



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CORPUS ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the frequently used words in the campaign speeches of President Donald J. Trump and to find out if the modes of persuasion, such as pathos, ethos and logos are employed in his speeches. This study utilized the qualitative method of research in analyzing the corpus (12 campaign speeches). When the corpus of the study was fed in the word count tool and text analyzer software, it was found out that the word "will" got the highest frequency of 121, followed by Hillary (58), American (38), going (35), plan and Clinton (32), illegal (30), government (28), corruption (26) and criminal (24). Further, it was also found out that Trump employed the modes of persuasion in his speeches. Given the results of the study, the researcher concludes that Pres. Trump's frequently used words and modes of persuasion might help him won the US election because the statements having the frequently used words and modes of persuasion are against Hillary or in his own favor. The findings of the study can lead to pedagogical implication which the language teachers may use this study to acquaint the students that modes of persuasion as well as frequently used words are important in order to win in a certain debate. On the other hand, this study may also be helpful for the aspiring politicians so that they will be mindful of the words and statements that they will utter in front of the people.

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INTRODUCTION

McNair (2017) simply defines political communication as purposeful communication about politics. This incorporate all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists, and communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics. One form of political communication is the campaign speech. More often, people communicate through words than actions, especially during campaigns when a person is trying to persuade which the ultimate goal is to gain as many votes as possible enough to win the election. It is with this goal in mind that campaigns are strategically planned. Since speeches were the most convincing method to explain a candidate's position, planning the content and delivery was crucial to winning an election (Helen Taft). Most countries in the world have practiced conducting elections to choose their politicians whom they believe can lead the country best and the United States of America is not excluded. On November 8, 2016, the US Presidential Election was made which heralded Donald J. Trump as the newly elect President.

Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story. Throughout his life he has continually set the standards of business and entrepreneurial excellence, especially with his interests in real estate, sports, and entertainment. Likewise, his entry into politics and public service resulted in the Presidential victory in, miraculously, his first ever run for office. After graduating from the Wharton School of Finance, Mr. Trump followed in his father's footsteps as a real estate developer, and he entered the world of real estate development in New York (the White House website). The Trump signature soon became synonymous with the most prestigious of addresses in Manhattan and subsequently throughout the world. An accomplished author, Mr. Trump has authored over fourteen bestsellers and his first book, *The Art of the Deal*, in addition to being the #1 book of the year, is considered a business classic. Mr. Trump announced his candidacy on June 16, 2015, and after seventeen Republican contenders suspended their campaigns, he accepted the Republican nomination for President of the United States in July of 2016. Mr. Trump won the election on November 8 of 2016 in the largest Electoral College landslide for a Republican in 28 years. He won over 2,600 counties nationwide, the most since President Reagan in 1984 (the White House website). Additionally, he won over 62 million votes in the popular vote, the highest all-time for a Republican nominee. He also won 306 electoral

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votes, the most for a Republican since George H.W. Bush in 1988. Millions of Americans rallied behind his message of rebuilding our country and disrupting the status quo—this was a truly national victory and a historic movement. Despite the victory, people couldn't believe the result that Trump defeated Clinton in the election (Oakley, 2016). During the campaign period of Trump, there had been a lot of analysis on the way he speaks and even in the language that he uses in his speeches. Some of the analyses were on the grade level or readability level, discourse markers and speaking style (Katy Waldman, 2016). Moreover, there was one study conducted by Degani (2016) that compared the campaign discourse of Clinton vs. Trump as to linguistic complexity, and the framing of discourse. Another study of Widyawardani (2016) the logos, ethos, pathos employed in Trump's presidential candidacy announcement speech. Despite these studies, there is still no in-depth study on his campaign speeches that looked into the frequently used words and mode of persuasion. Therefore, the researcher was prompted to conduct this study to find out if there are frequently used words and modes of persuasion employed by President Trump in his campaign speeches.

Research Questions

1. *What are the frequently used words in the campaign speeches of Pres. Donald Trump?*
2. *Are the modes of persuasion employed in the campaign speeches?*

Conceptual Framework

Corpus linguistic studies are generally considered to be a type of discourse analysis because they describe the use of linguistic forms in context. Corpus studies are based on analysis of all texts in a corpus, utilizing quantitative measures to identify the typical distribution patterns that occur across texts (Biber, Connor and Upton, 2007). Moreover, corpus approaches to discourse analysis involves the collection of large sets of authentic or real word texts and analyzing features of language within them with the help of a computer. It is now a widely used methodology for doing discourse analysis and offers unique insights into the use of language (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). With the use of computers, researchers are able to explore patterns of language use (grammatical or lexical for instance) within texts. This issue of modern technologies has greatly facilitated discourse-oriented research and dramatically reduced the time and resources needed to find particular linguistic patterns and collocations of words in texts. On the other hand, aside from analyzing features of language in a corpus, language choice of the speaker also affects the response of the audience because a speech is not only a collection of words, but it is a combination of different elements such as right words with right expression at the right time, vocal techniques, body language, facial expressions, etc. (Muirthy & Ghosal, 2014). Some words that we utter may not be effective, but they can be made effectually powerful with the help of Aristotle's three persuasive appeals of Rhetoric. They are Logos, Ethos and Pathos. The first kind of mode of persuasion depends on the personal character of the speaker [ethos]. The mode of persuasion "Ethos" deals with the character of the speaker. The intent of the speaker is to *appear* credible. According to Aristotle there are three prerequisites that are necessary to appear credible: competence, good intention and empathy. The second is on

putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [pathos]. Pathos encompasses the emotional influence on the audience. The goal of each speech is to persuade the audience; therefore it is necessary to put the audience in the appropriate emotional states. Aristotle noted that is of importance that each speaker knew, which emotions exists, how and under which circumstances that can be elicited. The third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself [logos]. Logos is the appeal towards logical reason, thus the speaker wants to present an argument that appears to be sound to the audience. It encompasses the content and arguments of the speech (Aristotle). Like ethos and pathos the aim is to create a persuasive effect, thus the apparent is sufficient. For the argumentation the arguments, argument schemes, the different forms of proof and the reasoning are of special interest. There are two different forms of proofs: the natural and the artificial/technical proof. Natural proofs are those that are based on giving data like documents, testimonies, etc. The artificial/technical proof are those that are created with a combination of information (hints, examples, etc.) and the art of logic.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative method of research. First, the researcher searched in the internet the transcript campaign speeches of President Donald J. Trump and was able to find them in the website "Trump Make America Great Again" which can be accessed at www.donaldjtrump.com. Next, there were only 12 campaign speeches, the corpus of the study, were purposely chosen from October to November 2016 because these were the last months before the election, which all the tactics in persuading people must be applied in order to win. The campaign speeches chosen were as follows:

- In Minnesota, Trump Offers Voters Chance to Take Government Back From the Corrupt Political Class (November 6, 2016)
- In Nevada, Trump Warns of Constitutional Crisis if Hillary is Elected (November 5, 2016)
- In North Carolina, Trump Delivers Positive Vision for America (November 5, 2016)
- Trump Joins Military Leaders, Medal of Honor Recipients to Outline Plan to Rebuild Military (November 3, 2016)
- Donald Trump Slams Hillary's Criminal Pay for Play Corruption Under Investigation (November 3, 2016)
- Donald J. Trump Pledges to Immediately Repeal and Replace Obamacare (November 1, 2016)
- In Colorado, Donald J. Trump Pledges to End the Corruption in Washington (October 29, 2016)
- In Michigan, Donald Trump Outlines his Urban Renewal Agenda and Promises to Bring Back Jobs (October 31, 2016)
- In Nevada, Trump Promises Real Change that Will Bring Back Jobs and Security (October 30, 2016)
- In Arizona, Trump vows to Make America Just Again (October 29, 2016)
- In Colorado, Donald J. Trump Pledges to End the Corruption in Washington (October 29, 2016)
- In Ohio, Trump Slams Obamacare and Proposes Real Change (October 27, 2016)

After selecting, the speeches excluding the titles [since these are not uttered by Trump himself], were fed in Word Counter

Tool to get the frequently used words. Words that are composed of three letters and below were not chosen such as *it, is, are* since they bear no significant meaning in the speeches when analyzed. Moreover to test the reliability of the result, these were also fed in Text Analyzer to find out if they have the same results. To further validate, the statements with the frequently used words were all extracted from the speeches and counted using the find function of MS word. After validating the result, the frequently words were analyzed. Meanwhile, aside from determining the frequently used words, the modes of persuasion, such as ethos, pathos and logos were also looked into. The speeches were read many times to thoroughly understand the speeches. After reading, the statements that belonged to each mode were extracted, analyzed and interpreted.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the frequently used words in the campaign speeches of Pres. Donald Trump?

With the help of the Word Counter Tool and Text Analyzer, which can be accessed at <https://wordcounttools.com/> and <https://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp>, respectively, the 12 campaign speeches of President Donald Trump were analyzed as to the frequency of words utilized. As presented in Table 1 below, out of 6, 050 words the word “Will” has the highest frequency of 121, followed by Hillary (occurred 58 times), American (occurred 38 times), going (occurred 35 times), Clinton (occurred 32 times), plan and illegal (occurred 30 times), government (occurred 28 times), corruption (occurred 26 times) and criminal (occurred 24 times).

Table 1. The Frequently Used Words

Words	Frequency
1.Will	121
2.Hillary	58
3.American	38
4.Going	35
5.Plan	32
6.Clinton	32
7.Illegal	30
8.Government	28
9.Corruption	26
10.Criminal	24

Will and Going

Out of 6, 050 words, the word “will” got the highest frequency of all the words used by Pres. Trump. It is a modal which is used with promises that take place in the future. By using this word, people can say that President Trump has the strong determination to realize or put into action what he had promised. Specified that “will” is a strong modal verb (Newson, 2008), it is utilized as a part of the statement to express strong aims, conviction, determination and promise. Basically, all the uses of will strengthen the precise intention of a political party – to win elections and structure a government. The use of “will” is intentional and strategic to persuade the electorate vote for him. Hence, of all the modals this is the only modal appears to be most suited for this kind of event. Instead of using the modal will, *be + going + to* pattern was also used by Pres. Trump in his campaign speeches that is why the word “going” has its frequency of 35. This is done to avoid the monopoly on using will in all his speeches because the mentioned pattern can also be used to indicate the action

that takes place in the future. However, the word “will” has a stronger degree of certainty than the mentioned pattern though both of them can be used alternatively since they indicate the same meaning. Besides, the former has only one word while the latter has three words to utter. So in the end, the preference of the speaker what to use more often will always prevail.

“A Trump Administration will end this nightmare of violence.”

“We are going to bring manufacturing and jobs, lots of jobs, back to Pennsylvania.”

Hillary and Clinton

Hillary Clinton is the complete name of a female candidate for president who was nominated for president by a major U.S. political party. Thus, she was President Trump’s rival during the Presidential Elections 2016. Her first name Hillary (occurred 58 times) and last name Clinton (occurred 32 times) were repeatedly mentioned by President Trump in his campaign speeches. This indicates that Pres. Trump always brought out the first name of the opponent rather than her last name. The last name if mentioned was partnered with another name such as Obama who was her alliance during the election. Either Hillary or Clinton, both were used in his speeches stating negative statements and pieces of evidence against her.

“We know Hillary can’t be trusted with America’s security.”

“We will also repeal the Obama-Clinton defense sequester and rebuild our badly depleted military.”

“The Clinton crew gave more than \$675,000 to the wife of the Deputy FBI Director overseeing the investigation into Hillary’s illegal server – a server we now know Obama knew about.”

American

The “American” word in his campaign speeches which occurred 38 times refers to the American citizens of course. Since the occasion is about the election, it is expected that his speeches are for the people of the America who are the target audience. In trying to persuade the people, a speaker has to emphasize that all the platforms are for them. Moreover, as given in the first statement below, Trump emphasized that it is not he who will run the country but the American people.

“This election will decide who runs this country: the Corrupt Political Class – or YOU, the American People.”

“We are going to lower taxes on American business from 35 percent to 15 percent.”

Plan

It is quite anticipated that in campaign speeches, the word “plan” will also be frequently used (occurred 30 times). This word was never used as a verb in his speeches since it will bear the lesser impact to the people. Instead, it functioned as a noun which refers to the detailed proposals of the Pres. Trump which will be achieved when he wins in the election. As part of the strategies of all running candidates, presenting plans which of the welfare of the people in that country where he is

running for are requisites to persuade the people to vote in their favor.

"My contract with the American voter begins with a plan to end government corruption – and to take our country back from the special interests."

"My plan also includes a pledge to reduce violent crime."

Illegal

This word which occurred 30 times refers to acts against the law established in the United States of America. In his speeches, unfortunately, the word illegal is attached to the names of former President, Barack Obama and his opponent, Hillary Clinton as presented below. He emphasized and insisted that the illegal actions happened in the country were the doings of the two personalities.

"They are also conducting a second criminal investigation into Hillary Clinton's illegal Pay-For-Play corruption at the State Department."

"Cancel every illegal Obama executive order"

"She illegally transmitted confidential information and then lied about it to Congress."

Government

In this context, it is extremely obvious that the government (occurred 28 times) refers to the governing body of the United States of America. This word connotes various meanings depending on how it was used in the statements. In this case, it was used differently either in Trump's favor or against his opponent, Hillary.

"When we win, you will finally have a government on YOUR side, fighting for YOUR community, and protecting YOUR family."

"A vote for Hillary is a vote to surrender our government to public corruption, graft and cronyism that threatens the very foundations of our Constitutional system."

Corruption

Corruption is most commonly defined as the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain (World Bank, 1997, UNDP, 1999). Hence, it is one of the problems which all governments, at any level of development, have to deal with. So in his speeches, Pres. Trump is persuading the people that he is against corruption. His one of the platforms is to fight against it and build the country without it.

"Public Corruption is a grave and profound threat to a Democracy."

"My Contract with the American voter begins with a plan to end government corruption."

Criminal

In Pres. Trump's campaign speeches, the word criminal (occurred 24 times) were frequently stated, pointing to the criminal aliens and Hillary Clinton. He pointed out in some of

his statements that Hillary did violate some laws in the United States of America. Moreover, he openly stated in the public that he is against to those people living in the country illegally. This shows that once he is elected as President, he will fight against the criminals.

"We will stop illegal immigration, deport all criminal aliens."

"As you know, the FBI has reopened its criminal investigation into Hillary Clinton following the discovery of another 650,000 emails."

Research Question 2: Are the modes of persuasion employed in the campaign speeches?

Ethos

Typically, the credibility of a person is seen through actions; however, since the speech is a non-verbal one, he was able to show his credibility through his choice of words, presenting facts from reliable sources and making the people believe that he is running as President for the people. On the other hand, in other cases being credible is by making oneself sound unbiased. But since the situation involves argument and fighting one another to get the people's votes, Pres. Trump is dreadfully straightforward in presenting facts which are against his opponent, Hillary.

"Together, We Will Make America Wealthy Again. We Will Make America Strong Again. We Will Make America Safe Again. And We Will Make America Great Again."

"CBS news has just minutes ago confirmed that the 650,000 emails discovered by the FBI include brand new emails not previously seen."

"Hillary Clinton is the candidate of yesterday. We are the movement of the future."

Pathos

To a person running for a Presidential Candidacy, his first and foremost objective is to get the people's sympathy. Once sympathy is achieved, victory is certain. The word "change" was used by him to convince the people since this is what all people are yearning for a long time. Meanwhile, Pres. Trump uttered statements which emphasize that the US government is for the people, which would touch the hearts of the many. Additionally, he stressed out that he is running for the purpose of serving and providing them the necessary changes and needs that are essentials for survival. Through these strategies, voters might be persuaded to vote for him.

"When we win, you will finally have a government on YOUR side, fighting for YOUR community, and protecting YOUR family."

"Our failed establishment has brought us nothing but poverty at home, and disaster overseas. We are tired of economic and foreign policies that have BLED THIS COUNTRY DRY. It is time for REAL CHANGE that puts the people back in charge. This election will decide who runs this country: the Corrupt Political Class – or YOU, the American People. That's the choice. She's with THEM – I'm with YOU. This is our last chance."

“We will create quality, reliable, affordable health care in a free market where parents can make the health care decisions that are right for their families. It will be much better health care, at a much less expensive cost.”

Logos

Pieces of evidence would strongly support an argument in every campaign speech of any persons running for a position in an election. So if a candidate wants to win, presenting data against an opponent is the best thing to do. In the campaign speeches of Pres. Trump, data against Hillary were presented without reservations. The issues wherein Hillary was involved were revealed in the public to stress out that she cannot be trusted and should not be voted as a president. He intentionally mentioned FBI and Department of Justice to emphasize that what he was saying was factual because these agencies are reliable and credible.

“As you know, the FBI has reopened its criminal investigation into Hillary Clinton. They are also conducting a second criminal investigation into Hillary Clinton’s Pay-For-Play corruption at the State Department. It has been confirmed that the 650,000 emails they discovered include brand new emails not previously turned over to authorities, likely including even more classified information. However, the reports also show that the political leadership at the Department of Justice is trying as hard as they can to protect Hillary Clinton.”

“CBS news has just minutes ago confirmed that the 650,000 emails discovered by the FBI include brand new emails not previously seen.”

DISCUSSION

Politics is often defined as the art of government; in that sense, the central aim of political interaction can be stated as persuasion (Heywood, 2002). As A. Ledgerwood (2000) highlighted in a concise manner “Persuasion is an important tool in creating lasting settlements between parties in conflict... the study of persuasion, using variations of its basic paradigm, can inform us about how attitude change occurs in a wide range of conflict resolution settings. The basic paradigm and its modifications permit us to address a host of issues manageably. The leap from there to real-world conflict resolution settings is sizeable but feasible...” (Ledgerwood, 2000). Demirdögen (2010) stated that the contemporary study of persuasion has its roots in the historical study of persuasion in Aristotle’s Rhetoric. This strong influence extending from the roots of history shows that the interest in studying the art and science of persuasion has stood the test of time. Hence, just like the other political communications, Trump applied the Aristotle’s rhetorical proofs to persuade the voters. Moreover, selected words were frequently used by him to add up the persuasion. Since the researcher of the present study excluded the words having three letters and below, the content words such as noun, adjective and verb were found to be frequently used by Trump. This finding is similar to the finding of the study conducted by Savoy (2013) where he compared the speeches of McCain and Obama and found out that McCain tends to overuse nouns and adjectives, while Obama used more active speeches preferring verbs. However, their study differed because Obama also used more frequent determinants, prepositions, as well as dollar signs and numbers, thus indicating a need to quantify his discussions. President Donald

Trump’s frequently used words and modes of persuasion perhaps helped him win the US election, though Hillary Clinton defeated him in the Popular Vote. Trump is clever to use frequently words in his campaign speeches because these are also the significant words that the people wanted to hear from a politician. Moreover, his purpose of repeating these words is to emphasize his platforms for the country and to drag down his opponent. Meanwhile, the modes of persuasion employed by him may also be a great factor which made him achieved the sweet victory which he was aspiring for from the very start, since the statements under these modes of persuasion only pointed out against Hillary or in his favor. However, these are just some possibilities why Trump won as president because there are also other factors that helped him won the election. Moreover, since this study did not utilize all the campaign speeches of Trump, other researchers who will conduct the same study might have different results in terms of the frequently used words. The findings of the study can lead to some pedagogical and political implications. One possible implication is that the language teachers may use this study to acquaint the students that modes of persuasion as well as frequently using words are important in order to win in a certain debate. Another implication is that the language teachers may serve this study as a guide for language learners to analyze other speeches aside from political ones following the same methods used. On the other hand, this study may also be helpful for the aspiring politicians so that they will be mindful of the words and statements that they will utter in front of the people.

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