidies to private insurers under the Medicare system. Doesn't work any better through the private insurers. They just skim off \$15 billion. That was a give away and part of the reason is because lobbyists are able to shape how Medicare works. (...)

So it seems Senator Barack Obama is very clear and straightforward in relation to his political stance. In fact, when analysing Obama's and McCain's answers in all 8 “interview-type sections”, we get the following results:

Senator Barack Obama: 5 answers and 3 equivocations.

Senator John McCain: 3 answers and 5 equivocations.

As we can see, Senator Barack Obama answers most of the questions. He only

equivocates in three questions: Question 3 about the financial rescue plan; Question 6 about the threat from Iran; and Question 7 about relationship with Russia. According to Bull et al.'s (1993) and Bull's (2003) typology of non-replies to questions, in Question 3 he declines to answer on grounds of inability (strategy 6.a)³. The moderator asks them about the financial rescue plan and Obama says:

(8) **OBAMA:** Well, there are a range of things that are probably going to have to be delayed. We don't yet know what our tax revenues are going to be. The economy is slowing down, so it's hard to anticipate right now what the budget is going to look like next year.

In Question 6 he uses strategy 8.c (ie. answers part of a single-barrelled question)⁴ and in Question 7 strategy 7.b (ie. presents policy)⁵.

³ Bull and Mayer (1993) developed a new coding procedure for politicians' failure to reply to questions based on eight televised political interviews recorded during the 1987 British General Election campaign. This classification has been recently revised by Bull (2003) and includes 12 categories and 35 subordinate categories. These categories are: (1) Ignores the question; (2) Acknowledges the question without answering it; (3) Questions the question through; (4) Attacks the question; (5) Attacks the interviewer; (6) Declines to answer; (7) Makes political point; (8) Gives incomplete reply; (9) Repeats answer to previous question; (10) States or implies that the question has already been answered; (11) Apologises; and (12) Literalism.

According to Bull (2003, pp. 117–118), there are five ways of declining to answer a question (category number 6 above): (a) refusal on grounds of inability; (b) unwillingness to answer; (c) inability to speak for someone else; (d) deferred answer (i.e. it is not possible to answer the question for the time being); and (e) ignorance.

⁴ According to Bull (2003, p. 120), there are five ways of giving an incomplete reply (category number 8 above): (a) starting to answer but does not finish (self-interruption); (b) negative answer: the politician states what will not happen instead of what will happen; (c) partial reply; (d) half answer; and (e) fractional reply.

⁵ According to Bull (2003, pp. 118–120), there are eight ways of making a political point (category number

As we said before, Senator John McCain is much more evasive: he only answers 3 questions and equivocates in 5: Question 1 about the financial recovery plan; Question 4 about Vietnam and Iraq; Question 5 about Afghanistan; Question 6 about the threat from Iran; and Question 7 about the relationship with Russian. It seems that both senators equivocate in these last two questions because these questions have to do with USA's security and they prefer to be cautious. In Question 1 he presents policy and appeals to nationalism (strategies 7.b and 7.e); in Question 4 he justifies policy and offers political analysis (strategies 7.c and 7.f); in Question 5 he attacks opposition and presents policy (strategies 7.a and 7.b); in Question 6 he only answers part of a single-barrelled question (strategy 8.c); and in Question 7 he presents policy (strategy 7.b). For example, in Question 6 the moderator asks them "what is your reading on the threat to Iran right now to the security of the United States?" Senator John McCain starts his answer in the following way:

- (9) **MCCAIN:** My reading of the threat from Iran is that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, it is an existential threat to the State of Israel and to other countries in the region because the other countries in the region will feel compelling requirement to acquire nuclear weapons as well. (...)

And then he goes on talking about the threat from Iran to the rest of the world but he does not explicitly speak about the security of the United States, although he mentions very briefly and quickly the threat to US soldiers in Iraq.

7 above): (a) external attack; (b) presents policy; (c) justifies policy; (d) gives reassurance; (e) appeals to nationalism; (f) offers political analysis; (g) self-justification; (h) talks up one's own side.

Another important difference between the rhetorical devices used by Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain in "interview-type sections" and in "debate-type sections" is related to the terms of address they chose. We can find the following terms of address in the transcription: "Senator Obama"; "Senator McCain"; "you"; "he"; first name (i.e. "Barack" or "John"); and vocatives. The first and most striking difference is that both senators only used "Senator Obama"; "Senator McCain"; and "he" in the "interview-type sections". On the contrary, we can find any of the above terms of address in the "debate-type sections". It seems that they want to show a situation similar to the one you can find in a parliamentary setting where "distance" relationships are preferred. In opposition to this, they both use "you" in most "debate-type sections". But, in contrast to Senator John McCain, Senator Barack Obama not only uses many more "you" references in the "debate-type sections" (34 in opposition to 8) but he also says "John" 24 times (11 of them were vocatives). Senator John McCain never utters a single "Barack" or a single vocative. The following example has been taken from the "debate-type section" right after Question 4 (i.e. about Vietnam and Iraq):

- (10) **OBAMA:** And so **John** likes – **John**, you like to pretend like the war started in 2007. **You** talk about the surge. The war started in 2003, and at the time when the war started, **you** said it was going to be quick and easy. **You** said we knew where the weapons of mass destruction were. **You** were wrong. **You** said that we were going to be greeted as liberators. **You** were wrong. **You** said that there was no history of violence between Shiite and Sunni. And **you** were wrong. And so my question is [...] (Interruption)

As we can see here, Senator Barack Obama has used “John” in two different ways. The first one is the subject of “likes” but the second is a vocative. So, Obama does not only use Senator John McCain’s first name but he even urges him to listen to him using a vocative. And then, he goes on using “you” up to 8 times, just the same number of times Senator John McCain used “you” in the whole transcript.

Finally, another fact which is noteworthy is that Senator Barack Obama uses the informal form “let’s” twice: “let’s talk” (in the “debate-type section” to question 6) and “let’s move on” (in the “debate-type section” to question 7). Once more, it seems that Senator Barack Obama fosters closer relationships.

In the following chart we can see a summary of this analysis:

SENATOR BARACK OBAMA	SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less evasive: 5 answers (Q1 Q2 Q4 Q5 Q8) and 3 equivocations (Q3 Q6 Q7). • Very clear about his political stance (20 expressions of disagreements and 4 agreements). • Fosters a “closer” relationship using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McCain’s first name 13 times and vocatives 11 times. - the informal form “let’s” twice. - the pronominal form “he” only 15 times and “you” up to 34 times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More evasive: 5 equivocations (Q1 Q4 Q5 Q6 Q7) and 3 answers (Q2 Q3 Q8). • Less clear about his political stance (no agreements and only 1 “forced” expression of disagreement). • Fosters a more “distance” relationship not using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obama’s first name or vocatives. - the informal form “let’s”. - so often the pronoun “you” (only 8 times) and much more often the pronominal form “he” (26 times).

Regarding the devices they use in the “interview-type section” and in the “debate-type sections”, we could point out that both senators feel more at ease during the “debate-type sections”. Obama expresses many more (dis)agreements (17 in contrast to 4) and both senators used “closer” terms of address in the “debate-type sections”; in fact they limit themselves to the forms “Senator Obama”, “Senator McCain”, and

“he”. It seems they know everybody is expecting a straightforward, adequate and witty answer and they feel rather tense and for that reason they measure their words with caution: content and style.

Regarding the analysis of nonverbal elements in the debate, it is well known that nonverbal signals are extremely important in political discourse and politicians are conscious of that. They know their gestures may be of great help to get the audience’s support, to convince them of something, or even to damage their opponent’s reputation. Anyway, politicians do not always convey the same message verbally and nonverbally and, sometimes, what they convey nonverbally is not really what they would like to. Analysing nonverbal devices, we can know much more about politicians’ intentions, feelings, or

even know whether they are lying or telling the truth.

The first nonverbal element to be taken into account in any debate is appearance. Appearance is very important in a televised political discourse because it is the first message the audience receives from the candidates. The term appearance includes a wide variety of qualities and signals such as clothing, attractiveness, artifacts, facial

gestures, weight, height, or even posture, among others.

Basically, appearance can be said to include two rather different types of signals: permanent and temporary. Permanent signals are in a way inherent, and consequently invariable. They are features which cannot be changed at once, for instance height, weight, eye colour, etc. In contrast, temporary signals are non-inherent elements and so they are open to be changed. Some examples of temporary nonverbal signals are clothes, artifacts, posture, etc.

Taking into account that the first presidential debate was about foreign policy and national security, one of Senator McCain's permanent signals related to appearance, age, was supposed to be an advantage for him at first sight. Age is generally related to experience and, consequently, John McCain had two points in his favour. First, he is older than Barack Obama, which might be interpreted by the audience as being a more experienced politician and, second, he is not new in the political arena, which means the audience already knows his face and this might lead the voters to consider McCain knows how to cope with matters related to foreign affairs and security much better than Obama.

The two candidates are conscious of this advantage in favour of McCain. For this reason, the two of them will try to make use of this knowledge in their own favour.

Senator McCain will keep mentioning that Obama has no experience:

- (11) **McCain**: "There are some advantages to **experience**, and knowledge, and judgment. And I – and I honestly don't believe that Senator Obama has the knowledge or **experience** and has made the wrong judgments in a number of areas, ..."

From McCain's words it can be noticed that he sees himself as an experienced man and also that this is an advantage. As a strategy, he wants the audience to associate experience with knowledge and judgement. It is obvious that he can easily show the audience that Senator Obama has no experience, at least not as much as he himself has, but it not so easy to convince the audience that Obama has no knowledge or judgement. With this strategy, he is trying to persuade the audience to interpret the three qualities together. So, once he can show Obama has no experience, both his lack of knowledge and judgement will also come to the voters' minds, even though one thing does not necessarily imply the other.

In contrast, Obama will try to turn McCain's advantage into a disadvantage. He will try to show the audience that because they already know Senator McCain, they should also know he is very similar to President Bush and so voting him would be like a passport to the past, to Bush's era. Once he establishes the parallelism between McCain and Bush, his strategy is attacking Bush, which is a way of attacking McCain since he has already been described as a continuation and a supporter of Bush.

When Obama describes his tax plan, he says:

- (12) **Obama**: "And over time, that, I think, is going to be a better recipe for economic growth than the – the policies of President Bush that John McCain wants to – wants to follow."

Obama also says that the economic crisis is the "final verdict on eight years of failed economic policies promoted by George Bush, supported by Senator McCain."

As noticed from the examples above, what was apparently an advantage for McCain might also be considered a disadvantage and, consequently, it might benefit Senator Obama. That is to say, even though age is supposed to go hand in hand with experience, the audience can also think that McCain's age puts him at a disadvantage because the new critical situation also requires new critical solutions. A new face, as Obama's, might also imply a new way of doing things, a new way of coping with the national financial crisis and a new solution to the international situation.

As mentioned above, appearance is the result of the combination not only of permanent elements but also of variable or temporary elements. The way of dressing and the use of artifacts are variable signals related to appearance which are also important in political discourse. The reason why they may be relevant is because they are also a nonverbal way to express identity, values, beliefs, etc.

In this respect, one of the most important variable signals in the debate is the use of bracelets. Senator John McCain uses the strategy of showing the audience a bracelet he is wearing with the name of Captain Matthew Stanley as a physical evidence of his proximity to the conflict.

- (13) **McCain:** [...] And I'll tell you, I had a town hall meeting in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, and a woman stood up and she said, "Senator McCain, I want you to do me the honor of wearing a bracelet with my son's name on it."

He was 22 years old and he was killed in combat outside of Baghdad, Matthew Stanley, before Christmas last year. This was last August, a year ago. And I said, "I will – I will wear his bracelet with honor."

And this was August, a year ago. And then she said, "But, Senator McCain, I want you to do everything – promise me one thing, that you'll do everything in your power to make sure that my son's death was not in vain."

That means that that mission succeeds, just like those young people who re-enlisted in Baghdad, just like the mother I met at the airport the other day whose son was killed. And they all say to me that we don't want defeat."

This strategy could have been an important advantage for Senator McCain. The use of this artifact is important not only because of what McCain feels or thinks but also, and this is probably the reason why he is wearing this bracelet, because of people's judgements about the Senator. Nonetheless, McCain did not expect Obama's counter-attack using the same device. After McCain's bracelet story, Obama immediately says that he has a bracelet too with the name of Sergeant Ryan David Jopeck, after some difficulty to remember his name:

- (14) **Obama:** Jim, let me just make a point. I've got a bracelet, too, from Sergeant – from the mother of Sergeant Ryan David Jopeck, sure another mother is not going through what I'm going through.

No U.S. soldier ever dies in vain because they're carrying out the missions of their commander in chief. And we honor all the service that they've provided. Our troops have performed brilliantly. The question is for the next president, are we making good judgments about how to keep America safe precisely because sending our military into battle is such an enormous step.

As a result, John McCain's initial strategy turns into a negative point for both candidates. In the case of McCain, the bracelet story does not score a point because he was expecting to move the audience with it and so have the audience's support but Barack Obama wrecked it all. Besides, it is also a negative point for Obama because, even though he is wise to counter-attack McCain's story, it comes back against him after showing he has problems remembering the soldier's name on his bracelet.

Analysing Senator McCain's facial gestures and his behaviour from this point on in the debate, it can be noticed that he was quite disappointed because his strategy did not have the effect he had expected and he did not expect Senator Obama's reaction to his strategy. The bracelet story can be considered, in some way, to constitute a turning point in McCain's behaviour in the debate.

Another relevant nonverbal signal to be analysed in this presidential debate is eye contact. In order to analyse the candidates' behaviour regarding eye contact, first, all the participants in the interaction have to be identified, since they are the possible targets of the Senators' gaze.

In this debate, as in any televised political debate, two different types of participants can be found. On the one hand, there are participants who are physically present at the interaction setting (Senator John McCain, Senator Barack Obama, the moderator Jim Lehrer, and the audience). They could be considered 'overt' participants. On the other hand, there are also what could be considered 'covert' participants, not physically present, the audience who are watching the debate from their homes. The camera is a kind of hinge between the two scenarios, which serves as a

kind of linking element. When one of the participants looks into the camera, the final target is the audience watching the debate on TV.

Having identified the participants of the debate, the possibilities for the candidates' eye contact are the following:

- a) Eye contact with the other candidate.
- b) Eye contact with the moderator.
- c) Eye contact with the overt audience, present at the set.
- d) Eye contact with the covert audience (camera).

The most relevant feature to be pointed out is that the two candidates avoid eye contact with each other the entire debate while they are talking. McCain does not look at Obama when he is talking. When Obama is speaking, he looks at McCain at different occasions in the debate but there is no eye contact because McCain avoids looking at him.

Most of the time, the two candidates are looking at the moderator. This conditions the way they talk and explains the fact why they use so many third person pronouns to refer to each other, even when answering direct questions from the other candidate, instead of using the second person pronoun. In the following example the moderator urges Senator Obama to say something directly to Senator McCain:

- (15) **OBAMA:** Well, I think **Senator McCain's** absolutely right that we need more responsibility, but we need it not just when there's a crisis. I mean, we've had years in which the reigning economic ideology has been what's good for Wall Street, but not what's good for Main Street. And there are folks out there who've been struggling before this crisis took place. And that's why it's so important, as

we solve this short-term problem, that we look at some of the underlying issues that have led to wages and incomes for ordinary Americans to go down, the – a health care system that is broken, energy policies that are not working, because, you know, 10 days ago, **John** said that the fundamentals of the economy are sound.

LEHRER: Say it directly to him.

OBAMA: I do not think that they are.

LEHRER: Say it directly to him.

OBAMA: Well, the – John, 10 days ago, you said that the fundamentals of the economy are sound. And [...]

Regarding the last type of eye contact (eye contact with the camera), the two candidates behave in a rather different way. Concerning Obama, he knows that the audience at home is important since they are the voters in this election. For that reason, he strategically selects two very important points in the debate to look straight into the camera, the beginning and the end. Obama is the first to start the debate. In his first 2-minute turn of the first interview-type section (S1-Q1) he looks at the moderator for 11 seconds and then he looks straight

into the camera for 1 minute and 57 seconds to address the audience following the debate from their homes.

This can be considered a positive point in Obama's favour because from this point Obama gets the support of a great part of the audience.

In contrast, as far as McCain is concerned, the situation is quite different. He tries to make some kind of contact with the camera when he says he is addressing all Americans but he is unable to maintain it and cannot keep eye contact for more than 1 second. He was the second candidate to talk but, instead of looking for support, as Barack Obama had already done, he addresses the moderator. In this sense he misses a very important chance.

Visual and acoustic nonverbal signals are equally important in a televised political discourse. So, in the same way as the already mentioned visual signals of appearance and eye-contact, acoustic elements also play an important role. With acoustic elements we refer to those nonverbal signals which have to do with speech style, that is to say, with the way

Table 1: Counting of words in the First Presidential Debate

Total Number of words in the debate		
16,331		
<i>Opening</i> 222	<i>Body</i> 16,053 Lehrer: 1,231 Obama: 7,663 McCain: 7,159	<i>Closure</i> 56

Table 2: Counting of words in the Body Section

Total Number of words in the Body-Section			
16,053			
Interview-Type Section 5,784		Debate-Type Section 9,038	
Obama 2,883	McCain 2,901	Obama 4,780	McCain 4,258

in which something is said (speed, pitch, tone, stress, pauses, silences, etc.).

Speed, to mention one of the paralinguistic signals, is closely related to the number of words uttered by the candidates. For that reason, we have carried out the counting of words in the debate, shown in the tables below.

As noticed in these tables, there is a difference in the number of words uttered by each candidate. This difference is found in the Debate-type section, where the candidates had five minutes for discussion. Here Obama has probably made use of a few more seconds than McCain. Although there is a little advantage on Obama's side, the difference is not big enough as to consider either of the two candidates a clear winner in this respect. One issue that could be interesting for future research would be analysing the nature of the words uttered by the candidates: number of function words, number of content words, word categories, etc.

Conclusions

To sum up we could say that (1) these two interviewees have shown completely different rhetorical styles in the whole transcript and (2) the devices used by each one in the "interview-type section" sections are in sharp contrast to those used in the "debate-type sections".

In relation to their rhetorical styles, Obama has taken a much more "risky" role in the sense that he has always expressed his (dis)agreements overtly and he has only equivocated in 3 of all questions. On the contrary, McCain has always tried to remain less involved when it comes to state his political stance and he has equivocated in 5 of all questions. Finally, whereas Obama has always tried to show an image

of closeness and proximity, McCain has fostered distance.

Concerning the use of non-verbal devices related to appearance, McCain puts everything on two cards: his age (a permanent signal) and a bracelet with the name of Captain Matthew Stanley (a temporary signal). Had Obama not counter-attacked these strategies, McCain would have got a perfect score. In the case of age, Barack Obama turns McCain's advantage into a disadvantage by showing the audience the new critical situation also requires new critical solutions. Obviously, John McCain cannot be seen as someone "new" by the audience, not only because of his age but also because Obama has established a parallelism between Bush and McCain, and Bush represents the old way. In the case of the bracelet story, Obama also counter-attacks but this time the strategy is not favourable for any of them because he shows some problems remembering the soldier's name on his bracelet.

As far as eye-contact is concerned, the two candidates behave in a very different way. Senator McCain does not look at Senator Obama, either when he is speaking or when he is listening to the other candidate. In contrast, Senator Obama looks at Senator McCain on different occasions but there is no eye-contact because John McCain avoids looking at him. This different behaviour might be interpreted by the audience, on the one hand, as an inability on McCain's side to deal with the situation and, consequently, this could be favourable to Obama. On the other hand, Obama's behaviour looking while speaking at McCain might be interpreted as his willing and ability to cope with difficult situations. Much of the same could be said in relation to their visual contact with the camera,

which is, as we have already mentioned, like looking at the audience watching the debate on TV. Obama took full advantage of this non-verbal device by looking directly into the camera both at the beginning and at the end of the debate. McCain, in contrast, makes some attempts to look into the camera but he is unable to keep contact and has to look to the moderator.

Finally, regarding quantity of words, if the amount of words uttered can be considered to be a positive point, there is a little advantage in favour of Obama in the counting of the Debate-Type sections. Anyway, as mentioned above, the difference is not big enough as to consider either of the two candidates a clear winner in this respect.

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Moksliniai interesai: politinis diskursas, neverbalinė komunikacija, retorika

GESTAI IR ŽODŽIAI POLITINIAME
DISKURSE: OBAMOS IR MCCAINO
SUSITIKIMO ATVEJO STUDIJA

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamos verbalinės ir neverbalinės diskurso strategijos, panaudotos senatorių Baracko Obamos ir Johno McCaino pa-

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Zainteresowania naukowe: dyskurs polityczny, komunikacja niewerbalna, retoryka

GESTY I SŁOWA W DYSKURSIE
POLITYCZNYM: SPOTKANIE OBAMA-
MCCAIN (STUDIUM PRZYPADKU)

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza werbalnych i niewerbalnych strategii dyskursu, zastosowanych podczas ostatniej kampanii wyborczej

skutinėje rinkiminėje kampanijoje JAV (2008 m. spalio 14 d.).

Politiniuose televizijos debatuose svarbi kiekviena smulkmena: žodžiai ir tai, kaip jie vartojami sakiniuose (sintaksinės ir teminės struktūros), (ne)sutikimo raiška, išsisukinėjimo strategijos, kreipiniai, išvaizda, veido mimika, kūno judesiai, gestai, akių kontaktas, pauzės, tylėjimas, rankos paspaudimas susitinkant ir atsisveikinant ir netgi politiko praktavimas. Straipsnyje analizuojama Obamos ir McCaina verbalinio ir neverbalinio diskurso strategijų, naudojamų reputacijos išsągojimui ir neverbalinio elgesio pateisinimui, sąveika. Politikai žino, kad nepakanka būti vien tik geru oratoriumi, kadangi klausytojai dekoduos ne tik tai, ką jie sako, bet ir tai, kaip sako ir elgiasi. Nors politikai suvokia minėtų verbalinių ir neverbalinių strategijų svarbą, bet nevisuomet geba jas visas tinkamai panaudoti. Atsitinka taip, kad jų verbalinė kalba nesutampa su tuo, ką jie išreiškia neverbaline kalba. Kartais gali nutikti taip, kad klausytojai dekoduodami sužinos daug daugiau apie tai, kaip politikai elgiasi, o ne apie tai, ką jie sako. Neverbalinių priemonių analizė gali padėti tiksliau atskleisti politikų ketinimus, jausmus, ji gali padėti sužinoti, kada jie sako tiesą, o kada meluoja.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: gestai, politinis diskursas, diskurso strategijos, politiniai debatai, išsisukinėjimas, (ne)sutikimas, rinkimų kampanija.

w USA przez senatorów Baracka Obamę i Johna McCainą (14 października 2008 r.).

Podczas telewizyjnej debaty polityków ważny jest każdy szczegół: wyrazy i ich użycie w zdaniach (struktury składniowe i tematyczne), wyrażanie (nie)zgody z opinią rozmówcy, odpowiedzi wymijające, sposoby zwracania się do rozmówcy, wygląd, mimika, ruchy ciała, gesty, kontakt wzrokowy, pauzy, milczenie, uścisk dłoni przy powitaniu i pożegnaniu, a nawet pocenie się polityka. Przedmiotem niniejszej analizy jest wzajemne oddziaływanie strategii dyskursu werbalnego i niewerbalnego, stosowanych przez Obamę i McCainą w celu zachowania swego wizerunku i uzasadnienia zachowania niewerbalnego. Politycy wiedzą, że nie wystarczy być jedynie dobrym oratorem, gdyż słuchacze deszyfrują nie tylko treść ich wypowiedzi, ale też sposób mówienia i zachowania. I choć politycy uświadamiają sobie znaczenie wspomnianych werbalnych i niewerbalnych środków komunikacji, nie zawsze jednak potrafią nalezyć nad tym wszystkim zapanować. W rezultacie ich wypowiedzi werbalne nie zawsze pokrywają się z tym, co wyrażają oni w języku niewerbalnym i w niektórych przypadkach może zdarzyć się tak, że widzowie otrzymają o wiele więcej informacji, deszyfrując zachowanie polityków, nie zaś treść ich wypowiedzi. Analiza niewerbalnych środków komunikacji może pomóc w ujawnieniu rzeczywistych zamiarów i odczuć polityków, a nawet w stwierdzeniu, kiedy mówią prawdę, a kiedy kłamią.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: gesty, dyskurs polityczny, strategie dyskursu, debata polityczna, odpowiedź wymijająca, (nie)zgoda z opinią rozmówcy, kampania wyborcza.

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