

An Analysis of Donald Trump's strategies in the 2016 Elections

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Abstract

The micro-blogging platform Twitter, besides serving as a personal content sharing platform, has become an instrumental tool of political propaganda in the last few years. This dissertation aims at constructing a linguistic profile of Donald Trump, 45th President of the United States of America, based on the argumentation theory framework to identify linguistic factors and strategies used in Donald Trump's social media communication and assess how they effectively appealed to the public's emotions and influenced the electors' vote in 2016. The study was carried out on a corpus of tweets, which was analyzed in terms of the nature and quality of the arguments used, fallacies committed, and most frequently used and manipulated emotive words. A quantitative analysis is performed for identifying the most common argumentative and manipulative strategies, which are described in detail through a qualitative analysis. The combination of these methods can show and assess how Trump manipulated language to successfully exert an influence on American citizens and direct their interests and attitudes.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Twitter, Donald Trump, US 2016 Elections, argumentation, emotive words

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Introduction

Communication and information technologies have been rapidly evolving during the 21st century enabling people across the world to interact both locally and globally through the Internet. Moreover, the emergence of a more user-oriented Internet, also referred to as Web 2.0, has provided new ways of interacting that have also impacted the political world in terms of how politicians communicate with the electorate. The 2016 American Presidential Election can be considered the ‘Twitter’ election, as ‘the use of Twitter and other social media platforms has reached new levels, and has been the source of a large amount of meta-discourse surrounding the language of Donald Trump’s campaign’ (Sclafani, 2018: 18). The main objective of this dissertation is to identify linguistic factors and strategies used in Donald Trump’s social media communication and assess how they effectively appealed to the public’s emotions and influenced the electors’ vote in 2016. The specific research questions are the following:

- What are the argumentative strategies that characterize Trump’s election campaign on Twitter?
- What are the linguistic strategies used by Trump in his Twitter campaign?
- To what extent Trump’s communication on Twitter can be considered as based on acceptable or manipulative tactics?

To this purpose, I will draw on the tools developed in the field of argumentation theory, and in particular on the criteria used for analyzing explicit and implicit arguments and assessing them.

The first chapter will explore how language has changed and features peculiar to the Internet have emerged in the field of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Examples of these features (e.g. abbreviations, emoticons, acronyms along with

syntactic and grammatical changes) will be provided as well as the main characteristics of the micro-blogging platform Twitter, which is encompassed in the new genres emerged with the development of the Internet. In the first part of the second chapter, an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis with a focus on political discourse will be provided, in order to better understand how the manipulation of language through argumentation strategies has been crucial for the 2016 campaign. The second part of the chapter addresses the definition of argument and emotive words; argumentation schemes as well as the theories surrounding emotive words are illustrated to provide the basis for constructing a linguistic profile of Donald Trump. Finally, the third chapter presents the analysis of a corpus of tweets manually collected and analyzed with the facilitation of the software Sketch Engine. The results will give an insight into Trump's "Twitter style", that is, the way the Republican candidate, at the time, shaped his arguments online to appeal to the audience. The analysis will be carried out at different levels, taking into account the types and quality of arguments, fallacies committed, and most frequent emotive words and their manipulation.

From a methodological point of view, a quantitative analysis, aimed at identifying the occurrences of the aforementioned strategies that constitute Trump's linguistic profile, will be followed by a qualitative analysis for illustrating how Trump uses and manipulates language to successfully exert an influence on American citizens and direct their attitude towards state of affairs.

Chapter 1

The Language of the Internet

Communication is commonly defined as `a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour` (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Throughout time, communication has been undergoing a constant change, but the evolution thereof is particularly evident during the 21st century with the new rising information technologies, along with the creation of the Internet. The introduction of this unconventional, when compared to the traditional ones, means of communication led to a drastic modification in the way individuals exchange information as newly-created symbols, signs, and behaviour altered the traditional perception communication. The most prominent change was sparked by the rise of new information technologies which enabled scientists to invent the Internet.

The Internet, and the World Wide Web, has been enabling people across the world to interact with each other through new technology devices, such as computers and mobile phones, no matter where they are based. Later on, the emergence of a more user-oriented Internet, also referred to as Web 2.0, provided new ways of interacting that have also impacted the political world in terms of how politicians communicate with the electorate and how the latter interacts with both the politicians and people they find similar to them.

The new technologies, especially after the development of new tools such as Social Media, have provided politicians, and public figures in general, with a new instrument of communication that has drastically changed political communication in the last few decades. The micro-blogging platform Twitter, in particular, seems to have had an unprecedented impact on political communication, which used to take place

mainly on TV and news broadcast. Thus, the political context, previously dominated by the media elite, has transformed to make space for a new sphere, in which the citizenry has more opportunities to participate. People are indeed capable of becoming an alternative voice regulating political and economic power. In this digital environment, politicians and parties find a way to approach their electorate and assess their opinions and comments more directly. Therefore, there are increasingly more political actors who incorporate digital media into their communications strategies, with the most striking case being the election of Donald J. Trump, often defined as “the Twitter President” following his mostly Twitter-based and unconventional election campaign.

1.1 The History of the Internet

The earliest communication technologies go as far back as 1838 with Samuel Morris’ telegraph and Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone in 1876, which, for the first time in history, made it possible to cover great distances and communicate in near-real time. However, only in the last few decades, digital technologies have changed conventional human interaction. In the early 1960s, the US Department of Defence, along with its researchers, started to develop a system that, in case of nuclear attacks, would ensure exchange of defence data through computer networks, enabling information to be shared among computers in different locations. The new system was later adopted by academics, mainly as a means of exchanging details about their research (Thurlow et al. 2004). In 1968, this system was implemented as ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) by the research company Bolt Beranek and Newman and it linked different computers situated in different locations, enabling machines in governmental installations and universities to easily share and exchange data.

Only in 1971, Ray Tomlinson, a computer engineer working at Bolt Beranek and Newman, thought of using this network to exchange electronic messages instead of only transferring data. This was the first recorded prototype email in history (Baron, 2008), which gave rise to a new form of interpersonal communication mediated by computers and established the new field of Computer-Mediated Communication (also referred to as CMC).

1.2.1 Computer-mediated Communication

Since the functions of computers expanded from storing and exchanging data to enabling people to communicate both locally and globally, new terminology to indicate the recently-established field had to be found. In the early days, a number of terms to denote the cross-machine communication began appearing in literature. Several researchers spoke of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) with a focus on the exchange of information made possible by the newest technologies and others, including Naomi Baron (2008), began speaking of “electronically-mediated communication” (EMC), a perhaps more inclusive name given the emergence of devices other than computers (e.g. mobile phones).

However, in the 1980s, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) seemed the right nomenclature to encompass platforms used to interact online, including email, chat and instant messaging. One of the first definitions to become widely accepted and recognised is that of Susan Herring (1996), who defined CMC as “communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring 1996, p. 1). One of the earliest attempt to give an overview of the language used online was that of David Crystal (2006), who introduced the term “Netspeak”, denoting a range of linguistic features characterising the Internet-based language. Other attempts to name online language were “interactive written discourse”, “e-mail style”, and “electronic

language” (Baron 2008). However, each one of these names were considered unsuitable, since they were not able to fully encompass the heterogeneity of the medium and, according to Thurlow et al. (2004), although they are necessary to describe in some way the language appearing online, they also suggest that language on the internet is so different that a new special label is needed, which is not exactly the case. However, Crystal (2006) asserts that sender and receiver are constrained by a keyboard and by a screen, which determine the type of information that can be sent and seen. Such limitations gave rise to a number of features, which will be presented later in more detail, that may give the impression of a unique form of language, e.g. abbreviations, emoticons, acronyms, etc. While language has always been considered in terms of speech and writing, with new communication technologies being so instrumental, conventional categories have to be reconsidered. Whereas some linguists are more cautious when discussing whether “Netspeak” is to be considered radically different, Crystal (2006) suggests the emergence of online language as a fourth medium, after speech, writing and signing. He continues arguing that Netspeak is more than an aggregate of spoken and written features, since “it does things that neither of these other mediums do, and must accordingly be seen as a new species of communication” (Crystal 2006, p. 51).

1.2.2 Linguistic Features of CMC

In their research, scholars have often argued that the nature of the medium (e.g. computers) has played a considerable role in giving rise to the peculiar and unique features of CMC. Communication online, for the most part, takes place through written forms, therefore a number of typical characteristics have been identified by linguists as a way users have of trying to express their intents. Despite being written, communication that happens via computers very often resembles face-to-face

conversation, though it lacks the immediacy of a dialogue. As Crystal (2006) argues, given the inadequacy of CMC when it comes to expressing feelings and intentions, users are continually in search of new strategies and new vocabulary to describe the online world and their experience in it. The creation of new lexicon is perhaps the most prominent feature of Netspeak, since users create words to describe their activities and situations when interacting online. Many terms have emerged to denote the users of the internet, such as netizens, cybersurfers, nerds, netties and surfers. Compounding, which consist of combining two separate words to form a new one, has become the main method of creating internet neologisms. Examples include the word mouse combined with pad and click to form words like mousepad and mouseclick; terms are also combined with prepositions to form phrasal verbs such as mouse across or mouse over. Another example of popular compound is with the word web, including webcam and webmail or with the word net, forming words like netlag, netnews, Netspeak. The use of prefixes like cyber is common as well in creating words like cyberspace, cyberculture, cybersex and cybersociety. The most widely known prefix use in the creation of neologisms is, however, the -e. The e-prefix was recorded by The Oxford Dictionary of New Words as early as 1997 with examples including e-text, e-money, e-books, e-shop, etc. Many words have entered in common everyday usage beyond the online world, especially among young people, who, be for a sense of belonging, be because Netspeak makes them cool, use a terminology typical of the domain of the Internet (e.g. "I need to go offline for a while", which means that the person needs to be alone and rest for a while). Even the acronym lol is widely employed in contexts other than those online. Especially when a new output is created, new words to describe the experiences of the users and the innovations of the service itself need to be created. Of course, not every word invented by people is destined to be used by the entire online community. Indeed, most words generated by the invention of a new area or service have a short life or live

as long as the output is popular. Years ago, a word would take years, sometimes centuries, before making its entrance in the dictionary; now, with the internet allowing news and, consequently, new words to travel in the blink of an eye, new words can take a few hours to become globally recognised, used for a period of time and then discarded. For example, when the platform Twitter became popular in 2010, a number of new words related to it were invented, including tweologism, twictionary, the blends twittersphere, twitterholic and celebritweet. Emoticons (or smileys) have become an important part of the online social culture because they make it easy to communicate emotions, since people find it rather difficult to express themselves with words. Emoticons first appeared in 1982 and they are created by the combination of punctuation marks along with numerals and characters in order to represent emotions like happiness and sadness. Likewise, abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms have been prominent within CMC. Although these are features that have always been employed in written tradition, mostly when saving space was necessary, they are considered quintessential in online language, especially given the technological constraints (e.g. character limitations) of most mobile devices. Examples of abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms include:

Brb be right back Btw by the way Sul8r see you later Lol laughing out loud

1.3 The Web 2.0

The early 2000s saw a shift in traditional Computer-Mediated Communication. The World Wide Web, though not new, became more dynamic and interactive as web sites allowed users to update content and leave comments. This shift foreshadowed the arrival of the so-called Web 2.0 (Herring 2013). The term was first coined in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly who called a conference he was organising the “Web 2.0 Conference” and

many people found it controversial since they questioned whether the web had become so different in recent years than it needed a new classification. In her paper *Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, Reconfigured, and Emergent* (2013), Susan Herring proposed a redefinition of the Web 2.0 as “Web-based platforms that emerged as popular in the first decade of the 21st century, and that incorporate user-generated content and social interaction [...]” (Herring 2013). Therefore, the Web 2.0, also called social web (Zappavigna 2012), defined the internet as an interpersonal mean rather than an exclusively informational network, since people use it to form and maintain relationship as well as to create communities sharing the same ideas, be they political, religious or of other nature. Therefore, users have gone from only being allowed to read web sites to being able to contribute and create content themselves (the most known example is Wikipedia), moving towards a more dynamic environment, which made it possible for everybody to share thoughts, ideas and, above all, interact through platforms other than those already consolidated in the Web 1.0 (e.g. chatroom, email and IM). Although written mode is still the most widely used on the internet, Susan Herring (2013) notes that on Web 2.0 platforms written content is often juxtaposed with other content of multimodal nature and this phenomenon is defined Convergent Media Computer Mediated Communication (CMCMC). Examples of CMCMC include text responses to YouTube videos or on sites featuring photo-sharing, status updates on Facebook and exchanges on Twitter which, besides text-based posts, include images and videos.

1.4.1 Twitter: a Character-limited Medium

Twitter is a microblogging platform created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone, and Noah Glass that allows users to send and receive text-based posts, called tweets, of up to 140 characters. The data place Twitter among the most

rapidly growing Internet brand in 2010. According to Zappavigna (2012), people were sending 5000 tweets per day in 2007; in 2010 figures increased as high as 50 million per day. As of today, on a monthly basis, Twitter counts 310 million active users with about 460,000 new accounts being created each day. On March 21st, 2006, the first tweet saying “Just setting up my twittr” was posted. Twittr was the original name of the platform, which later became Twitter. The word twitter means “a short burst of inconsequential information” and “a series of chirps from birds” (this explains its signature blue logo), a definition that seemed perfect to the creators, who were looking for a platform that would enable people to send short messages online similar to mobile phone text-messages. As Twitter began to gain popularity, programmers introduced new interface features and functions. First and foremost, characters were raised to 160 so that users could read tweets entirely; however, twenty of the 160 were intended to be used for the name of tweeters (one of the names used to refer to the users of the platform), leaving the remaining characters to express the content of the message. In late 2017, Twitter decided to implement a character limit change, raising the number of characters to 280, which was completed, after initial testing, for all users in early 2018. In order to make it easier for users to remain in the limit established by the website, Twitter provides the number of characters still available for each tweet. Tweets are chronologically displayed on the author’s page as well as on the page of users who have voluntarily given an expression of interest in the author’s posts. People who have expressed interest in somebody’s page are called followers and, unlike Facebook, which requires the acceptance of a friend request, the interest does not have to be mutual in order for the messages to be displayed on one’s wall. This asymmetrical relationship allows people to follow content that they find interesting without entailing a social bond, which is the case of Facebook. When a tweet is sent, the site displays it in a two-part structure, with the first part containing the author’s identity and the message and

the second part containing data such as temporal source, an option that permits a reply, signalled with the symbol @, and the other different responses to a tweet. Responses to the tweet include the possibility to retweet the message by typing RT, that is, forward it to one's followers and also to Like a post (the option Like has substituted the earlier Favourite option). Users can include as many RTs and replies as they want, always taking into account the character limitation. Twitter also allows its users to include URLs in their post if they wish to share web sites, pictures or videos with their followers, however, since URLs are very long, shortenings techniques have been developed to avoid exceeding character limitation. An example of an address shortened by Twitter is <http://bit.ly/xxxxxx>, each one with a unique sequence of letters and numerals (Crystal 2011).

Barack Obama @BarackObama Aug 19

Climate change is not too big of a challenge to solve. We're making good headway. #ActOnClimate

Another function, which remained unique to Twitter until new platforms such as Instagram and the long-established Facebook took inspiration from it, is hashtags, which label posts according to the subject thereof with the hash symbol #. This function allows people to easily recover tweets belonging to the same subject: in the image above, the hashtag #ActOnClimate would permit to any user to find tweets related to the matter of the Act on Climate and also responses of others interested in the same post, potentially creating a debate. In 2009, a sidebar displaying the most discussed topic (i.e. Trending topics) on the platform was developed.

1.4.2 Linguistic features of Twitter

When studying a medium such as Twitter, it is fundamental to consider the potential effects of character limitation on the language used on the platform. When Twitter was first created, the interface displayed a prompt to the users, “What are you doing?”; the question elicited self-contained utterances which hardly suggested a sense of dialogue between tweeters: Missed the bus and got to work later. Grr! (Crystal 2011) When in 2009 the prompt was changed into “What’s happening?”, utterances began to entail elements suggesting a sense of dialogue with lol and yeah being response utterances:

Lol yeah I wasn’t thinking fast enough!

It is also worth noting the omission of personal pronouns in some of the utterances, a phenomenon most likely deriving from the nature of the medium, which is the reason why users are always looking for new way to express meanings without being too constrained (the same as to why they use abbreviations, contractions, logograms, etc.). Crystal argues that the features unique to Twitter characterise the output as a variety. This is rather true, since no other platform combines the character limitation of text-messaging, the possibility of communicating with others as with IM, but in an asynchronous modality like we do with emails and, finally, the blogging character, though in a micro format. Therefore, it can be defined as a hybrid medium combining different modalities and it is worth going into details analysing each platform in comparison to Twitter. With reference to Baron’s synchronous versus asynchronous and one-to one versus one-to-many classification, Twitter can be classified as an asynchronous one-to-many service combining features of Instant Messaging, mobile phone text-messaging and blogs. However, Twitter is primarily a service akin to blogging and it is, indeed, called micro-blogging. The origin of blogs

dates back to the 1990s, when they were called “web logs”. These sites featured a number of web sites which the creator of the page wished to share with others. As blogging became a mass phenomenon, people, as previously described, began sharing thoughts on any kind of matter or even went as far as sharing their daily lives on the platform. While Baron (2008) thoroughly described the blogging phenomenon, she did not make a comparison with Twitter, which is part of the intentions of this section. Blogging sites usually offer an opening page containing the profile of the author, a similarity shared with Twitter as well as other media such as Facebook and MySpace. While comments are allowed on blogs, people writing a piece for their site are not always keen on interacting with their readers unless they decide to, which is a feature of Twitter, where the interest does not have to be mutual, unlikely other media (e.g. Facebook). People can follow blogs without the blogger being forced to respond or follow back. The four basic features of blogs are all shared by Twitter, since blogs are predominantly text-based, the entries appear in chronological order with the most recent displayed first and with the option of seeing all the old posts, they contain links to other websites and they are frequently updated. The latter is particularly common on Twitter, because linguists have found that the character limitation, therefore short messages, encourages users to write more frequently. Blogs and Twitter also share the same purposes: update others on one’s status, release emotional tension, express opinions to influence others, seek others’ opinion and motivate other people to do something. They all are the main reason why people, both common people and politicians or prominent personalities, resort to Twitter to send micro-posts to be displayed publicly. Twitter and blogs are sometimes preferred to IM or text-messaging when people feel the need to communicate but without emotional implications of a one-to-one conversation. All the data reported seem to clearly demonstrate the hybrid nature of Twitter and the uniqueness thereof. In the last few years, Twitter has become a lot more than a platform

where people can exchange short messages and tell friends activities and whereabouts, now it can be thought of as a tool to quickly and easily access information about what is happening across the world. Using the search option on Twitter, latest news, events, and trends can be found and updated in real-time. Especially political communication has been impacted by Twitter. In the past, news regarding politics were only reported by a few services. Twitter has been instrumental in politics and social protests. Many people have chosen to use the 140 characters of Twitter to gain attention for important issues. Politicians chose to communicate with their public with the immediacy of a short, concise tweet in the attempt to influence them and respond to their opponents. They have also been utilising Twitter as a way to engage with foreign politics and diplomacy. Similarly, citizens can write directly to the politicians, or, at least, share their ideas with people believing in the same values and have their voice heard about matters that are important to them.

1.5.1 Political Campaigns in the Twittersphere

Political speeches are intended to persuade the audience into agreeing with the speaker's intentions, and this is especially true when presidential elections are held. Winning the elections means convincing citizens to vote for one candidate choosing between two or more. This entails that candidates must distinguish themselves from each other in order to receive votes and campaigning is what enables them to deliver messages containing their plans, which are usually very different from the opponent's ones (Benoit 2003). Thus, casting a vote for a candidate rather than the other is a comparative act, which is possible when candidates offer information and thoroughly articulate where their policies stand and why they should be elected. Over the last few decades, the power of parties has declined, which means that, although part of the electorate still votes for their party's nominee, people cast their vote for the candidate

who appeals to them in terms of policies and plans, despite the side they belong to (Benoit 2003). As a result, political campaign messages are essential to arise consent and appear preferable to the electorate.

1.5.2 Political Campaigns and the traditional Media

As Hendricks and Denton (2010) note, mass media and politics have always been linked, starting from the American Revolution when newspapers were distributed and long speeches were delivered to the acclaiming public. The dynamics changed when the radio became the main means for politicians to share their ideas and speak to the electorate, because millions of people could listen to the messages of candidates without having to be physically present. Later on, television began to dominate politics by broadcasting conventions and interviews of politicians, which allowed the electorate to feel as if they knew the candidate personally, leading to feelings of trust and intimacy. Moreover, being able to see the candidate, his gestures and proxemics enables the audience to better understand both the message and the person behind it. Along with the broadcast of interviews and conventions, television served as a means of transmitting TV spots and slogans of the candidate's campaign, which used catching words in order to attract the attention of people. However, as Benoit (2003) argues, besides broadcast of conventions and interviews, indeed helpful to discuss and inform the audience about the candidates' future plans, traditional media such as newspapers and television news are not actually informative, because they concentrate on the "race" aspect of the campaign, that is, who is ahead in the polls or who attacked the opponents and why. Moreover, rather than the substance of the campaign, they concentrate on scandals regarding the candidates, which is a very topical situation in the 2016 American Presidential Elections, where the media, along with the candidates themselves, often direct the attention on scandals rather than on the actual campaign.

Nonetheless, as we shall see in the next section, attacking the opponent has always been part of political campaigning, along with acclaiming and defending one.

1.5.3 How the Internet Changed Political Campaigning

As new information technologies continue to change and develop, our ability to communicate is magnified and the way politicians engage with the public must adapt accordingly. The process started as far back as 1992 with president Bill Clinton's campaign, during which the use of emails and listservs as a way to reach potential supporters began. Later on, candidate websites were created to inform the electorate about the candidate's background, policies and also to hold online fundraising for the campaign. Given the recent emergence of social media, further adaptation has been prompted and political candidates, presidential candidates especially, have joined social media in order to personally reach most of the electorate, particularly young voters. As Benoit (2003) reports, the Internet was first used in a presidential campaign relatively long ago, that is, in 1992, when Bill Clinton was running for president. However, at the time, the only resources available were emails, listservs and websites. Scholars found that webpages were more positive than newspaper ads and television spots, because both character and policies were favoured, although 90 percent of the content was policy-related. The information about policies predominantly mentioned accomplishments of the past (e.g. "The Administration has already achieved significant savings by streamlining the defence infrastructure" (Benoit 2003); on the other hand, no human interaction was entailed. Therefore, to a certain extent, the Internet has changed how politicians run presidential campaigns, since the introduction of email, even text messages, to reach the electorate has enabled politicians to reach a growing number of people. Only with the emergence of social media sites, however, the political scene has truly evolved into an audience-centred and content-generated setting. Thus, we shall see

in more detail the role the web 2.0, and especially Twitter given that this study focuses more on the micro-blogging platform, has played in American presidential elections as of 2008 and 2012 with the President elected Barack Obama and at present time with the presidential nominees Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton.

1.5.4 The Role of the Web 2.0 in Political Campaigns

The role of traditional media (i.e. newspapers and broadcast news) in presidential campaigns, as mentioned above, has slowly diminished as candidates have relied on conventions and debates to speak to their electorate, rather than on the brief attention given to their policies by the news. However, new media have been successfully employed in the last decade and, as Hendricks and Denton (2010) drawing from Gulati (2010) argue, “[t]oday, the World Wide Web is the single best medium for allowing candidates to communicate directly, without any filter, to a multitude of constituencies simultaneously while maintaining a great deal of control over their own message” (p.7). Hendricks and Denton (2010), at the time of writing, continued asserting that the 2012 would rely even more on social media as new technologies and platforms were developing notably. Obviously, they accurately foresaw the direction presidential campaigns were heading to, since the 2012 Obama campaign continued to invest their attention and time in social media. The prevision has been proven to be even more accurate for the 2016 presidential elections as the two presidential nominees made major use of new media, especially Twitter. As Hendricks and Denton (2010) argue, whereas in previous elections candidates updated webpages featuring basic information about their policies, their contacts (i.e. email address) and indications for donating money to the campaign, web 2.0 provides new opportunities for both the candidates and the electorate. First and foremost, candidates have been able to create their own pages on various social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, which can be

regularly updated as opposed to static traditional webpages. In addition, the video broadcasting platform YouTube allows politicians to upload videos for free to promote their campaign as opposed to paid for advertisements. Not only does YouTube enable politicians to advert their campaigns, but it enables the electorate, that is, common people, to film and share videos to support a candidate. As a result, the average American can share messages, both through videos and Facebook posts or tweets, and forward them to basically whoever has access to the Internet. Thus, the Internet and social media encourage potential voters to communicate with each other, to share ideas and gather to discuss and support a candidate (Hendricks and Denton 2010). The opportunity to actively participate and not just be a passive receiver of persuading political messages has empowered the audience and changed the political dimension giving an almost direct line to the candidates in terms of communication. During the 2010 presidential campaign, an increasing percentage of voters turned to social media in order to find information; it has been found that 22 percent of adults resorted to Twitter for political purposes (Bode and Dalrymple 2014). The strategy of connecting to the electorate through social media has especially been positive in terms of leading young voters to the polls. For instance, according to Hendricks and Denton (2010), 66 percent of voters, about 23 million young people, under the age of thirty supported Obama in 2008, an incredible turnout compared to that of previous elections with about 3.4 million more voters than before. Moreover, Hendricks and Denton (2010) report that the online campaign attracted about 69 percent of new voters. The data clearly demonstrate the major role the Internet, and social media in particular, has played since campaigns have been constructed and centred around the online world. The very first candidate to have extensively and successfully used the Web 2.0 in order to win the election is Barack Obama, which has been since defined the first “Internet President”.

1.5.5 Twitter as a Political Tool: the Case of Obama

In 2008, the president-would-be Barack Obama and his campaign team were the first to deeply understand the potential of using social media as the main source for promoting and running a successful presidential campaign. Hendricks and Denton (2010), along with a number of scholars, compared the political revolution, which turned traditional campaigning into online campaigning, accomplished by Barack Obama to the revolution brought by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, who was the first to extensively use the new mass medium of television to such an extent that he changed the politics of the twentieth century. The use of Twitter was instrumental for Obama's campaign also because the platform presents a number of advantages: first, it gives direct and limitless connection to the electorate, since Twitter is accessible from both computers and mobile phones, second, the 140 character-limitation enables the candidate to share short, effective and frequent updates and, third, Twitter enables its users to share videos, locations and links to any website, therefore followers can be reminded at any time of an event (e.g. debates, rallies, etc.) involving the candidate, or they can also be exposed to posters and slogans about the campaign. Fourth, followers can tweet or respond to a tweet of candidates, which makes Twitter an actual channel of communication between politicians and their possible voters. Politicians can ask his voters whether or not they agree with policies and voters can respond and send a question themselves. Twitter and social media in general are employed during presidential debates as well. The second to last presidential debate, which was held on October 9th, 2016 saw the presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald J. Trump respond to questions both of the audience participating in person and also to questions arriving from the most-known social media (i.e. Twitter and Facebook). Thus, the role social networking play until election day is always crucial. Scholars, including Hendricks and Denton (2010), argue that technology played a

critical role in Obama's campaign, distributing his message to millions of Americans and raising an unprecedented amount of money thanks to the mobilisation on social media. Even the average American was able to contribute with small amounts of money in order to support their favourite candidate. Barack Obama's first tweet was posted on April 29, 2007. Obama encouraged followers to sign a petition against the war in Iraq, but also invited his followers to go look for additional pieces of information on his website (Hendricks and Denton 2010):

“Thinking we're only one signature away from ending the war in Iraq.

Learn more at www.barackobama.com.” Many of the tweets sent out by candidates resemble that of Obama, because they often associate a message with a hyperlink, leading the user to a website relevant for the message shared. Redirecting followers to a website, a video or a picture is common during the entire process leading to election day, since candidates want to share as much information as possible with voters, which, often, is not possible in 140 characters. Moreover, candidates tweet excerpts of their speeches in order for the most important words or statements to remain in the voters' minds. Also, when delivering speeches, candidates usually invite voters to tune in, if the speech is broadcasted, or to follow the account for more information (i.e. excerpts, short videos, etc.). In addition, as explained in the first chapter, one of the most original and revolutionary options of Twitter is the use of hashtags. Hashtags enable users to recover tweets belonging to the same subject, but also to make them the most discussed topics on the platform. Barack Obama, and later most of politicians and candidates with a Twitter account, made extensive use of hashtags and benefited from it, because hashtags enabled them to reach millions of people, who jointly forwarded (retweeted) the messages and promoted the candidates' profiles, making policies well-known and discussed. For instance, the “Affordable Care Act”, which is a health care

reform promoted and passed in 2010 under the Obama's legislation, is always referred to as Obamacare. The term was coined by Obama's opponents as a pejorative term. However, by 2012, it had become a colloquial way to refer to the health care act after Obama and his team endorsed it and promoted it on Twitter, inviting supporters to send messages that began with "I like #ObamaCare because...". The power of social media made the term famous and ObamaCare became a strong point for the campaign, since it is a sort of wordplay with Obama and Care, suggesting that Obama cares for his people. Twitter became a great place for people to discuss and debate the topic as well as learning about it from searching #ObamaCare on the micro-blogging platform and reading all the tweets and attached articles explaining what the reform entailed.

In conclusion, new information technologies played a central role in Barack Obama's presidential campaign. Social media enabled Obama to deliver messages to his voters and to his non-voters alike, shaping the image of a leader who is willing to be close to his electorate, in order to listen to their needs and requests. He was able to engage with millions of his voters and interact with them, announcing events as well as providing resources that kept them informed. Barack Obama, as a candidate and later as President, was able to gather his followers and voters on a platform where they could not only engage with him, but also with likeminded people with whom they held discussions and communicated, creating a large online community tied by common interests, values and beliefs. The 2016 presidential campaign made even more use of social media and fully exploited its potential to reach the electorate and persuade people into supporting the candidates' ideas, values, and beliefs through small powerful pieces of text posted on their Twitter pages, which attained to millions of voters within seconds and made this election the most tweeted-about one in history so far, with 1 billion tweets sent since the primary debates began, according to Twitter.

Chapter 2

Political Discourse and Argumentation

Communication in all kinds and forms is object of study of a discipline called Discourse Analysis, which is a discipline that studies text and talk within its social context. According to Brown and Yule (1983), every discourse fragment involves a topic or theme which unifies the dynamic process of discourse. Therefore, discourse may be defined as "language in use" which fulfils "human affairs".

Political discourse can be considered a sub-category of discourse analysis and, as the name suggests, it is concerned with a broad bulk of studies about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels. As politics involves actions to affect other people's behaviour and beliefs, the way language is used to achieve such power is the subject matter of political discourse analysis, along with different kinds of strategies employed.

2.1 Political discourse

The noun 'politics', among others belonging to the same family of words, including 'politician' and the adjective 'political', comes from the ancient Greek and the root thereof means 'city' or 'citizen' (from polis). The original meaning of the word is concerned with a group of people living in an organised community, the polis, where they lead a life under the guidance of a democratically chosen leader(s) (Beard 2000). However, in order to gain power and establish, organise and guide political, social and economic institutions, human-beings resort to communication, which has long been seen as the essential element of politics. This vision dates back to Aristotle who, in his

work 'Politics', recognizes the close relationship between politics and communication, asserting that humans are "political animals":

'man is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal [...]. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech. [...] speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong [...]' (Aristotle, cited in Forchtner and Wodak, 2018: 2).

Men are born to live in a politically organized environment while serving civil functions. As opposed to animals, humans possess the faculty of language, therefore, whereas animals are perfectly able to communicate with each other, they cannot speak. According to the philosopher, through language, humans are able to distinguish between just and unjust, that is, the good and the harmful (Hendricks and Denton 2010) but, more importantly, they are able to communicate ideas, values and beliefs. Since "politics is concerned with acquiring, maintaining and sustaining power" (Charteris-Black 2011, p.4), politicians use language to present and shape their arguments to persuade the audience in order to gain consent and approval on their ideas, which are the basis of future policies. As Charteris-Black (2011) states "[w]ithin all types of political system leaders have relied on the spoken word to [convince others of] the benefits that arise from their leadership" (Charteris-Black 2011, p.1). Persuasion is a key concept in politics and it is intimately related to rhetoric. The origin of these two concepts goes, once again, as far back as Ancient Greece, when Aristotle spoke of rhetoric as the art of using language to persuade others. The art of persuasion has been fundamental in the world of politics for as long as democracy has existed, which has come to be recognized as the political system that best represents the voice of the people, or rather the unified ideas of the majority. Therefore, persuasion "refers to the

intention, act and effect of changing an audience's thinking" (Charteris-Black 2011, p.14) and it is necessarily included, as mentioned above, in any definition of rhetoric, considering that the term "rhetoric" encompasses a range of methods employed in order to achieve persuasion. It must be observed that any kind of persuasive act is entirely intentional, because persuasion is based on the assumption that the speaker has an underlying intention behind his/her act, which is to change one's point of view. Consequently, the audience plays a passive role in the act of persuasion. However, in order for politicians to effectively entice their public trust must be established, usually by demonstrating that they have good intentions and the audience's needs at heart. Moreover, Charteris-Black (2011), drawing from Jowett and O'Donnell (1992), argues that the audience is successfully persuaded when speakers deliver a message which adheres to their shared beliefs and values, evoking and reinforcing them. Since people are usually reluctant to change, the speaker has to engage in the discussion of something in which the audience already believes and which is already acceptable to them (Charteris-Black 2011). When people in the audience perceive that their needs are understood, a connection between them and the speaker is immediately created. While on the one hand rhetoric has a positive connotation, on the other hand it is regarded with suspicion. According to Charteris-Black (2011), the philosopher Plato was the first to define rhetoric as the art of deception, arguing that it did not favour the truth, but it was only a means for the speaker of achieving the desired purpose, whether it be through honest means or not. George Orwell, in his essay "Politics and the English Language" (1946), considers political speech and writing "the defence of the indefensible" and brings the example of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, which, as Orwell argues, may only be defended by political arguments that do not conform with the aims proclaimed by political parties, which means that language is exploited as a weapon of propaganda and deceit. In his book, Adrian Beard (2000) proposes the definition of the

Brewer's Dictionary of Politics, which describes a politician as being a "practitioner of the art of politics" whose role is fundamental to the working of society, yet it is often despised. Beard continues arguing that the words 'practitioner' and 'art' suggest the idea that a politician is somebody gifted of professionalism and creativity. However, the dictionary also mentions that politicians are seen as devious by most people.

It becomes clear that politics does not exist without language, because communicating, discussing and confronting about various matters, more specifically plans and policies to implement, are activities at the very basis of politics, since people gather to plan for cooperative group action so that something new can be created and the existing can be changed. However, it is worth noting that a distinction between the concept of persuasion and manipulation exists. As previously mentioned, persuasion is based on rhetorical techniques aiming at producing a desired effect on the audience and obtaining the addressee's adherence, which, in case of politics, means adherence to a political agenda. Manipulation, on the other hand, while based on the use of techniques whose purpose is to persuade people into believing or accepting certain ideas, it often relies on hidden benefit sought by the orator as their sole aim, rather than benefit the audience. In addition, manipulation is also characterized by the act of withholding or distorting a certain state of affairs (Nettel 2011).

The analysis of the persuasive tactics used in political discourse can be analyzed considering their distinct dimensions, namely their "emotive" effects (emotive language), the inferences that speakers communicate (reconstructed through the argumentation schemes), and the common knowledge that they take for granted and, more importantly, can manipulate to achieve their goals (problematic presuppositions). In the following sections these aspects of the analysis will be described at a theoretical level.

2.2.1 Emotive language and argumentation

When preparing a speech, the main purpose of politicians is usually that of convincing the audience to share and support their plans through persuasive arguments. Charteris-Black argues that, according to Aristotle, an enticing and well-structured speech is based on the combination of ethos, logos and pathos. Ethos refers to a politician's trustworthiness, because a good rhetorician must be morally virtuous; logos refers to the ability of providing rational proofs to the argument and, lastly, pathos refers to the ability of an orator to arise emotions in the audience. This last element is of particular relevance as arising emotions and exploiting them to fulfil the ultimate purpose (i.e. winning the elections, in the case of presidential campaigns) is a strategy that has proven to be most effective in the 2016 Elections. Donald Trump, in fact, used a kind of rhetoric that relied on emotional response from the public throughout his campaign and emotive language was employed in his speeches, statements, and especially tweets posted on his official page leading up to the election day.

According to Macagno and Walton (2010, p. 2), "a term is considered emotive if it leads the interlocutor to draw a value judgment on the fragment of reality the term is used to refer to". Emotive language can be defined as particular dialectical and rhetorical strategy whose distinctive feature is the persuasion through emotions. Emotive language generates the categorization of words, which are consequently divided in good or bad based on the values a certain community shares, a community the speaker belongs to. The interlocutor uses these words to support their actions or decisions, and to convey the message that is at the basis of their idea (political agenda, in case of elections). However, as argued by Macagno and Walton (2010), emotive language can turn out to be tricky, since the use of emotive words, and consequent

strong emotions arising from the use thereof, can create the idea that a contrary point of view would follow unacceptable values.

Furthermore, the use of emotive language may lead to the perception that what is being conveyed, while reasonably constructed, is in reality fallacious, especially when an argument is not backed up by actual facts and figures, but only relies on strong statements whose purpose is to cause a strong response in the audience.

As previously mentioned drawing from Orwell (1946), political speech and writing is defined as “the defense of the indefensible” and some ideas may only be defended by political arguments, since they would not be justified other than with the exploitation of emotions and use of strategies, which means that language is exploited as a weapon of propaganda and deceit. Therefore, words might be used to prevent the reader from understanding the part of reality they refer to and become masks, instead of signs.

2.2.2 Emotive words

As Stevenson (1937) argues, words can be used for two distinct purposes: descriptively, to state and clarify beliefs, or dynamically, to “give vent to feelings, create moods or incite people to actions or attitudes” (Stevenson 1937, 21). These words, which he defines as emotive or ethical words, can affect the interlocutor’s evaluation and perception of the current reality and lead them to reconsider such state of affairs and lead them to specific actions. According to his point of view, emotive terms are constituted of a combination of their descriptive and emotive meaning as they are capable of directing or affecting the hearer’s set of interests as well as providing an actual evaluation of the reality in question by means of the emotions conveyed and expressed through the statement. Therefore, the emotive meaning represents the feelings or attitudes, whether that be positive or negative, that the use of the word suggests to

respondents. The emotive meaning of a word is a kind of implicit suggestion contained in the word that triggers a positive or negative response in an audience. As Walton (2006) argues, statements are usually “loaded to support one side of a dispute and refute the other side in virtue of a term used in the statement that has positive or negative emotive connotations” (Walton 2006, p.220). Some words in particular have strong positive or negative emotive connotations. In fact, there are terms that cannot be considered neutral and carry an evaluation with them, usually an evaluation based on the most common use of such word in a given community. The term “sexist”, as Walton presents as example, is a derogatory one, which carries a negative label and will immediately evoke negative suggestions, given the conventional emotive connotations that the term has taken on in current usage. The implications of such word are so strong that, as argued by Walton (2006), if our point of view is described as ‘sexist’, whether supported by evidence or not, it will be rather difficult to defend. However, the inferences resulting from the use of an ethical word are not necessarily stable. By placing a word or a phrase in a different context, it is possible to change the emotive meaning while maintaining the descriptive meaning, and trigger a different response in the interlocutor when put before a certain word whose meaning was altered by re-contextualization. An example is brought by the 2016 presidential campaign. Donald Trump re-contextualized “politically correct”, linking it to a set of negative characteristics and using it to attack opponents suggesting that people who are politically correct are hypocrites and phony. However, this shift in meaning is achieved implicitly as Trump never states that politically correct individuals are hypocrites. The audience draws a conclusion through an inference based on the context and the way Trump gives the word a new meaning.

2.2.3 Strategies of emotive language

There are a number of different manipulative strategies grounded on the use of emotions as emotive words can be employed in a misleading way to manipulate shared knowledge and values of the hearers; the strategies can be identified as euphemisms, loaded words, also called question begging epithets, persuasive definitions, and quasi-definitions.

Euphemism, loaded words, and emotional language

The first strategy is the use of metaphors or euphemisms to conceal certain concepts. As Macagno and Walton (2010) explain, euphemisms are used to soften a harsh reality, for instance, we might say that a person has 'passed away', instead of using 'died'. However, euphemisms can also be used to hide some aspects of reality, leading the interlocutor to draw a conclusion based on only a partial representation of the situation. This process of hiding usually happens by using *loaded words*, which are words presupposing facts not accepted or shared by the interlocutors to support a value judgment, as characteristics of a state of affairs are assumed but not shared.

Walton and Macagno (2010), drawing from Manicas & Kruger (1968, p. 326) present the following example:

Example 1

a) You cannot let this man go free because your sister or your wife may be his next victim.

b) Now, let's consider some disadvantages of the immoral policy of legalized gambling.

The first example assumes that the man already killed a person; whereas in the second sentence there is a presupposition stating that legalized gambling is considered

against morality. Such assumptions do not need to be supported by arguments, as already taken for granted. A second strategy is the use of indeterminate words, such as 'Fascist', 'Communist' which are commonly negatively evaluated; however, their meaning is undetermined, when it comes to using them to classify state of affairs. The third strategy is the exploitation of definitions to categorize reality. This technique is based on ambiguity, which is achieved with the introduction of a new concept, whose definition is not commonly shared, by the speaker, who directs the emotions usually associated to the old definition towards the new referent of the word. For instance, dictatorships often redefine and re-contextualize the concept of democracy to label their regime as 'democratic'. The newly created definition often clashes with the traditional understanding of democracy, but the word, carrying a positive evaluation, can be attributed to a form of government that is usually condemned. These strategies show how emotive language can be exploited to conceal reality as people know it and lead the hearers or readers to evaluate a situation they do not fully know (Macagno and Walton, 2010). When people are not able to fully comprehend a situation or certain fragment of reality, they cannot evaluate the concept and make a rational decision about it, making it easier for the speaker to direct their judgement in their favor, since the hearer will grasp the part of the concept that seems more familiar to them and that will trigger their emotional response, rather than being able to discern all components of the concept. Often, policies are made difficult for the public to understand through the use of acronyms and scientific jargon. For instance, naming a neutron bomb a 'radiation enhancement weapon' prevents many people from understanding the concept to which such name refers, allowing whoever is conveying a message in relation to this concept to pass their intended meaning (i.e. what they wish the public to understand about and respond to). However, as argued by Macagno and Walton (2010), drawing from (Schiappa, 2003, p.152), emotions can be directed and changed not only by concealing

the referent, but also by amplifying some of its details to hide other features which may elicit unwanted judgments. This process is called ‘framing’ and consists in describing the same event in different ways, each emphasizing some details and ignoring others, and consequently eliciting extremely different emotive responses. For instance, the same situation is being described in the following example, however, in different ways and with a different choice of wording:

Example 2

- A tree is being cut down

- A cylindrical organic object is being rotated from a vertical to a horizontal position

- A tree is being murdered

- A mean old man is cutting down that nice shady tree

As seen above, different judgments are elicited by using different ways and focusing on different details each time the same situation is described. A tree is described as a living individual being murdered in one line, whereas it is objectively defined as a cylindrical organic object in another one.

Persuasive definitions

There are different kinds of known definitions: lexical, stipulative, and persuasive definitions. As Walton (2006) describes, a lexical definition is used to explain the meaning of a word (or phrase) to somebody who, presumably, does not understand or know the meaning of such term. In contrast to a lexical definition, a stipulative definition is purely arbitrary, and the definer is free to invent a word or assign to a word their preferred meaning. Walton brings as an example the following:

Example 3

Helen: I define an 'excessive' tip as any tip over 15 percent of the bill.

Bob: That is arbitrary. I would say that a tip is "excessive" if the amount is more than was merited by the quality of the service.

Many times, definitions are a mix of lexical and stipulative, as people may use a conventionally accepted term and then develop it further according to what the situation is. For instance, a discipline such as science may take a commonly known meaning, as 'number' or 'acid' in everyday usage, and then adapt it to the methodology of that particular discipline. Persuasive definitions usually change the conventional meaning of words, by taking it in a direction that suits the purpose of the definer, still keeping the emotional connotation the same as the original.

As Stevenson argues, 'a "persuasive" definition is one which gives a new conceptual meaning to a familiar word without substantially changing its emotive meaning, and which is used with the conscious or unconscious purpose of changing, by this means, the direction of people's interests' (1938, p. 331). A redefinition can be identified as the speaker emphasizes the distinction between a new meaning of the term, which is often referred to as "true" or "real", as opposed to the common use, which is considered "false". Stevenson also highlights that not all definitions that intend to redirect interests of people are persuasive. For instance, when a new technical term is introduced, this might change the meaning of an already existing related term or partly modify it after new elements have been added to it, however, it does not mean that the definition is persuasive. The distinction is grounded on whether the term carries a strong emotive meaning and whether the speaker intends to employ the word dynamically, that is, with the intention of changing people's interests rather than merely classifying it and making it understood by others. Finally, as Stevenson argues, the successful use of a persuasive definition depends upon dynamic usage, that is, how the speaker presents his

point in terms vigor, gestures, tone of voice, the cadence of his accompanying sentences, figures of speech. On the other hand, with regards to the hearers, it is of great relevance the respect they have for the speaker, their susceptibility to a redirection of interests. As previously mentioned, persuasion is effective when the hearers are already on the point of changing their interests and already sharing certain beliefs with the speaker. Thus, a persuasive definition may prove to be the final step to the change and the element that will keep the change permanent.

Quasi-definitions

While persuasive definitions distort the meaning of a concept, but still keep the evaluation that such word evoke, quasi-definitions alter the emotive meaning of a word, leaving the descriptive side unmodified (Stevenson, 1944). A quasi-definition consists in the modification of what is commonly described as "connotation", that is, different inferences that are commonly associated with a term based on the context in which it is normally used.

In other words, a name is used to classify a fragment of reality, but its evaluation is altered by an argument. Macagno and Walton, drawing from Stevenson (1944, p. 280, 281) bring us an example as follows:

Example 4

- Blackguards are the most fascinating people. - You don't say so? Exclaimed Sarudine, smiling. - Of course they are. There's nothing so boring in all the worlds as your so-called honest man. ... With the programme of honesty and virtue everybody is long familiar; and so it contains nothing that is new. Such antiquated rubbish robs a man of all individuality, and his life is lived within the narrow, tedious limits of virtue...

Yes, blackguards are the most sincere and interesting people imaginable, for they have no conception of the bounds of human baseness.

In the example above, the concept of blackguard is not modified by the speaker, but the way it is evaluated is redefined, as 'Virtue' and 'infidelity' are implicitly redefined as 'baseness' and 'originality'.

In conclusion, Walton (2005) argues that persuasive and quasi-definitions can both be considered stipulative, since their purpose is not to explain the meaning of a word, but to support a thesis. Lexical definitions, as they are used to clarify a concept, have no argumentative power. Persuasive definitions, on the other hand, introduce a new meaning of the term that is used to support the definer's point of view.

It emerges how emotive words are dialectical instruments that need to be supported by arguments whenever they are challenged since the ultimate goal of emotive language is directing the interlocutor to commit to an action. In order to understand how emotive language and decision-making processes are connected, an overview of the main argument schemes will be provided and will be later on used to analyze the 2016 presidential campaign.

2.2.4 Argumentation schemes

Argumentation as a discipline provides the tools for effectively pursuing a communicative goal as well as detecting and understanding manipulative strategies. In order to do so, arguments are analyzed in terms of reasonableness of the reasons used to support a specific point of view. According to Walton (2006), arguments are constituted of statements called premises and conclusions. A statement, also referred to as proposition, is a sentence that is either true or false, whereas premises are statements that offer reasons to support a conclusion. Finally, a conclusion is a statement that, in

response to doubt about the claim made by the other party, expresses a claim. Usual expressions that identify a conclusion of an argument are ‘therefore’ or ‘thus’. As Walton (2006) explains, the concept of proposition is fundamental to critical argumentation, as arguments are composed of premises and conclusions that are propositions. As illustrated in the previous paragraph, a proposition is, in principle, true or false. However, as the author argues, something can be considered a proposition even if we do not know whether it is true or false. Walton (2006) brings the following example to justify this claim: ‘Hannibal wore a beard on the day of the Battle of the Trasimene Lake’. This proposition claims something that is true or false, even though no reliable proof is available to support this particular claim. Therefore, although propositions are known for having the characteristic of being true or false, we may not be able to know whether this is true or not.

Arguments can be divided in three fundamental types: deductive arguments, inductive arguments, which are based on probability, and presumptive arguments, which are based on plausibility.

In an argument that is deductively valid, if the premises are true, the conclusion, by logical necessity, must be true (Walton, 2006). For example, in the following argument, the first premise is taken to be an absolute universal generalization with no exceptions.

Example 5

PREMISE: All police chiefs are honest.

PREMISE: John is a police chief.

CONCLUSION: John is honest.

Walton (2006) observes that the word ‘all’ in the first premise indicates a universal generalization, which means the premise is accepted as true. By logical necessity, the conclusion cannot be doubted and is true. As the author further explains, to say that an argument is deductively valid means that it is logically impossible for all the premises to be true and the conclusion false. Provided that the premises are accepted as true, if the conclusion is false, the conclusion is inconsistent.

For example, we would say that these statements are inconsistent, because the third statement is not logically acceptable.

Example 6

FIRST STATEMENT: All police chiefs are honest.

SECOND STATEMENT: John is a police chief.

THIRD STATEMENT: John is not honest.

On the contrary, in an inductive argument, if the premises are true, the conclusion is probably true, but it could also be false, because inductive arguments are based on probability. Walton uses the following argument.

Example 7

Most swans are white.

This bird is a swan.

Therefore, this bird is white.

The first premise is an inductive generalization, rather than a universal one. Not all swans are white, but only most of them. In this case, if the premises are accepted as true, then the conclusion is probably (but not necessarily) true. An inductive argument is usually supported by gathering empirical evidence as follows:

Example 8

Seventy percent of residents of Tutela Heights vote Conservative.

Ned is a resident of Tutela Heights.

Therefore (probably) Ned will vote Conservative.

In this argument, the conclusion has a certain degree of probability relative to the premises, as the author observes. The third type of argument is the presumptive argument, which leads to a conclusion that is plausible, and that may be acceptable as a presumption. However, it is defeasible in the sense that it can fail should new evidence come in. For example:

Example 9

Where there's smoke there's fire.

There is smoke in Buttner Hall.

Therefore, there is fire in Buttner Hall.

The premise 'Where there's smoke there's fire' is not an absolute universal generalization, as this is a defeasible statement; generally speaking, where smoke is seen, fire can be found, but there are exceptions. Although both premises are true, the conclusion may be false. As previously mentioned, presumptive arguments are based on

plausibility, which, as Walton argues, is a matter of whether a statement appears to be true in a normal type of situation that is familiar both to the participants and the onlookers. If one party accepts the premises, then they might also have a good reason to accept the conclusion, although not uncritically. There can be appropriate critical questions to ask before accepting a conclusion. There may be some arguments in favor of the conclusion and some against it. Walton (2006) explains that these forms of inference are called argumentation schemes.

An argument is successful when it provides a good reason, or several ones, to support or criticize a claim. An error in the reasoning or the logic of an argument, which makes is ultimately illegitimate, is called a fallacy. Although the use of emotive language seems to be rather effective when it comes to political campaigning, fallacies can be identified in the reasoning of a particular statement.

A number of different argumentative schemes and fallacies that are relevant to the analysis of political reasoning (Hansen and Walton, 2013) can be identified and described as follows:

- Ad hominem

An Ad Hominem fallacy is committed if person A attacks person B rather than the argument made by person B. This is done when someone focuses their critique on a person's appearance, character, way of speaking etc. instead of refuting their ideas or opinions. This is one of the most used strategy in political campaigning as attacking the opponent's honesty or credibility is rather powerful and effective, because it leads the hearer to believe that such person cannot be trusted, no matter how good their arguments are. The attack will reduce the plausibility of any argument coming from the opponent as their credibility will be diminished by criticizing their personality, trustworthiness, or lack thereof. As Walton (2006) argues, sometimes ad hominem

arguments can be reasonable when supported by facts. However, most of the times, ad hominem arguments are intended to discredit the character and present little to no facts that can back up such allegations.

Two types of Ad hominem arguments can be distinguished: direct and circumstantial. The direct, also called personal type, suggests that since the proponent of an argument is a bad character, the argument they put forward is as bad as the person proposing it. Usually, the attack is aimed at destroying somebody's credibility, for instance, accusing them of being a liar. As a result, their argument will be reduced in plausibility. On the other hand, the circumstantial ad hominem argument is considered a subtype of argument from inconsistent commitment, as Walton (2006) explains. The allegation of inconsistent commitment is used to suggest that the speaker is not following the conclusion of his own argument, making the audience doubt the speaker's underlying reasoning behind the statement. For instance, arguing that smoking leads to lung diseases, and that people should not smoke, while being a smoker, leads people to doubt the argument. As a result, the opponent can attack the speaker on a lack of commitment towards a point that is being preached and question the character as a sincere person.

- Argument from popular opinion (or Argument ad populum)

Argument from popular opinion is a fallacy in which a conclusion is believed to be true because many people say or believe it is. Phrases such as "everybody knows that...", "all people see...", "so many people believe" are used to validate a particular message, conveying that if so many believe something then it must be true. Therefore, if a statement is generally accepted, then that can be used as a plausible argument in favor of A. However, Walton (2006) explains that this kind of strategy is not strong, since having a majority of people believing something is acceptable does not grant that such

thing is actually true. Combining an argument from popular opinion with one from position to know may make such argument stronger as shown in the following example: It is generally accepted by those who live in Cedar Rapids that the lake is a good place to swim in the summer (Walton, 2006, p. 92). It is a plausible assumption for people to believe that the lake is a good place to swim in the summer as the inhabitants of that specific area, who are familiar with the place, think so. Therefore, in the absence of any evidence that would lead to believing the contrary, this is a widely accepted idea.

- Argument from popular practice

A more practical form of the argument from popular opinion is the argument from popular practice. This form of argument is connected to ‘position to know’ argumentation, as familiarity with a practice is a basis for being in a position to know whether it is generally acceptable or not.

Walton (2006, p.93) brings the example of a husband and wife visiting Holland for the first time going for a bike ride. The husband is riding behind his wife, thinking that riding side-by-side is not allowed. After his wife asks him to ride beside her, so they could talk, the husband states that he is not sure it is allowed; the wife replies that everybody is doing it, basing the assumption on the fact that other couples are likely to be from the local area, and not all tourists, they would be likely to know what is generally accepted in terms of practice. In this case, argument from popular practice is implicitly backed by an argument from position to know.

- Argument from expert opinion

In a critical discussion, a number of different facts can be relevant to the dispute, for example citing notable sources, such as books, academic articles, depending on the subject of the dispute. However, although this kind of argument can be plausible, it is

also defeasible as the speaker will have to rely on presumption or trust that the source is knowledgeable and not misinformed. Doubts can be raised in a dialogue about the truth of premises or by asking whether the subject is a trustworthy source of information.

The following doubts can be raised when an argument from expert opinion is used: the reason why the expert is stating something, if his statement goes along with other experts' opinions, if he has expertise in that specific area, if he speaks without biases and if he recalls the pieces of information that are relevant for the matter.

- Is a in a position to know whether A is true (false)? 2. Is a an honest (trustworthy, reliable) source? 3. Did a assert that A is true (false)?

The six basic critical questions are:

1. Expertise Question. How credible is E as an expert source?
2. Field Question. Is E an expert in the field that A is in?
3. Opinion Question. What did E assert that implies A?
4. Trustworthiness Question. Is E personally reliable as a source?
5. Consistency Question. Is A consistent with what other experts assert?
6. Backup Evidence Question. Is E's assertion based on evidence? (Walton 2006, p. 88)

- Argument from analogy

The argument from analogy is a case-based reasoning, where a case is considered to be similar to another in a particular respect; since one case has certain properties, then the other case also has the same ones. However, this strategy is defeasible, because one case may have resemblance to another case, but at the same

time have dissimilarities that makes them different to some extent, otherwise they would be the same case.

- Argumentation from correlation to cause

This kind of argument presupposes that there is a cause-effect correlation between events, that is, one state of affairs A causes another state of affairs B. A is something that can be brought about, and when it is brought about (or stopped), then B is also brought about (or stopped) (Walton, 2006). As Walton explains, a correlation is a statistical relationship, determined by counting up numbers where one event occurs in a case where another event also occurs. However, this is not merely a statistical relationship. However, sometimes, there may not be a real correlation between two events, but only seem to be one or be totally a coincidence. For example, Walton reports the following example, drawing from a study by Jane Gadd, “Arthritis Study Rejects Weather Link,” *Globe and Mail*, April 3, 1996, p. A5, stating that there might be a correlation between arthritis symptoms and weather changes. Nonetheless, no pattern was found when scientists tried to prove such theory. In conclusion, argument from correlation to cause is a legitimate one, and it is particularly useful for guiding actions in practical matters. Nevertheless, sometimes human tendency to find a correlation between events that seem to be directly connected, automatically excludes that this correlation may be the result of pure coincidence. In such cases, Walton recommends to ask appropriate critical questions before placing too much weight on an argument from correlation to cause.

- False dilemma

Fallacy in which only two alternatives are presented, when, in reality, there are numerous possible outcomes. This fallacy is present numerous times in Trump’s tweets, when the listener/reader is given two options: winning or losing; these tweets are

delivered in different contexts, especially when contrasting himself as a winner to his opponents, the losers. It is worth noting how most arguments of false dilemma offer extreme outcomes or options to readers, tapping on their fears and discontent. This strategy is directly related to another that exploits emotions for persuasion purposes: Appeal to fear.

- Post hoc

Post hoc is an argument which attempts to establish a cause>effect relationship between two or more unrelated things. For instance, Trump argued that “[...] some of the candidates [...] didn’t know the air-conditioner didn’t work. [...] How are they going to beat ISIS?”. In Trump’s argument, just because the other presidential candidates were unaware that the air conditioning in the building was not working on that particular day does not mean they would be ineffective at combatting ISIS.

- Argument from consequences

This strategy is based on citing the foreseeable consequences of a certain proposal as a premise, and to infer that a certain course of action is or is not recommendable as a conclusion. These arguments are common in political debates when it comes to weighing the pros and cons of a proposal, and they can be used in a positive or negative manner. One person might cite negative consequences that could arise from accepting a certain proposal (If A is brought about, bad consequences will plausibly occur. A should not be brought about.), whereas the opposition might cite positive consequences arising from the same (If A is brought about, good consequences will plausibly occur. A should be brought about.)

- Slippery Slope

A slippery slope is a sub-type of argument from consequences and is utilized in the attempt to persuade an audience by making the argument that if one event happens, then another, then another, and then another must logically happen as a result, almost like a chain-of-events reaction. However, there is no evidence that one event leads to the others, therefore, the argument is illogical.

- Straw man

The straw man argument is 'the technique used when an arguer ignores their opponent's real position on an issue and sets up a weaker version of that position by misrepresentation, exaggeration, distortion or simplification' (Bowell and Kemp, 2014, p.252). According to Talisse and Aikin (2006), as explained by O'Halloran (2018), two forms of straw man can be identified: misrepresentation, which consists in using an argument that misrepresents the standpoint advanced by the person they are attacking, and weak, which consists in selecting the less relevant and weakest element of the opponent standpoint, in order to make it more criticizable. Aikin and Casey (2011) add one more form of straw man, namely hollow man argument, that is a complete fabrication of a standpoint, which does not resemble the original one in any way, when compared to the other forms of straw man. In conclusion, the argument seems so extreme that the speaker's one will appear more reasonable by comparison.

-Argument from sign

According to Walton (2006), argument from sign is a presumptive type of argument based on a premise that a finding is a characteristic of some type of object, event, or action. The other premise is that some specific signs are present in the given case. The conclusion is that whenever these specific signs are present, the event will occur. In the medical field, often times doctors use a symptom (sign) to identify a specific disease, which usually occurs when this sign, or signs, occur. For instance,

yellow skin is one of the symptoms of liver dysfunction. However, patients may present yellow skin, but not have a liver dysfunction, as color of the skin is only a preliminary sign of the disease. This kind of argument is based on a finding or an indicator. Walton also argues that an argument from sign is a rather unreliable strategy. Nevertheless, can sometimes help directing a chain of reasoning, giving the basis for an initial hypothesis and lead to a plausible conclusion, once more context and details are provided.

- Argument from commitment

In argument from commitment, as Walton (2006) explains, the proponent takes as premise a proposition that the respondent is committed to and uses it to press the respondent to concede another proposition that follows by inference from that premise. Therefore, when a subject *a* is committed to a proposition *A*, we can infer that he is usually also committed to *B*. When it comes to argument from commitment, the straw man fallacy is a possible consequence since, in order to attack or refute one's opinion as implausible, the point of view can be distorted or exaggerated. Moreover, argument from commitment can be used in an even stronger way to infer that a respondent is inconsistent in his commitments by providing arguments supporting this theory.

- Argument from verbal classification

Argument from verbal classification asserts that an object is said to have a property on the grounds that such object can be classified under a general category of things possessing the same property. Walton (2006, p. 128) brings the following:

Example 10

All dolphins are classified as mammals. Flipper is a dolphin. Therefore, Flipper is a mammal.

As this case is based on a scientific definition, which usually means that is not subject to exceptions or borderline cases, it may be defined a valid argument. However, as Walton argues, there are cases that are subject to doubts. For instance, stating that anyone with an asset of over a million dollars is a wealthy person might be acceptable or not based on the context of its use. In some countries, possessing over a million dollars is considered being wealthy, whereas in others (e.g. Saudi Arabia), the classification would not be as acceptable, since the word “wealthy” is used on the grounds of different conditions.

2.2.5 Non-explicit dimension of argumentation

In everyday dialogues, basic elements of discourse may not be explicitly expressed, in this case, premises and conclusions are often left unstated. As Walton (2006) explains, the lack of detection or understanding of such non-explicit elements may lead to an incomplete argument, which may need to be made explicit in order to offer a basis for critically evaluating the argument as a whole. It can be assumed by the speaker that an audience will fill in the unstated premises or draw the unstated conclusions by themselves. Walton continues by saying that people might use such non-explicit language on purpose to hide their meaning. For example, an unstated premise or conclusion may be used to persuade an audience, but then later, when critically questioned, the real intent or meaning of the proposition may be denied. This technique is commonly used in political argumentation when trying to avoid taking a stance toward a previously stated commitment.

The result of using unstated premises or conclusions is a concept called presupposition. As Macagno (2018) explains, presuppositions are reconstructed as the conclusions of implicit arguments from presumptive reasoning. ‘At a logical level,

presuppositions are regarded as sentences that are evaluated against a set of pre-existing commitments and that can be accepted either as true or false' (Macagno, 2018 p.296).

As the author observes, presupposition cannot be evaluated for the following reasons: 1) because it is incomplete and, as a result, this is not a proposition, 2) because it cannot be verified on the hearer's perspective, as they do not know whether it is true or not. In the first case, the sentence turns out to be not valid. In the second case, the hearer may be able to evaluate it provisionally if this is coherent with his commitments. At a pragmatic level, presuppositions can be analyzed in terms of relationship between the audience and the proposition, that is, something already accepted by the speaker and, therefore, taken for granted.

Macagno (2018) explains that a basic condition for presuppositions consists in the possibility of accessing (identifying) the presupposed information, which means that the hearer has to be able to reconstruct what is taken for granted and link it to his knowledge or the context.

Presupposing means that the speaker is considering that a proposition is included in the hearer's common ground. The notion of "common ground" is based on the interlocutors' set of value, beliefs or knowledge (Clark, 1996; Gibbs, 1987; Kecskes & Zhang, 2013) (Macagno 2018). Thus, presupposing implies taking for granted and previously accepted the hearer's commitments, without securing its acceptance. However, a presupposition can turn out to be not accepted by the interlocutor, resulting in a false presupposition, which Macagno defines 'a disruption of the order of acceptance, and can be denied either at a logical level (assessment level –“ p is false”) or at a pragmatic level (denying the previous acceptance of the presupposition –“I have never accepted p”)' (Macagno, 2018 p.297). An unaccepted presupposition can be represented as the result of an unsound process of presumptive reasoning.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Donald Trump's Tweets

The micro-blogging platform Twitter has become an instrumental tool for political communication, not only during election campaigns, but also on a daily basis. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the character-limited medium allows politicians to have a direct channel of communication with the electorate that serves as a source for promoting and running a successful campaign. While the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections introduced Twitter as a political tool, helping Obama to engage with millions of his voters and interact with them, as well as keeping them informed about his policies and plans, the 2016 presidential elections greatly relied on the tool and exploited all its potential to run a fully internet-based campaign. This allowed Donald J. Trump to reach the American people, as well as other supporters in the world, and spread his ideas and messages to millions of individuals within minutes.

This dissertation aims at analyzing a corpus of tweets posted by Donald J. Trump, current president of the United States of America, on his Twitter profile during the 2016 election campaign, while running for presidency. The analysis is based on the argumentation theory discussed in the previous chapter; three levels of analysis were carried out on argumentative messages in order to identify the types of arguments, fallacies, and most relevant key words.

3.1 Methodology

In order to identify the factors and strategies that contributed to Donald Trump to be able to effectively appeal to the public and win the presidential elections in 2016, a corpus of tweets posted by Trump between July 21, 2016 and November 16, 2016 was

gathered to serve this purpose. This specific interval of time was selected as it is arguably the most decisive and crucial period of the campaign, which starts with the official nomination as the Republican Party's candidate on July 21, includes the three general election debates, as well as the final attempts to obtain more voters and consensus among the American people in light of the approaching election day (i.e. November 8, 2016). In total, the number of tweets gathered from the aforementioned timespan was 1287, which were manually extracted, given that the relevant data was posted on the profile more than two years ago and most available resources have limitations as to how far back they can go to facilitate collection of data.

A preliminary analysis was carried out and a number of non-argumentative tweets were excluded from the corpus based on the following exclusion criteria:

1. Tweets featuring hyperlinks to articles or content posted by others were excluded as unlikely to present an argument.
2. Tweets reproducing previous messages, including retweets (i.e. forwarding one's message, or even own's messages to followers, to support, endorse, or restate an idea), which have the purpose of reinforce an opinion rather than express an argument.
3. Tweets that express gratitude or feelings and opinions on personal matters were excluded as unlikely to contain arguments with the purpose of directing people's opinions and persuade them.

An inclusion criterion was added to abovementioned ones:

1. Are considered as argumentative the tweets that: a. include opinions or information supported by facts, namely verifiable propositions used as a premise or conclusion; b. express conclusions that are aimed at persuading the public.

The preliminary analysis of the corpus based on these criteria led to the selection of 147 tweets, representing a 11,4% of argumentative messages on a total of 1287.

3.2 Linguistic analysis

The analysis of the corpus consisted of an automatic analysis and a manual codification.

The automatic analysis was carried out through the software Sketch Engine.⁷ (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), which facilitated the identification of key words, that is, the most frequently used words in a given corpus when compared to the reference one. The reference corpus used in this research is a pre-constituted one, called English Web 2015, which represents common usage. Key words were automatically identified based on the frequency of the word or phrase in our corpus against the English Web 2015, containing more than 15 billion words. A more specific and detailed categorization was then completed, taking into account semantic properties and inferences resulting from the use of such words. Emotive words, that is, words used to support and justify value judgements or decisions, were analyzed.

The identification and analysis of emotive words was carried out as follows: first, the argumentative structure of a tweet was determined in terms of identifying the type of argument used. To do so, the tweets were analyzed according to argumentation schemes, which were described in Chapter 2. This analysis contributed to reveal the most frequently used strategies and the reasons behind the choice thereof, that is, how Trump chose to communicate certain messages to his audience. In most instances, emotive words are frequently present in statements consisting of an opinion supported or justified through a value judgement (x is acceptable, x is thought to be good on an

ethical point of view). Then, the second step consists in identifying the foundation of this moral judgment. When this judgment is based solely on the use of specific terms that admit inferences at the level of value judgments, these can be considered "emotive words." The last step consists in the analysis of the justification of the use of emotional words, which involves 3 factors.

The last step consists in the assessment of what is behind the use of emotional words, which involves 3 factors. First, it examines whether the state of affairs to which the emotional word refers to is universally shared by the audience - that is to say if there is evidence that it is not indeed shared (for example, third party information, statements in the corpus, etc.). Secondly, if there is a difference between what is assumed by the use of the term and the common ground, the dictionary definition of the term is analyzed, by comparing it with the one that emerges in the specific case. If there is a discrepancy, it is assessed whether the conditions that legitimize a classification as a persuasive definition are met (absence of an explicit redefinition in the message; sharing of the state of affairs designated by the speaker and audience), or if it is a matter of a use of a loaded word. Finally, if the first two options are negative, the inference is analyzed and it is determined whether the evaluative conclusion is commonly associated with the use of the term or instead the latter has been quasi-defined. In order to do that, examples from the reference corpus on Sketch Engine are extracted and the collocations analyzed (i.e. the context in which it is used). If the value judgments normally inferred are different from those found in the messages under analysis or rather incompatible with these, the possibility of a quasi-definition is evaluated.

3.3.1 Results – Argumentative analysis

This section will provide an overview of Donald Trump's argumentative style through the types of arguments used in his tweets in the previously mentioned time span

as well as through the fallacies identified in such arguments. A qualitative analysis will then give a more in-depth description of the strategies employed with related examples.

3.3.2 Quantitative analysis – Types of arguments

Types of argument	Occurrence	Frequency
Argument from consequences	21	14,2%
Argument from sign	17	11,5%
Argument from correlation to cause	14	9,5%
Argument from practical reasoning	13	9%
Argument from commitment	13	9%
Argument from popular opinion	5	3,4%
Argument from expert opinion	6	4%
Argument from classification	2	1,3%
Argument from popular practice	1	0,7%
Argument from analogy	1	0,7%

Table 1 – Types of arguments

As Table 1 shows, the most frequent arguments used are the ones that aim at justifying a certain decision made by the speaker as well as the ones that aim at demonstrating the eventual consequences should a course of action happen or be allowed to happen, which are arguments from consequences, correlation to cause, practical reasoning, and commitment, representing half of the arguments used. These arguments are also used to assess the desirability of the course of an action, illustrating means to achieve a goal through the use of practical reasoning. Two recurring types of arguments were also arguments from sign and arguments from commitment, occurred

17 and 13 times respectively. Although both arguments can be classified as aiming at constructing and justifying the evaluation of a character, they are used differently as will be illustrated in the following section. Finally, arguments from popular opinion, popular practice, and expert opinion, representing a less significant portion with 5%, 1%, and 6% respectively, are used to establish the acceptability of a proposition based on the quality of its source, where the speaker introduces a third-party individual who is meant to contribute to the argument by means of added knowledge and credibility.

3.3.3 Qualitative analysis – Types of arguments

The argument from consequences was one of the most frequently used along the corpus. This argument is often used in political and economic deliberations where having to decide the best course of action; it can be used both positively, following the scheme “If A, good consequences will plausibly occur. Therefore, A should be brought about”, and negatively, following “If A, bad consequences will plausibly occur. Therefore, A should not be brought about”.

Example 1

We cannot take four more years of Barack Obama and that’s what you’ll get if you vote for Hillary. #BigLeagueTruth

Example 2

A vote for Hillary Clinton is a vote for another generation of poverty high crime and lost opportunities. #ImWithYou

In this tweet, Trump is exemplifying the consequences of a certain action, voting for Hillary Clinton, in this case. The Republican candidate, at the time, was questioning the public on the desirability of the course of action and the related

consequence that would plausibly, according to his opinion, occur if Clinton were to be elected.

An interesting strategy is the use of arguments from sign (to character), representing 11,5% of cases, and commitment, representing 9% of cases. As previously mentioned, although both used to support and direct the evaluation of a character, the use of such arguments can be divided according to the purpose thereof: arguments from sign are employed to convey the idea that Hillary Clinton, and also Barack Obama in a few instances, are not capable of governing a nation due to being untrustworthy, unable to carry out presidential duties, such as negotiate deals, support laws. Therefore, such arguments are used to negatively depict the opponents as in the following example:

Example 3

Hillary is too weak to lead on border security-no solutions no ideas no credibility. She supported NAFTA worst deal in US history. #Debate

The fact that his opponent supported a deal that Trump deems as “the worst in the US history” leads to the conclusion that she is not fit to be president and be in charge of negotiating deals. On the other hand, arguments from commitment are used to provide a positive evaluation of Trump’s character and his devotion to the American people as opposed to Hillary Clinton and the Democrats, as illustrated in the following example:

Example 4

To the African-American community: The Democrats have failed you for fifty years high crime poor schools no jobs. I will fix it VOTE "T"

The correlation to cause argument, with 9,5% of frequency along the corpus, represents another interesting finding in Trump’s argumentative style. The Republican candidate used this strategy to attribute a causal link between his opponents’ actions and other facts that, however, have no proven causal relationship. As a result, most of these

arguments are fallacious and fall under the category of post hoc, as in the following example:

Example 5

Russia took Crimea during the so-called Obama years. Who wouldn't know this and why does Obama get a free pass?

Trump argues that there is a causal relationship between Obama's term and Russia taking over Crimea, when there is no plausible connection between the two events, making this a post hoc fallacy. The post hoc fallacy is committed when it is assumed that because one thing occurred after another or in the same time span, it must have occurred as a result of it. Mere temporal succession, however, does not entail causal succession. The section 3.3.4 Qualitative analysis – Fallacies will further explain this concept and the deriving implications of the use of such argument.

3.4.1 Quantitative analysis – *Fallacies*

The analysis of fallacies committed in the tweets posted reveal that poorly-constructed arguments and, as a result, presumptively manipulative, are present in almost 90% of the corpus.

Fallacy	Occurrence	Frequency
Ad hominem	92	62,6%
Post hoc	18	12,2%
Straw man	16	10,9%
Hasty Generalization	4	2,7%
False Dilemma	3	2%

Table 2 – Fallacies

As Table 2 shows, the highest occurrence along the corpus is represented by the ad hominem fallacy, with 62,6%, followed by post hoc, with 12,2%, and straw man, with 10,9%.

3.4.2 Qualitative analysis – Fallacies

As identified along the analysis, Trump tries to make his points by intentionally avoiding logic and reasonableness, relying entirely upon discrediting them as a person.

As explained in Chapter 2, section 2.2.4, two types of ad hominem attacks can be distinguished, namely direct and circumstantial. In a direct ad hominem, the attack is aimed at destroying somebody's credibility, for instance, accusing them of being a liar, reducing their argument in plausibility. Most of the ad hominem identified in Trump's tweets, around 72%, were classified as direct. On the other hand, the circumstantial ad hominem argument is used to suggest that the speaker is not following the conclusion of his own argument, making the audience doubt the speaker's underlying reasoning behind the statement. A circumstantial ad hominem can be seen in the following examples, where Trump attacks Clinton's ability of making good decision and keeping her promises, without any hidden motives:

Example 6 and 7

I have created tens of thousands of jobs and will bring back great American prosperity. Hillary has only created jobs at the FBI and DOJ!

When is the media going to talk about Hillary's policies that have gotten people killed like Libya open borders and maybe her emails?

Direct ad hominem attacks are the most frequent in the corpus as Trump seems to favour such strategy when addressing his opponents, whether they be other politicians such as Clinton and Obama, or mainstream media, such as the New York Times and the CNN.

Example 8

Hillary Clinton doesn't have the strength or the stamina to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN! #AmericaFirst

Hillary Clinton is depicted as weak and incapable of making, hence unfit to become president. Often times, the Republican candidate, currently president of the US, attacked Clinton for being corrupt, and suggested that she should be thrown into jail, following the email scandal, along with many other episodes of misconduct. Suggesting that she had engaged in criminal behavior could be as effective and persuasive over the general public, who was constantly flooded with negative inputs in relation to Clinton. Trump also frequently attacked both the media and the Clintons, for putting the interests of their friends and associates before those of 'hard-working Americans,' which implied a conflict of interest.

Example 9

Hillary Clinton should have been prosecuted and should be in jail. Instead she is running for president in what looks like a rigged election.

In the example above, Trump is appealing to the emotions of the public, alerting them that his opponents, and the person who might run the government if elected, has engaged in criminal activity, representing a danger to the nation, whose interests will come after the needs of the Clintons and their circle.

Besides directly attacking his opponents and accusing them of misconduct, Trump uses a great number of epithets, which automatically prompt a value judgement in the audience, adding to the message that Trump is already conveying through the accusation; the most known ones include “Crazy Bernie” for Bernie Sanders, “Low energy” for Jeb Bush, “Little Marco” or “Lightweight Marco” for Marco Rubio, “Lying Ted” for Ted Cruz, “Pathological” for Ben Carson, “Failing” New York Times, and, of course, “Crooked” for Hillary Clinton. By calling attention to strange, unique weaknesses of each of the candidates, Trump was able to shape the public’s perception of them, redirecting the evaluation of the people listening to or reading such pejorative epithets. The attacks are used to undermine a category of people, encompassing his opponents, and anyone that Trump does not deem fit for their role as president, candidates, TV anchor, journalist, etc., to which he wants to distinguish himself and represent the best alternative to. Through this technique, the audience is led to infer that, since Clinton is unfit to be president, the only valid alternative is Trump. This inference is grounded on the following scheme:

Either A is true or B is true. Thus, if A is true, B is false, and if B is true, A is false.

When comparing two or more items, the contrast principle is used to highlight the differences between a target item and the other item(s).

A fallacy occurs when it is assumed that the choices offered are the *only* choices. By offering a single alternative, the listener is given the impression that other choices do not exist. Another fallacy occurs where it is assumed that the two alternatives are mutually exclusive. This means that if one has a particular characteristic, the other is assumed not to have any of this characteristic.

However, although these attacks and epithets carry a value judgement and are intended to direct people’s vision of a certain state of affairs, they rely merely on

unshared presuppositions, which represent a common pattern in Trump's argumentative style.

Example 10

Crooked Hillary's V.P. pick said this morning that I was not aware that Russia took over Crimea. A total lie - and taken over during Obama term!

Since presuppositions are seen as statements that are evaluated against a set of pre-existing commitments and judgements, by associating the emotive term "crooked" to Clinton's name, Trump presupposes that Hillary Clinton being corrupt is part of the common ground, it is an established fact, and the audience shares the same belief, which is a value judgement that lacks any justification, since no proof is provided of such affirmation and negative moral judgement. The presupposition places a proposition in the interlocutors' common ground (Macagno 2018), who are associated to a judgement that was never accepted or shared by them.

In Trump's tweets, the post hoc fallacy, which accounts for 12,2% of the total, was found to rely on the same principle of false presuppositions. Post hoc, as well as False dilemma fallacy, are generalizations used within an argument as a conclusion of incorrect reasoning from correlation to cause and hasty generalizations, used to draw several types of conclusions. These conclusions are, however, not valid as based on unshared presuppositions as found in the analysis of the corpus.

Take as examples the following:

Example 11

Look how bad it is getting! How much more crime how many more shootings will it take for African-Americans and Latinos to vote Trump=SAFE!

Trump used an argument from consequence, suggesting that voting for him will bring positive consequences, namely that crime will decrease. However, this is also a post hoc fallacy based on an unshared presupposition: Trump suggests that Democrats have allowed crime to spread among the African-Americans and Latinos. This presupposes that crime rate has been increasing during the Democrats term and that it is particularly high in the minorities. The entire argument is not based on common ground as there is no proof advanced to support the statement and to proceed as if it were a shared idea.

Example 12

Heroin overdoses are taking over our children and others in the MIDWEST.
Coming in from our southern border. We need strong border and WALL!

Trump is advancing an argument from correlation to cause, connecting the overdose incidents to drugs entering the country with illegal immigrants. Firstly, this presupposes that there is an increase in drug-related incidents and that these are directly related to immigration, one of most debated issues during Trump's campaign.

Example 13

We are going to make this a government of the people once again!
#MakeAmericaGreatAgain #ImWithYou

Finally, this statement is a further example of an argument relying on an unshared ground. Trump conveys the idea that the government was taken away from the people and he will need to work towards the goal of giving it back to the people. Also the false dilemma fallacy, which is not as common as the abovementioned ones, with about 2% of frequency, relies on incorrect reasoning deriving from a generalization and is based on unshared presuppositions as the following example:

Example 14

Drugs are pouring into this country. If we have no border we have no country.
That's why ICE endorsed me. #Debate #BigLeagueTruth

Another example of improper presupposition can be noticed in the following example of argument from analogy.

Example 15

Well Iran has done it again. Taken two of our people and asking for a fortune for their release. This doesn't happen if I'm president!

The adverb “again” presupposes that the event described in the tweet has happened in the past and such event presents the features of the present one (using an argument from analogy). First of all, Trump takes for granted that the public is informed about the incident he is referring to (Iran hostage crisis in 1979, in which militants in Iran seized 66 American citizens at the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held 52 of them hostage for more than a year.), which is the first use of improper presupposition. Secondly, the analogy represents in this case an unshared presupposition as the two events cannot be compared to the release of prisoners under Obama administration in 2016. D. Trump assumes that the audience shares his point of view on the matter, although there is no indication or proof advancing that it is a shared stance.

When describing strategies deriving from generalizations, it is worth noting the fallacy of hasty generalization, which is exemplified in the following tweet:

Example 16

Wow just came out on secret tape that Crooked Hillary wants to take in as many Syrians as possible. We cannot let this happen - ISIS!

By stating that America should not let Syrian refugee into the country, and associating the word ISIS, Trump commits the fallacy of hasty generalization. This is because Trump considers that 100% of refugees from Syria, who are Muslims, are criminals, aim at destroying the country and have bad intentions.

The idea is based on an inductive syllogism suggesting:

Premise: People committing terror attacks are Muslims

Premise 2: Refugees from Syria are Muslims

Conclusion: All people who are Muslims from Syria must be terrorists from ISIS.

Finally, the straw man strategy was also one of the most common fallacy identified in the corpus. Straw man strategy is intended to deliberately distort the interlocutor's point of view, in order to make a point in favor of the speaker.

Example 17

Crooked Hillary wants to take your 2nd Amendment rights away. Will guns be taken from her heavily armed Secret Service detail? Maybe not!

Distorting somebody else's point of view is rather common in politics, where candidates may want to reformulate statements and conveying them differently to the audience than the original message as this can favor them. As shown in the example 15, Trump argues that Hillary Clinton plans on "taking the 2nd Amendment right away" from people, when, in fact, her vision is rather different. She aims at having a comprehensive, universal background check legislation, repealing civil immunity for gun manufacturers, and banning assault weapons, as well as preventing severely

mentally ill and domestic abusers from buying guns¹. It becomes clear that this strategy is employed to manipulate words of the opponents and persuade the public into believing that a certain person actually uttered those words.

3.5.1 Quantitative analysis – Key words and emotive words

This portion of the analysis was carried out both manually, which consisted in identifying the usage of loaded words, persuasive definitions, and quasi-definitions, and automatically, which consisted in the identification of key words and most frequent terms in the corpus. Keywords are words typical of the focus corpus in contrast to a reference corpus, more specifically, “word that occurs with unusual frequency in a given text [...] by comparison with a reference corpus of some kind” (Scott 1997, p. 236). Therefore, a word or lemma is considered positively key if its frequency in the study corpus is unusually high (Scott, 2010). Emotive words represent roughly 67% of the key words automatically extracted by the software, with 56,6% of negatively connoted words and 10,4% of positively connoted words. The term that presents the highest score in the corpus is “crooked”, with a score of 7.382,890 and a frequency of 42, followed by “failing”, “dishonest”, “unfit”, “radical”, “disaster”, “honest”, “illegal”, “terrorist”, “Islamic” or “Islam”. The words “crooked”, “failing”, “dishonest”, and “unfit” are loaded words (or question begging epithets) that imply a negative value judgement which, however, cannot be justified with valid arguments. The terms “terrorist”, “Islamic”, “radical”, “illegal” are used as pejoratives and their connotation (i.e. an idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal meaning) is

¹ <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/14/11922924/hillary-clinton-gun-control> accessed on March 12, 2019 –

Matthews, D. August 10, 2016

deliberately directed by placing the terms in contexts where a negative value judgement is the only outcome possible, for instance, “illegal immigration”, “radical Islamic terrorism”.

Terms that evoke positive value judgements, such as “honest” and “hard-working”, were also identified in the corpus as having a high keyness score as well as high frequency. Nevertheless, as no reasoning to support the conclusion is provided, these are once again merely presuppositions. In this particular case, Trump uses honest and hard-working to modify “people” and “supporters”, that is, his supporters are honest people as well as hard-working as opposed to everyone else, which gives rise to a false dilemma.

3.5.2 Qualitative analysis – Ethical words (loaded words, pejorative terms)

As Stevenson noticed, the so-called “ethical words” words (including slurs, pejorative and loaded words) are connected with and used to produce emotions and responses.

As previously described, loaded words (or question begging epithets) consist of biased language used to support a conclusion that is logically unproved. The idea is to persuade someone using biased language rather than logic. Trump uses “crooked” in 42 instances, all associated to Hillary Clinton to instill the idea that Hillary Clinton is not fit for the role of President of the United States enhancing a lack of credibility towards his opponent. The term “failing” occurs 7 times in relation to the New York Times, “dishonest” also was identified 7 times, associated in all instances to the media, and “bad” occurs 15 times, where 10 times is associated to judgement, always referring to Clinton’s “bad judgment”, and 5 times in association to other nouns such as “bad deals”, “bad decisions” attributed to different characters (e.g. Obama, other opponents).

The epithets “crooked”, “failing”, and “dishonest” are ultimately fallacious as Trump does not provide any backing proof of the message he is trying to convey. At no point he uses logically-constructed arguments to support the conclusions that the audience will be inferring when such terms are employed.

As described in Chapter 2, section 2.2.3, besides the use of loaded words, the speaker can manipulate or redirect the interlocutor’s attitude towards a state of affairs by means of redefinition of the “descriptive meaning” or the “emotive meaning” of the ethical word used to refer to it (Stevenson 1938). In the first case, the ethical term is “persuasively defined,” in the second case, “quasi-defined.”

3.5.3 Qualitative analysis – *Quasi-definitions*

An example of both quasi-definition and persuasive definition were identified in the corpus. Let us take into consideration the quasi-definition of the phrase “politically correct” in the following tweet:

Example 18

With Hillary and Obama the terrorist attacks will only get worse. Politically correct fools won't even call it what it is - RADICAL ISLAM!

The strategy of quasi-definition is more complex as it is not an ordinary definition aimed at describing the meaning of a term, but it consists in the re-contextualization of an emotive term. The strategy used in the example above is the modification of the traditional context of the word; “politically correct” is not redefined, but rather manipulated in terms of inferences that can derive from the use. “Politically correct” has acquired a new connotation throughout Trump’s campaign. The traditional meaning of the phrase “politically correct” is “conforming to a belief that language and practices

which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated”, or also “agreeing with the idea that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people”².

Therefore, the term is not commonly perceived as derogatory, however, the Republican candidate has modified the inferences usually drawn through the use in specific contexts. In this specific example (example 18), Trump states that not addressing the problem and especially not calling the issue by its real name, “radical Islam”, will only prevent America from tackling and solving this crucial problem. Therefore, being “politically correct” means being hypocrite and being exposed to further dramatic consequences. According to the way Trump uses it, “Political correctness” also means being unable to make a firm decision and act accordingly, in order to prevent further attacks on the American people (Macagno et al. forthcoming).

“Political correctness” seems to be used to avoid getting involved in problematic issues, even to the detriment of the whole country, to pursue one’s own interest. All the negative inferences of the new emotional meaning of “politically correct”, with the association of ideas such as injustice and danger, can enhance emotional response as rage and indignation in the audience.

3.5.4 Qualitative analysis – *Persuasive definitions*

The same example mentioned in the previous section can be used to exemplify the identification of a persuasive definition in the term “radical Islam”, which can also be encountered in a number of different forms: “radical Islamic terrorism”, “radical Islamic terrorists”. Trump, and the Republicans, have condemned the political world’s

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct>

avoidance of “radical Islam”, arguing that not properly assessing the situation exposes the United States of America, and the rest of the Western world, to this threat. Trump speaks of radicalism rooted in the religion of Islam, which is implicitly redefined as a radical religion, shifting the perception of the public towards the concept of both religion and terrorism. There is no such thing as a religion that is radical; instead of regarding it as extremism deriving from a clash within the Islamic civilization, Trump and his party view it as militant religiosity. The phrase inaccurately implies that groups such as ISIS represent the entirety of the Muslim religion and “misidentifies the cause of the problem as one of Islamic theology rather than the series of complex political and social factors that actually produce it”³. Therefore, the traditional meaning of religion (“a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices”⁴) becomes strictly associated with radicalism and terrorism, sparking controversial opinions and emotional response of those who follow Trump’s statements.

3.6 Conclusion

Twitter has become a tool for sharing personal content as well as for political propaganda (Sclafani 2018).

However, character limitation can play an instrumental role when it comes to conveying messages relevant for politics, whether that be expressing a point of view or supporting a particular policy. As illustrated along this chapter, arguments may rely exclusively on unshared presuppositions, that is, a common ground that is taken for granted when communicating a message to the audience. Although the analysis faced

³ <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/8/14/16143634/trump-charlottesville-white-supremacy-terrorism-islamism> - Zach Beauchamp, August 14, 2017 [accessed March 12, 2019]

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion>

limitations in terms of the complexity of the methodology, which comprised three different types of classification, and in terms of the extension of the corpus, limited to a specific time span and to a non-comparative analysis, conclusions can be drawn from the data. Well-constructed and reasonable arguments represent a minority of the messages when compared to the high number of manipulative arguments advanced by the Republican candidate. The data shows that Trump committed logical fallacies in 90,4% of the tweets posted between July 21, 2016 and November 16, 2016, which indicates that most of the messages communicated to the public were intended to manipulate and deliberately direct people's interest and judgement towards what was deemed to be the most favorable towards the ultimate goal, that is, winning the elections.

In terms of arguments, Trump greatly relies on practical reasoning and arguments from consequences, with the intent of demonstrating what is the most effective way to reach a certain goal and what the relevant consequences, positive or negative, are. In addition, a great number of arguments from commitment and sign were identified, mainly when Trump's purpose was to direct and support character evaluation in terms of trustworthiness, credibility, and dedication to the American people, as well as evaluation of state of affairs in terms of policies and opponents' stances.

The analysis of the fallacies revealed a consistent use of aggressive language towards his opponents intended to heighten the emotions of the audience by targeting people with personal attacks, that is, with the purpose of undermining their credibility and capabilities (e.g. doubting Hillary Clinton ability to be president). A relevant feature identified in the corpus was the constant, and mostly improper, use of unshared presuppositions, ideas taken for granted as being part of the common ground and beliefs. Trump uses strategies such as straw man, post hoc, and false dilemma to manipulate messages that, as a result, rely on such unshared presuppositions.

Redefinitions and epithets are a further strategy employed to manipulate the language in terms of changing common meanings and connotation of prototypical inferences.

Emotive words, that is, words carrying a strong value judgment, are capable of directing the audience towards a desired point of view, without requiring any justification or arguments supporting such judgement. The use of loaded words was a salient characteristic of Trump's posts, which featured negatively connoted words (e.g. crazy, disastrous, poison, invasion, devastating, liar, crooked, abusive) in 56,6% of cases.

Throughout his campaign, Trump relied on emotion-provoking narrative, based on what Aristotle referred to as pathos, elevating emotional appeal over rational ones.

Conclusion

As outlined in the Introduction, the main objective of this dissertation has been the construction of Donald Trump linguistic profile, based on the theory of argumentation. A review of existing literature was provided in relation to key concepts, in order to establish a theoretical frame in relation to persuasive discourse analysis in politics. The following hypotheses were addressed and verified:

- The Internet changed political communication allowing candidates to voice their messages directly to the public, without filters of traditional media.
- The micro-blogging platform Twitter played a crucial role in Trump's election in terms of conveying the message in an immediate and effective way.
- Donald Trump appealed to the public by leveraging on emotive words, which have the power to influence and alter people's perception of reality.

The validation of such hypotheses was facilitated by a multi-level analysis carried out on a corpus of tweets, posted between July 21, 2016 and November 16, 2016, arguably the most significant time span for Trump to win the trust of the electorate. As previously explained, the analysis included the identification of argumentative schemes, which were thoroughly illustrated in Chapter 2, used by the Republican candidate throughout his campaign. Additionally, emotive words (i.e. words carrying values and propelling a certain perception of reality) were identified and their positive or negative value in the context they are put in, as opposed to the traditional collocation, was assessed. The identification of fallacies committed by Trump followed the aforementioned analysis, which completed the overview that enabled us to elaborate our results.

Although the analysis faced limitations in terms of the complexity of the methodology, which comprised three different types of classification, and in terms of the extension of

the corpus, limited to a specific time span and to a non-comparative analysis, conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Well-constructed and reasonable arguments represent a minority of the messages when compared to the high number of manipulative arguments advanced by the Republican candidate. The data showed a stunningly majority of manipulative messages posted between July 21, 2016 and November 16, 2016. In terms of arguments, Trump greatly relied on practical reasoning and arguments from consequences, with the intent of demonstrating what is the most effective way to reach a certain goal and what the relevant consequences, positive or negative, are. It is worth noting that Trump, although ran a mainly emotion-driven campaign, also relied on ethos, which Aristotle identified as the means of convincing an audience of the credibility of the persuader. An important feature of credibility is to appear to have the audience's best interest in mind by sharing, understanding, and amplifying their cultural values. A great number of arguments from commitment and sign were identified, supporting our previous hypothesis in relation to the relevance of ethos in Trump's tweets. On the one hand, arguments from commitment aimed at directing and supporting Trump's character evaluation in terms of trustworthiness, credibility, and dedication to the American people, as well as evaluation of state of affairs in terms of policies and opponents' stances. Thus, they would favour his personality as the best choice for the presidency. On the other hand, arguments from sign were mainly employed to prove the inadequacy of his opponents and her circle of people, including the predecessor, Barack Obama.

The analysis of the fallacies revealed a consistent use of aggressive language towards his opponents intended to heighten the emotions of the audience by targeting people with personal attacks, that is, with the purpose of undermining, once again, their credibility and capabilities (e.g. doubting Hillary Clinton ability to be president). A

relevant feature identified in the corpus was the constant, and mostly improper, use of unshared presuppositions, ideas taken for granted as being part of the common ground and beliefs. Trump uses strategies such as straw man, post hoc, and false dilemma to manipulate messages that, as a result, rely on such unshared presuppositions.

Redefinitions and epithets are a further strategy employed to manipulate the language in terms of changing common meanings and connotation of prototypical inferences.

Furthermore, the use of loaded words was a salient characteristic of Trump's posts, which featured negatively connoted words (e.g. crazy, disastrous, poison, invasion, devastating, liar, crooked, abusive) in 56,6% of cases, with the result of directing the audience towards a desired point of view, without requiring any justification or arguments supporting such judgement. In conclusion, Donald Trump used a combination of pathos and ethos to achieve public consensus, while hardly relying on logos, to the extent that he was defined as a demagogue ("political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people, rather than by using rational argument"), being an "[...] energetic and charismatic speaker who can be entertaining and ingratiating with his audiences." (Healy and Haberman, 2015).

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