

Donald Trump and His Opponents as Represented in His 2016 US Presidential Campaign Retweets: A Discourse Analytic Study

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Abstract

Donald Trump's 106 handpicked tweets of his supporters in terms of his retweets, during his 2016 presidential campaign starting from the day before his candidacy announcement, June 15th, 2015, until the day he took office on January 20th, 2017, were explored in accordance with the Fairclough's approach to CDA: (1) to identify the specific linguistic, discursive, and social features employed in Donald Trump's retweets; (2) to explore how Donald Trump is represented via his retweets; (3) and to examine how Donald Trump's opponents are represented via his retweets. The findings revealed a severe authenticity issue regarding Trump's retweets since numerous Twitter accounts from which he retweeted did not exist on Twitter. Additionally, his representation was mainly *us* vs. *them*. He was attributed with Godlike characteristics while his opponents were poorly portrayed. Moreover, his representation was concentrated on his personal character, his popularity, and his financial success. From the discourse perspective, his discourse was simplistic, populist, informal, and repetitious filled with powerful words describing nationalistic and economic-oriented ideologies. Generally, the discourse struggled to legitimize Trump as the prime candidate and

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delegitimize his opponents due to the people's discontent with the career politicians. This study indicated that Trump's presence as a celebrity politician was due to the need in society for a novel character to relieve traditional politics while his language simultaneously transformed the existing social order in the realm of American politics

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Trump's candidacy legitimacy, Trump's candidacy representation, Trump's retweets, Twitter discourse

Introduction

Social media usage has surged within the past decade which has resulted in instant connection among people across the world. It has emerged as a platform for the people to be vocal (Gerbaudo, 2018) since they are offered miscellaneous outlets to discuss opinions, ideologies, and emotions. It facilitates creative production and interpretation of content developed by the people's participation (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014) and it decentralizes and democratizes access to discursive power (KhosraviNik, 2017). Accordingly, it is defined as "a space that is reputed to be more authentic than the one dominated by mainstream media" (Gerbaudo, 2018, p. 748). It equips people, media, and politicians to socialize with their audience in their own styles for self-promotion, supporter mobilization, information distribution, and impression management (Graham et al., 2013).

Such capabilities have led to the recognition of the social media as the new communication medium for politicians (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014). They have been ever-increasingly conscious about their social media and its discourse utilization as *toolkit of political communication* to exploit for their propagandas and political purposes (Graham et al., 2013, p. 692) in terms of "a (potential for) many-to-many dynamic of discursive practice" in which there is no *clear-cut* division between manufacturers and interpreters of discourse unlike "the traditional unidirectional, one-to-many interface of mass media" (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 582).

Yet, as Chilton (2004) maintains strikingly least attention was paid in conventional political studies to (social media) discourse and its impacts on society and politics. Such ignorance is further shocking when politics is defined to be "reconciling differences through discussion and persuasion [in which] communication is, therefore, central to politics" (Hague et al. 1998, pp. 3-4). In other words, persuasion and bargaining are the two main bases of politics (Miller,

1991). Thus, as Chilton (2004) acknowledges, there is a conspicuous need “to explain how use of language can produce the effects of authority, legitimacy, consensus, and so forth that are recognised as being intrinsic to politics” (p. 4) which is in line with the objectives of the current study.

Donald Trump, as a candidate for the 2016 US presidential election, with minimal staff, advertising, and discipline, could have managed to win the presidential election with resort to such a powerful customizable media, mainly Twitter (Karpf, 2017). He struggled to emancipate himself from the established and mainstream media and termed the opposing media *fake news* as an attempt to discredit them in order to popularize his discourse through his Twitter account. In the interim, his utilization of the social media and his discourse raised many interests as he unceremoniously employed discourses and practices inappropriate to his high official position and exercised the social media like a common man dissimilar to an officially responsible authority (Rachman & Yuniant, 2017; Sánchez-Giménez & Tchubykalo, 2018). As every research comes to existence from a curiosity and as Chilton (2004) asserts that human language with its cultural background “observably serve (though of course not exclusively) the needs of the political” (p. 6), Trump’s handpicked tweets of his supporters are the subjects for this study to identify his supporters’ perceptions about him alongside his preferred representation of himself and how his retweets serve his political needs.

Literature Review

Discourse Concept

The notion of *discourse* has been a challenging concept to define owing to the profusion of the definitions provided for it due to its significance in social sciences (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). That is, some scholars incline to narrowly define discourse as “continuous stretch of language - spoken or written - larger than a sentence” (Crystal, 1992, p. 25) while others, such as Cook (1992), define discourse as communicative language use in line with Gee (2005) who refers to it as “language (oral or written) in use with more socio-politically oriented meaning.” (p. 1). In a similar vein, Van Dijk (1977) considers discourse as “information that is obligated for empiric examination” (p. 3). Therefore, discourse definition is more encompassing than just some ‘content’ and discourse rather, as Fairclough (1989)

asserts, refers to the whole communication process. In this regard, he claims that “I should utilize the term discourse to allude to the entire procedure of social communication of which a content is only a section” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24)

Political Discourse

Discourse is capable of construction, manipulation, transformation, or even (re)production of reality (Fairclough, 1989, 2013). Such a mentioned capability of discourse is even further noteworthy when it comes to politics as politics in contemporary societies is becoming more and more democratic and the only possible way for politicians to come to power or to remain in power is their profound prolific communication with their people to convince them that they are the most qualified political figures to occupy some political positions (Chilton, 2004).

Political discourse is believed to be employed to shape and control people’s thoughts as well as homogenize beliefs and attitudes of people with politicians. Fairclough (2006) declares that the political discourse has the requisite capability to “misrepresent as well as represent realities [and] ...it can also rhetorically obfuscate realities and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations” (p. 1). This is performed and functioned through the manufacture of consent whose vehicle is discourse, by which ideologies, beliefs, socio-cultural values, religions, and identities are represented (Fairclough, 1989, 2013). In this respect, Meyerhoff (2006) acknowledges that the styles of politicians’ converse can be a resource for the people to understand their intentions and ideologies.

Critical Discourse Analysis in Fairclough’s Approach

Critical discourse analysis considers and illuminates the hidden messages that discourse (re)produces (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough’s dialectical-relational approach to CDA (1995) perceives discourse as a social practice in “a social-theoretically informed way” (p. 131) denoting that a dialectical relationship between language and society is perceived. In this sense, they are to reciprocally influence each other, in that, “language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 23).

Since sheer textual analysis is considered insufficient in analyzing discourse, three levels of meanings are to be taken into consideration (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1989, 2013) proposes a three-dimensional model to analyze every discursive event in terms of, firstly a spoken or written text; secondly a discursive practice embracing both interpretation and production; and thirdly a social practice. These three layers of meaning are investigated to uncover how Trump is represented through discourse, what are his ideologies, to what Donald Trump as a phenomenon responds, and what he may cause to happen in the society.

Previous Related Research

Rahimi et al. (2010) investigated demonstrations of ideologies through discursive practices used in the campaign speeches of the 2008 democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in relation to race and gender. In this respect, they used Hodge and Kress's (1996) framework and the results indicated that their discursive features were sensitive to their race and gender and these two factors were influential in determining their discursive features.

Amirian et al. (2012) conducted research to identify how Iranians are represented in western movies. They investigated the images of Iranians in Western movies, produced to be allegedly honest, which were considered to be anti-Iranian being referred as the case of Iranium. In their study, Van Dijk's approach (2004) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed as the theoretical framework to unearth the ideology that the movie held and the misrepresentations of Iranians. The findings indicated that a total distortion of the "image of the Iranians' history, culture and ideologies" was done through "the dichotomy of in-group favoritism vs. out-group derogation" (p. 1).

Dastpak and Taghinezhad (2015) tried to uncover the president Obama's overall intended ideology hidden in his public speeches. This study is done through the employment of Fairclough's CDA perspective. It is found that Obama's key ideologies are, namely *pragmatism*, *liberalism*, *inclusiveness*, and "acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity and unity" (p. 26). On the other hand, investigation of the keywords demonstrated that the following words were the most prominently utilized words, *country*, *new*, and *America* (p. 26) while an overwhelming usage of the pronoun *we* as a manifestation of solidarity was also perceived.

Mohammadi and Javadi (2017) researched on the discursive practices and their interrelation with ideological structures in the presidential acceptance speech of Donald Trump in 2016 through experimentation of Fairclough's CDA framework to uncover language strategies as well as the ideologies and the power that his language conveys. The findings of the study revealed that there are interrelations between discursive practices and ideological structures and Donald Trump used his exclusiveness from politics as an apparatus to blame others and clean himself from any disastrous mistakes done by his predecessors.

Hussein (2016) studied the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's speech at the opening ceremony of the New Suez Canal on 6th August 2015 to uncover his linguistic features and ideologies by applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. The findings claimed that distinctive and linguistic features were utilized in the forms of *figures of speech, repetition, synonymy, and collocation* (p. 85) to project his desired ideologies. Those ideologies were: a) the Egyptian's gratitude towards those who have helped them in reaching to their present status; b) strength and confrontation announcement; as well as c) expressing their self-confidence.

García and de Navarra (2018) were also persuaded to conduct a study on Donald J. Trump, who was in their opinion an "off the spectrum" (p. 47) president with contentious behavior which makes controversial news across international media. Their study was theoretically based on the Fairclough's dialectical relational approach to CDA in the form of his three dimensional model to reach three aims, namely to gain an insight about a) discourse styles of Donald Trump through the Fairclough's three-model of analysis; b) how his representation as a father is through "the family model developed by George Lakoff in terms of metaphors" (p. 47); finally c) how Donald Trump depicts otherness while his attitude towards racism, immigration, and the establishment is also regarded. The findings contributed to the simplicity and informality of Trump's discourse which attracts attention as few politicians act like him. Also, his strictness as a father is approved as he depicts the world full of danger and a place in which family needs to be protected by the father. In conjunction with that, it is also comprehended through its direct accusations of others in many terms, such as immigration and other concepts like that. Such otherness is depicted by his self-approval and other-disapproval statements. The

mentioned sets of research were some of the academic studies conducted in the area of discourse, CDA, and politics. However, in this study Donald Trump not only as a person but as a phenomenon is considered to discursively unearth why he came to power and what changes his raise to power would discursively impose on society.

Research Questions

1. What are the specific linguistic, discursive, and social features employed in Donald Trump's retweets?
2. How is Donald Trump represented via his retweets?
3. How are Donald Trump's opponents represented via his retweets?

Method

Research Design

The research is a qualitative one whose data and materials, 106 (re)tweets in the form of linguistic texts posted from his candidacy announcement on June 16, 2015, until he took the office on January 20, 2017, were collected from the official Twitter account of Donald Trump. Simple random sampling was devised. This type of sampling is a type of probability sampling by which each member of target population has the same chance of inclusion and exclusion, and it is appropriate when the target population is large, which is the case in this study.

For meticulous scrutiny regarding linguistic texts, Fairclough's three-dimensional model is perfectly relevant since it links between discourse and society through which profounder perception of Donald Trump as the president of US and his opponents is revealed alongside the reasons of his gaining power as well as the results that he may have on society. The three dimensions are namely texts, interaction, and social context. Firstly, text properties, which are explained in the theoretical underpinning section, are analyzed in terms of description stage. Secondly, the relationship between producer and interpreter of the message on the one hand, and the relationship between text and interaction on the other hand are analyzed in terms of interaction stage. The explanation stage, coping with social context conditions and structures, explains that interaction with respect to social conditions. Each stage has its own particular criteria to follow to fulfill its aims.

Theoretical Underpinning

Description Stage. In the description phase, textual features are considered in realms of vocabulary and grammar as well as textual structures. Conducting the three-dimensional model of CDA is straightforward since via answering the following overarching questions, the textual features are going to be described:

Vocabulary. What experiential values do words have?

What relational values do words have?

What expressive values do words have ?

What metaphors are used ?

Grammar. What experiential values do grammatical features have?

What relational values do grammatical features have?

What expressive values do grammatical features have?

Are there important features of expressive modality?

How are (simple) sentences linked together?

Textual structures. What interactional conventions are used?

Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

What larger-scale structures does the text have?

Interpretation Stage. The second stage known as interpretation focuses on the processes by which producer and interpreter communicate with each other (Fairclough, 1989, 2013). To fully understand a discourse, MR as *background knowledge* relates to formal text features as *cues* to comprehend meanings. Fairclough (1989) raised the following questions to address the aims of this stage through both *interpretation of text* and *interpretation context*.

Interpretation of text. Surface of utterance

Meaning of utterance

Local coherence

Text structure and point

Interpretation of context. What's going on?

Who is involved?

In what relations?

What's the role of language in what is going on?

Explanation. It deals with portraying “a discourse as part of a social

process, as a social practice ...determined by social structures” while it has reproductive effects “on those structures, sustaining them or changing them” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 163). Within this stage, social determinants, social effects, and ideologies are considered at three levels, namely the societal level, the institutional level, and the situational level. Such three levels are studied through answering to the following questions (Fairclough, 1989, p. 166):

- What power relations at situational, institutional, and societal levels help shape discourse?
- What elements of MR, which are drawn upon, have an ideological character?
- Does the discourse contribute to sustaining existing power relations or transforming them?

Results and Discussion

Description Stage

Within this stage, the focus is on “what is 'there' in the text” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 110) through answering to the questions already mentioned along with their sub-questions (Fairclough, 1989). As mentioned afore, the questions are to address within three sections of vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. However, regarding the former two, three values are considered in terms of experiential, relational, and expressive values.

Vocabulary Features. The feature with experiential value appears as “a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer’s experience of the natural or world is represented” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112). It refers to content, knowledge, and belief (Fairclough, 2013). Under this value, classifications of schemes are important which, in this study, are categorized into three main schemes, namely *Trump’s personal character*, including trustworthiness and reliance, sincerity and honesty, strength, intelligence, vision, Christianity, devotion, confidence, bravery and courage, zeal, practicality, righteousness, toughness, and influence; *Trump’s popularity*, comprising courtesy and humanism, awareness and consideration of the people’s problems, and speaking the people’s words; and lastly *Trump’s business affairs*, including business skills, prosperity, leadership, wealth and financial independence, and accomplishments. Obviously, these tweets are

concerned with triumph and its essentials against others, which can be interpreted as any entity that is perceived as enemy by the producers, owing to this perception that the USA is threatened by other countries in various respects among which economy is more palpable because of China's economic advancement. These three main schemes are displayed as the people's main concerning themes about their future president as if these were the lost characteristics of an ideal president that people have been desperately searching among politicians. Nevertheless, they have yet to encounter these qualities embodied in any individual other than Donald Trump. As a non-career politician, he stands apart from the established political class, offering a departure from the disillusionment many have experienced with traditional political figures.

Considering the ideologically contested words, albeit *politicians* and *politics* may not be considered ideological regardless of context, in this context they appear ideological with special meanings of *impracticality*, *talkativeness*, *dishonesty*, *insincerity*, *weakness*, *self-promotion*, and *personal gains* while Trump is represented positively converse. Moreover, 60s and 70s liberals made an ideological analogy which resembles the Democrat's ruling era to the liberals in past with nothing novel and acceptable to offer. *Carter* is also declared to further associate the ideology of the Democrat Party with the crises occurred during his presidency.

Conversely, Trump is compared to *Reagan* whose reign is remembered with the flourish of the economy and the overcome of some of the problems he inherited from Carter although many problems remained, and some others occurred. Therefore, Reagan and Trump, both as the Republican presidents, appeared as the saviours of the US and its people who are closely represented due to their similar backgrounds but different from others, *Hollywood*. Also, there is another name whose numerous usages with certain identity, ideology, and services have led to its ideological connotation. *Teddy Roosevelt* is such a name representing an ideology of toughness, determination, and anti-corruption. In the statement *tough as hell*, Trump is compared to him.

The word *founders* imparts the ideology of sacrifice for the sake of the country owing to their unselfish services. Trump's lack of academic degree in law is linked to the founders' lack of academic degrees to transform this weak point to a

strong one. *Congress*, used in terms of metaphor referring to politicians, is an ideologically contested appellation which ordinarily represents the country's Constitution and supports its people. However, in the text, it is revealed to be incapable of righteously serving the country. Furthermore, God, faith, and Christianity are also used reflecting the ideology of faithfulness and religiousness in divine power. To some scale, such divine power is attributed to Trump by this statement *in God we trust, In Trump we trust*. In other words, they believe that Trump is the only humanly God or Godlike human who has the divine power and capability to lead the nation towards salvation and prosperity the same as God has it.

In the interim, the names of the Twitter accounts also possess significant ideological meanings. *Tory Ireland* is one of the accounts' names who supported Trump which is also ideological. It refers to the view of conservative party of the UK for which "Patriotism is the first, and most deeply rooted, element of the party's character" (Padmanabhan, 2015). Apparently, it is synonymous with what Trump is broaching about *America first*. Knight is another account name which seems to have ideology behind it as it alludes to a person who is awarded with the title of knighthood for the merit and services (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Therefore, it shows the merits of the account holder in his support and loyalty to Trump the same as real knights are to their sovereign. The last ideologically meaningful account name is *patriot4567*. It projects the ideology of nationalism and thus the support of nationalists for Trump.

As mentioned, firstly the politicians and the political institutions are ideologically challenged to tarnish their devotion and value so that they cannot appear as an obstacle for displaying Trump's trustworthiness. It is a counterattack of credibility from Trump's supporters towards politicians who may disqualify him due to his integrity deficiency. Afterwards, they struggle to grant him validity through comparing him to the prestigious icons that are symbolically recognized for their honest and great services to the USA, such as Reagan, Roosevelt, and founding fathers, namely George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. They even do not stop there and endeavour to picture him above all to assure that no one can challenge him and place him in the safe zone by comparing him to God who is the source of trust and divine power. This indicates Trump and his supporters' perfectionism; in other words, extremism perspective which is also manifested in the high frequency of

exclamation marks which are repeatedly used for 70 times screening that the statements are produced with emphasis, certainty, excitement, and strong emotion (Gunner, n.d.). He and his supporters strive to redefine credibility in American politics in their own ways since in American politics with the current standards and institutions he may not have enough credibility to fill the president office.

Quantitatively considering, there are 124 twitter accounts involved in the text, without consideration of the famously recognized accounts of political or social institutions such as CNN and so on. Out of which 73 really exist on Twitter while 24 are suspended and the other 27 do not exist on Twitter. Also, there are 7 accounts which exist but joined Twitter even after the time Trump retweeted the tweets under their names and there are 4 available accounts which have not tweeted at all.

The next sub-question is about the occurrence of rewording and overwording. Rewording is when an *oppositional* wording happens. That is, “an existing, dominant, and naturalized, wording is being systematically replaced by another one in conscious opposition to it” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 113). Overwording, on the other hand, is “an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms” which indicates “a focus of ideological struggle” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 115).

Rewording happens in the case of media since it is commented on with the word hate indicating their insincerity in respect to Trump. The media is expected to stay honest in broadcasting news regardless of its own interests. Yet, they are portrayed as the producers of fake propagandas and false assertions against Trump, who is pictured in the tweets to mention nothing but the truth. Particularly, NBC New York, Politico, and mostly CNN, with the Democrat affiliation are considered as biased, unfair, and fake, in the statements, such as *stop interrupting Trump, will CNN be tough as they were with Trump?*, and *story is bogus*.

Likewise, politicians, who are expected to be the saviours of the United States of America, are projected as the ill-mannered and incompetent people with no positive effects for the country and its people. Similarly, albeit Congress and the White House are supposed to be the symbols of the US Constitution and lawfulness, they are represented as unlawfulness and selfish. *True, right, truthfulness*, and the synonymous words referring to the meaning of truth are reworded as those only assertions which are affirmed by Trump. In other words, Trump is the source of

truth who can distinguish true from false for the people.

Moreover, the US is referred to, with the words, namely *America, nation, country, the United States, and American* with tremendous repetitions, as a bankrupt, corrupt, divided, and unjust country while the US still has one of the strongest economy and military forces in the world. Such rewordings occur due to the Trump's supporters' perceptions of his opponents and the circumstances. They are clearly protesting the situation going on during the 2016 US election.

Overwording also occurs in this text. In this regard, *great* and *greatness* as of the country along with their synonymous words are predominantly recurred indicating that the greatness of the country is the most significant concern in their views. The word *fix* also appears frequently illustrating the urgency to fix the current situation which is believed to be only possible with Trump. *Hope* is another word occurring with its synonyms several times as the need of the people. The words of *speech, speaking, call* and their synonyms are also repeated, which mostly appear with the word *truth*, denoting Trump's truthfulness, or his representativeness to the people. *Lead, dominate*, and their synonyms also recurrently appear in the text revealing Trump's lead and domination over his rivals.

The word *want* is also repetitively mentioned, whether explicitly or implicitly, exhibiting their inclination towards Trump over other politicians. Another repeated word is *love* screening the people's love for Trump. The synonymous words including *win, victory, beat, and nail* are utilized as praises for Trump to express Trump's power in winning and defeating rivals. Likewise, the word *go* is drawn on for several times for encouraging and applauding Trump.

Intelligence and *wisdom* along with their synonyms, *brilliant, savvy, IQ, great ideas, lots of great sense, not brain dead, smart, most talented, and creative*, are employed to highlight and promote Trump's intelligence over his opponents. Moreover, Trump's *business successes* are also shown by overwording about his business skills and prosperity with the synonymous words, namely *prosperous, successful, business tycoon, icon, bigger than life, rich, net worth, and master negotiator, negotiating skills, and entrepreneur spirit*. *Truth* and *trueness* are also ideologically highlighted by overwording through the words, *right, correct, truth, true, truthfulness, and truly* which are repeatedly mentioned.

Furthermore, *the only* is overwhelmingly reoccurred showing the

uniqueness of Trump and his singularity in merits over his opponents. *Courageous*, *not afraid*, *bold*, *tough*, and *man enough* are utilized to expose his bravery in telling the truth and standing on his principles. *Real*, *actual*, *really*, *last*, and *finally* are repeatedly exercised to prove the real possibility of his presidency. The latter two are used to manifest his presidency as the last and final desperate opportunity for the Americans to find prosperity. *The most* as a superlative adjective is used to enhance the supremacy of his attributions over his opponents.

The last sub-question of experiential value concerning with vocabulary is about the ideologically significant meaning relations among words. Such meaning relations are mainly synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy (Fairclough, 1989). Synonymy obviously refers to words with same or similar meanings. Albeit it is, surely, difficult to find words with absolutely the same meanings, Fairclough (1989) asserts that it is enough if the words are nearly synonymous. Hyponymy refers to the situation where “the meaning of one word is, so to speak, included within the meaning of another word” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 116). On the other hand, antonymy is where the meaning of a word is incompatible with another one.

Concerning with synonymy, within overwording, they were already addressed with the focus on Trump. Yet, the synonymous words regarding Trump’s rivals have yet to be considered. *Mess* and *debt* are synonymously utilized referring to the bad situation of the country under Trump’s rivals’ supervision. They are addressed with the synonymously used words of *scared*, *too afraid*, and *weak*. *Politically correct*, *total liar* and *dishonest* are also synonymously employed as his rivals’ attributions. *Dummies*, *incompetent*, and *brain-dead* are the other words used to describe his rivals.

Hyponymy is next to address. The first hyponymy scheme to address is about personal and characteristic merits of Donald Trump over his opponents which are mentioned through the following words, including *sincerity*, *honesty*, *appeal*, *motivation*, *depth*, *commitment*, *passion*, *confidence*, *sacrifice*, *stamina*, *proud*, *competent*, *experienced*, *gentle*, *awesome*, and *calm*. The word *impact* has hyponymy relations with the words, namely *influence*, *change*, and *shock*, which are used to demonstrate the immense influence of Trump on America and the world along with the hyponym words *huge*, *staggering*, and *serious*.

Trump is also considered as a *heroin* and *saviour* with the following words,

which are hyponyms of each other, *hero*, *best*, *greatest*, and *amazing*. Intensifiers are also used in terms of hyponyms to further signalize Trump's superiority over other politicians. They are namely *so*, *much*, *very*, *too*, and *many*. Likewise, there is a hyponymy about the extreme words with absolute meanings, comprising *ever*, *never*, *every*, *any*, *full*, *total*, *bigger than life*, *all*, *closest*, *excellent* and many others exhibiting Trump's supporters' perfectionism and extremism ideology. In the meantime, there are some words which may not be categorized under one classification, yet they all manifest loud and extremism attitude of the Trump's supporters about his supremacy over his opponents in filling the position of the US presidency. For instance, *yell*, *scream*, *very best*, *really*, *actually*, *most*, *tough as hell*, *rarely*, *only*, *110%*, *extra*, and *more* are some of such meaningful words.

Finally, it is time to deal with antonymy which mainly occurs between the words used for describing Donald Trump and the words used for describing his rivals. *Mess*, *debt*, *lawlessness*, and *status quo* are exerted for depicting his rivals and the situations under their reigns while Trump is portrayed as a person who brings *success*, *order*, and *change*. They are *scared*, *too afraid*, and *weak* whereas Trump is *courageous*, *tough*, and *bold*. *Politically correct*, *total liar*, and *dishonest* are used to describe Trump's rivals whereas he is *true*, *correct*, *right*, *honest*, and *sincere*. *Dummies*, *incompetent*, *brain-dead*, and *clowns* are to refer to his rivals while Trump is addressed as *competent*, *smart*, *savvy*, and *Godlike*. *Loser* and *whiner* are the last words to refer to the rivals. Yet, Trump is addressed as *winner*.

Relational value, on the other hand, "is a trace of and a cue to the relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112). It alludes to relations and social relationships. Under this value, euphemistic expression is examined. It is defined as "a word which is substituted for a more conventional or familiar one as a way of avoiding negative values" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 117). Within this text, no example of euphemism expression is discerned since the producers are not concerned with negative values of the statements attributed to Trump's rivals. Meanwhile, those which are attributed to Trump hold positive values without euphemism.

Afterwards, markedly formality and informality of the words is considered. Fairclough in his famous book, *language and power*, elucidates that the concept of formality is about "concern from participants for each other's 'face' [and] respect for

status and position” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 118). On this matter, majority of the clauses are identified to be informal and even markedly informal while only 9 of them are discerned with ordinary level of formality since the Twitter discourse is informal and surely different from the established mainstream media’s.

Finally, expressive value leads to subjects and social identities as it is “a trace of and a cue to the producer’s evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of the reality it relates to” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112). He accentuates “the text producer’s evaluations [which] are expressed by drawing on classification schemes, which are ideologically significant” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 99).

Taken expressive values into consideration along with the previously mentioned classification schemes, most of the Trump’s supporters judge him with ultimate certainty as the perfect person with ultimate personality character which makes him acceptable for the presidency position. As long as his popularity is concerned, he is definitely defined as the people’s choice unlike other politicians. Trump’s business affairs, on the other hand, are perfectly represented as the only successful person among politicians with business successes. His supporters portray him with high certainty as the person who is the most qualified, the most popular, strong, trustworthy, and prosperous while other politicians are the least fitted, the least popular, weak, corrupt, and failing.

Fairclough (1989) maintains that another important textual feature is the utilization of metaphoric expressions. He elucidates that “Metaphor is a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another” (pp. 119-120). In this discourse, through the two expressions of *nobody owns you* and *I love the fact that you can’t be bought*, independence and financial freedom of Trump is intensively represented in terms of purchasing/selling goods and ownership. In another case, Americans’ right to vote, represented as their votes are reserved for Trump, is portrayed as the worthiest asset in the statement *most valuable asset an American owns is their votes* alluding to the worthiness and merits of Trump and simultaneously to the necessity for Americans to use their votes rightly.

In the following tweet, *get out of this mess*, the current situation of the country is explained in the form of mess which needs organization, arrangement, and fresh management *America can be great again with Trump in the helm* is another metaphoric expression comparing leadership and management to driving a

boat with steering wheel. It projects the stormy current situation of the US so that if a true leader does not lead the country soon, it may face challenges and consequences. It projects safeness with Trump in the driver's seat and displays the trust they have in Trump.

Comparing Trump to a fighter in ... *always respect Fighters...* and *you are a fighter* give a fighter's characteristics to Trump, as a person, whose dream is winning and who does his best for achieving that. In the tweet *in God, we trust and in Donald we trust*, a simile is used between God and Donald Trump in terms of trustworthiness in which Trump is equalled to God. Mountain lion is another metaphor used to describe Donald Trump in ... *no more presidential than an alley cat is a mountain lion, and the lion does not concern himself with the opinion of sheep* demonstrating his courage, bravery, and prestige whereas his rivals and opponents are compared to sheep for their lack of bravery, knowledge, and wisdom.

It's time to run America like a business is another expression with a simile comparing leading America to leading a business which is believed to be Donald Trump's expertise. This even shows him more qualified than other career politicians for the job, the US presidency. Similarly, his unique background, which is apart from other politicians, is also described as freshness, change, relief, and freedom which are pleasant and necessary in the tweet *Mr Trump you're a breath of fresh air...*

In the tweet *he is not running for his health*, his benefits are manifested by the word *health* indicating that he will even suffer and sacrifice himself let alone gaining any rewards or benefits from his presidency. *He believes in the Red White & Blue* manifests the United States in terms of colours representing the flag of the country, the political parties, and the soul of the country. According to the Fairclough's (1989) statement that "different metaphors imply different ways of dealing with things" (p. 120), such numerous usages of metaphoric expressions are signs of the various ways supporters realize the superiority of Trump over his rivals.

Grammatical Features. Once the vocabulary textual features are analysed, the three previously mentioned values, experiential, relational, and expressive, of the grammatical features are analysed. As Fairclough (2013) asserts, the experiential values of the grammar deal with the relationships among involved participants, their spatially and temporally related situations, the occurring manner, and so on.

The first sub-question under this value is concerned with the processes and participants which are predominant. Majority of the clauses are ‘attributions’ to attribute positive merits to Trump and negative features to his opponents. Then, ‘action’ clauses, which refer to where actions occur, are the second common process expressing Trump’s accomplishments and achievements along with his opponents’ failures. Lastly, just 8 clauses are ‘events’ as they involve just one participant, and it is the answer to ‘what (has) happened?’ (Fairclough, 2013). Meanwhile, the predominant participant is surely *Donald Trump* while other participants are also involved, namely *his opponents, Hillary Clinton, God, politicians, Reagan, Teddy Roosevelt, the people, Putin, and Obama*.

In the meantime, all recognized clauses have clear agencies, whether explicitly or implicitly, to unambiguously attribute the characteristics to those agents they are referring. Activeness and passiveness of a statement is the next feature to discern. In this regard, just 3 clauses are passive, which are *ur voice will be heard, ... no one is offended* as well as *I love the fact that you can’t be bought*, and the remaining clauses are all active showing that the agents are proud of their utterances and the agents as the actual voters are as important as, if not more than, the statements. As to positivity and negativity of the clauses, majority of the clauses are positive and just 27 are negative. Such negativity, however, is diversely used to negate Donald Trump’s negative attributes and negate the merits of his opponents.

When it comes to relational values, firstly, the modes of the statements are scrutinized. In this regard, declaratives are the majority while there are 20 imperatives and 8 grammatical questions. The declarative statements are mainly and persuasively supportive of Donald Trump and critical of his opponents. The imperative ones are mainly about praising and encouraging Donald Trump and even others to act in Trump’s favour. On the other hand, the grammatical questions are mostly concerned with either some kinds of surprise and wonder about Trump’s accomplishments or questioning his opponents’ competence.

About the relational modality, as many participants are involved, there is more than one type of relational modality. Some of them feel connected and close to Trump, then they have a friend-like relation with Trump with repetitive usage of *you, I, and we*. Some of them, however, consider Trump as a saviour and they admire him. Thus, in their reference to Trump, they use *he* instead. Altogether, they

all consider Trump as a revered and devoted person who has sacrificed, and willing to sacrifice himself, for the sake of the American people.

The next significant feature is the expressive modality which is concerned with “the speaker/writer's evaluation of truth” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 127). The expressive value is high in almost all of the clauses with the frequency of 241 clauses out of 244 clauses. Majority of them are in the form of simple present tense, with rare negativity, representing their statements as genuinely true. Afterwards, the second most utilized tense is simple past tense indicating the facts happened in the past while simple future tense usage is also prominent showing future certainty. In the interim, present perfect and present continuous tenses are also used with lower frequencies. Notwithstanding, it should be mentioned that almost all of them are mentioned with high certainty or high expressive modality.

Meanwhile, modals are also used with different purposes. The modal *can't* is used in three times in the forms of negative questions with the following affirmative implications. Firstly, it shows Trump's absolute power in making Americans' dreams come true. Secondly, it indicates the impossibility of any corruption for Trump. Lastly, it is about the enthusiasm of a supporter for watching Trump in a debate.

Can is used to show the ability and capability of Trump about *making America great again*. Also, *could* is used twice in terms of conditional clauses which show Trump's future success. *Must* is once used referring to the certainty of the assertion which is about the lawlessness of the politicians and the White House. *Shouldn't* is also used to allude to the improbability of the occurrence of problematic situations for the people if they elect Trump as the president.

The text has some logical connectors in terms of subordination and coordination albeit the text mostly consists of simple sentences. *That-clauses* are mostly used as attributions and definitions. *If-clauses* are used to talk about conditions and the consequences which are mostly imaginary. *When* is twice used to refer to time or even situation in terms of subordination. Other logical connectors are, namely *as*, *since*, and *because* utilized in terms of subordination which show reason. The most applied conjunction is *and* which is repeatedly utilized to refer to connection of clauses in terms of addition or continuation of thought in the form of coordination. *Yet*, *but*, and *on the other hand* are also used to show contrast between

clauses in terms of coordination. For the outside and inside reference, overwhelmingly the following pronouns are applied *it, he, they, this, that, their*, along with article *the*.

Regarding the interactional conventions, the discourse is a monologue without any direct interactions or interruptions between the producers, who are firstly the supporters while Trump is the secondary producer since he retweeted them, and the addressees, who are both Trump and the US citizens. Last of all, the larger-scale structures of the text are the next concerns. The analysed text is Donald Trump's supporters' tweets which he retweeted on his Twitter account. They are expected to be in support of Trump and of course against his opponents. Since there are character limitations for tweets, the structures are in short simple and even abbreviated forms.

Interpretation Stage

Once the first stage is done, in order for evaluating social values and social importance of the text, the text should go through the interpretation and the explanation stages since neither background assumption of discourse nor ideological properties of these assumptions that connect discourse to relations of power and social struggle are apparent to the participants in the discourse. Thus, the interpretation and the explanation stages are "two successively applied procedures of unveiling and demystification" (Fairclough, 2013, p.118). Within interpretation stage, the meaning is constructed and produced from the interplay of the formal features from the description stage, which appear as cues, and MR, member resources, which is also known as background knowledge (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough (1989, 2013) argues that for the interpretation of a discourse, two steps should be taken, namely *interpretation of text* and *interpretation of context* which are acquired through answering to the two sets of questions.

Interpretation of Text. Regarding interpretation of text, the first component is surface of utterances which are mainly simplistic in grammar, right to the point, and clear while they are in contracted and abbreviated forms of the social media writing, for example sometimes *ur* is written instead of *your* or even *you're* and likewise. The vocabulary used is also simple with no euphemism along with slangs indicating the level of formality of the text which is markedly informal.

Considering the meanings of the utterances, although they are direct and explicit, they also have implicit meanings. The struggle is to explicitly attribute positive characteristics to Trump while the negative attributes are implicitly attributed to his opponents and vice versa. Metaphoric expressions noticeably contribute to the meanings along with rewording and overwording on the one hand and synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy on the other. Considering local coherence, on the other hand, *and* as well as *but* are the main utilized connectors showing continuation of thoughts as well as contrast while *because* and its synonyms are also employed. Text structure, which is already described, and point of the discourse unequivocally represents Trump as the ideal man for whom Americans have long awaited.

Interpretation of Context. The first component is about *content* in the form of *what is going on* in the text. In terms of this question, there are three subsets, namely *activity*, *topic*, and *purpose*. The activity is a Republican political propagandistic discourse on Twitter which is broadcasted by Trump through his supporters' tweets to exhibit his desirable image of himself. The topic of the discourse is about Trump's merits for the US presidency, the opponents' lack of capability for the job, the supporters' acknowledgement about the change and the hope that he has brought about, and approval of his plans and ideologies. The purpose, as the last subset, signifies the reason for articulating such a discourse, which in this case, is for establishing Trump as the legitimate candidate and the future president whose singular ideology and plan is consistent with the people's demand and different from the career politicians'. It introduces him as an honest person who communicates with people without any protocols or without being politically correct.

The next question is about the subjects through the question of *who is involved*. There are three dimensions of subject positions. Primarily, the position derives from activity type. In this respect, Trump is the producer of the retweets, and his supporters are the producers of the tweets while Trump as well as the US citizens are both the addressees. Afterwards, it is about the position from the institutional perspective. Trump, here, is the Republican candidate who tries to persuade people about the righteousness of the Republican ideology and his presidency. Lastly, the position is considered from the situational point of view in which Trump is the

presidential candidate.

The third question is about the relations with which the participants are involved. Trump as a celebrity, who is also a candidate, is in the high position of power with close social distance with people, so they can converse with him through the social media, Twitter. Trump attempts to empathize with the people about their problems, frustrations, and struggles by retweeting their tweets.

The last question to answer is about the connections through the question of *what is the role of language*. In this case, the language is used to show the people's support of the Trump's presidency. It is produced through written channel although it is more like spoken than written because of the informality of the discourse.

Explanation Stage

Fairclough (2013) ascertains the objective of this stage in terms of depicting "a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them" (p. 135). He (1989) believes that "Both social effects of discourse and social determinants of discourse should be investigated at three levels of social organization: the societal level, the institutional level, and the situational level" (p. 163).

Politicians from both major political parties, Republican and Democrat, had long been exercising their policies which had resulted in the people's dissatisfaction which was clear in their previous electoral participations. In some people's perspective, politicians were identical political position fillers regardless of their political ideologies and functions since they were similar in overlooking the people's demands and desires. Although they could always coin a new compelling slogan and motto, they could not deliver what they were expected to accomplish and resulted in distrust between the people and the politicians. Thus, the people were in quest of a candidate with different background to appear as their true representative. Meanwhile, Trump could fill the gap as he was a *blue-collar billionaire* (Wells et al., 2016) whose fundamental differences with other typical politicians caused him popularity and acceptance.

Besides, politicians were not transparent with their people due to their lack of regular communication. They were considered politically correct, which was not

what the people expected from their representatives. Trump, in the meantime, came with a solution to further associate with the people. He resolved the communication barriers with his social media accounts. He struggled to declare what were almost taboos in order to display his transparency. In so doing, his business and celebrity background became advantageous to assure the people that he was sufficiently dissimilar to ordinary politicians (Franko, 2006).

Moreover, although he was one of the people and not one of the politicians, which led to his close connection to the people, he still possessed power since he was already a celebrity with an echoed voice. He was already a recognized person across the globe with millions of followers on his social media. He helped his supporters, who were ordinary people with less than 2 thousand followers on social media, through his retweets to be vocal on his populous platform. Notwithstanding the foregoing, he was not considered serious until a surge in his support was perceived by the politicians as well as social and political institutions.

In the societal level, the discourse functions against the status quo in the US and terms the Democrat party as well as Trump's Republican opponents explicitly and overtly untrue and likewise. It effectively contests the social orders and the orders of discourse regarding the political and presidential discourses since the (re)tweets addressed the existing conventions in politics in general, international priorities and so on, as untrue, failing, etc. Institutionally, Trump's ideology is represented to be inconsistent with the Republican Party, let alone the Democrat Party. He proclaimed that the US should engage in those international affairs only if the US benefits are secured since, as he said, America is not the world's police (Allen, 2020). He was infrequently concerned with international crises, such as human rights, racial justice, world peace, climate change, etc.

Regarding the situational level, the same transformation and alteration is occurring since the tweets are broadcasted in different situations and occasions against the status quo, namely debates, interviews, and speeches. The discourse is utilized creatively and not normatively due to the novelty of their expressions. In that, his supporters, indirectly Trump, employed creative medium, Twitter, and applied the discourse, which was creative and novel. It contributed to the status quo transformation in power relations to designate nationalism and economic interests as the prime priority in US politics.

Conclusion

Trump, unlike traditional and career politicians, exceptionally inclined to strategically execute Twitter as a platform to both echo his ideology, as celebrity politicians are quoted several times further than ordinary or unknown politicians (Wallsten 2013) and establish connection with his supporters since Twitter is recognized as an acceptable non-elite source and people could manage to accompany Trump in this regard (Wells et al., 2016). Meanwhile, although Twitter has assisted ordinary people to be able to author their opinions in a public forum, it seems problematic since “authority is severely challenged when everyone can be an author” (Kress, 2005, p. 19). Simultaneously, there were serious doubts about the authenticity of the accounts and thus their discourse since there was considerable number of the Twitter accounts, from which Trump retweeted either did not exist on Twitter or were suspended, or even had not published any tweets.

Three main focused schemas were, namely Trump’s personal character, his popularity, and his business prosperity with numerous ideologically condensed and contested words exhibiting the superiority of Trump’s nationalism ideology. Additionally, a significant quantity of repetitious words was perceived in terms of rewording, overwording, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy. They were predominantly binary in assigning perfectionistic excellence to Trump and legitimizing him while they were discrediting and delegitimizing his opponents. His supporters exhibited him as the omniscient person who was always right and correct with Godlike characteristics which was analogous to the classical rightwing discourse in which they were divinely sent (Wodak, 1989, 2015) whereas his rivals, both politicians and media, were represented as fake, failing, erroneous, and corrupt who devilishly attacked him regardless of his innocence (Şakiroğlu, 2020). It is abundantly clear that there was a direct confrontation of Us versus Them. In this case, Donald Trump was the protagonist holding great characteristics while his opponents were the antagonists who were evil and detrimental to their country and people.

The discourse was simplistic, populist, and repetitious in terms of common informal written language with numerous usages of extreme words and structures. The focused words were highlighted in bold accompanied by numerous exclamation marks to enhance their meaning importance (Ott, 2017).

Moreover, this study indicated that Trump's presence as a celebrity politician was due to the lack of competence and trustworthiness of career politicians who have lost the trust of their people. It was also discovered that the difference in American political discourse through Donald Trump resulted from the need in the society for a novel character who was so dissimilar to other known politicians that people were convinced that he was the only man for bringing them a relief from the traditional politics. Concurrently, Trump's language transformed the existing social order in the realm of American politics.

The present study is limited to the supporters' tweets which were retweeted by Donald Trump. The discourse was restricted to linguistic texts and visuals were not considered at all. In the meantime, his opposing media's social network usage is also to be scrutinized while common people's views are also neglected. In this respect, a comprehensive study about Trump's presidency and his social media utilization may be groundbreaking in the realm of critical discourse analysis.

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