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COMMUNICATIVE SILENCE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY ON AMERICAN AND UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES

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Abstract. The study assumes that political communication techniques and strategies are manifested at a presidential debate. Its format plays one of the key roles in choosing the tactic of the speech presentation, namely the use of silence. Thus, the paper focuses on the communicative aspect of silence manifested in interpersonal relationships and political communication. Extra-long juncture pauses serve as a conflict or confrontation trigger, sparking offensive responses by the opponent.

Key words: political debate, silence effect, conflict trigger, pause, speech.

Listen to silence. It has so much to say.
Rumi

1. Introduction

Politics has always been one of the most controversial spheres of human existence. Ronald Reagan once mentioned, "it has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first" (Hanska 2012: 122). It has always evoked interest among scholars who have actively carried out research analyzing political debates (Auer 1962; Hart & Jarvis 1997; Hellweg et al. 1992; McKinney & Carlin 2004; Pfau 1984), the image and charisma of a politician expressed in media (Martynyuk & Meleshchenko 2019; Petlyuchenko & Chernyakova 2019; Stashko et. al. 2020), rhetoric and politics (Glenn 2004; Gronbeck 2004), and prosodic organization of political speeches (Polieieva & Vasik 2020). The analysis of the recorded speech plays a central role in discourse studies and remains open to investigation for the reason that silence and the profound effect it exerts on the interlocutor has always captured the attention of linguists (Анохіна 2008; Jensen 1976; Jones 2011; Tissi 2000; Wainberg 2017). The innovative aspect of this

study stems from the hypothesis that the silence effect can be regarded as a conflict or confrontation trigger (Panasenko et al. 2018). In this context, the ultimate aim of the paper is to analyze the pauses in the political speeches and prove their conflicting cross-cultural potential.

The paper is organized in the following way: the Introduction gives an overview of the related articles, sets the aim of this research article, shedding light on its novel nature and describing its structure. Section 2 presents the background of the silence effect, signifies the role of pauses in political speech, and briefly discusses the state-of-the-art in political campaign debates. Next, the choice of material, as well as methods, are described in Section 3. Ultimately, Section 4 contains the results of our phonetic experiment with the following discussion. The research is concluded in Section 5.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Televised political campaign debates

The earliest comprehensive and critical debate analysis goes back to the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates (Auer 1962). Since then, interest in debate theory among scholars has awakened (maybe grown or awakened) (Hart & Jarvis 1997; Hellweg et al. 1992) and significantly rekindled over the last decade (Kaid et al. 2000; McKinney & Carlin 2004; McKinney & Warner 2013), increasing various approaches to argumentation and debate theory. Primarily, one needs to clarify what a political debate is from the functional point of view. Having analyzed the existing definitions suggested by Auer (1962), McKinney and Carlin (2004), and following Chaffe's (1978) top three motivations that viewers cite for watching debates, one can assume that a political debate is campaign communication in the form of a dialogue composed of a series of arguments that enables the viewers to learn about candidates' issue positions, compare their personalities, and acquire information to make their voting decision.

2.1.1 Debate formats

To answer the question of whether debate format matters to the public, one needs to resort to debate scholars McKinney and Carlin claiming that "the central issue every four years surrounding our presidential debates seems to be *what type* of debates we will have rather than *if* debates will take place at all" (2004: 220). This statement proves a pivotal role of a debate format.

Nevertheless, the design and practice of presidential debates have been altered to a great extent since the 1960s.

McKinney and Carlin (2004: 205-228) suggest the following classification of debates:

- a) debates with a panel of journalists *vs* debates with a single moderator;
- b) Town Hall debates *vs* policy expert debates;
- c) debates that facilitate candidates' clash *vs* debates without candidates' clash;
- d) the more formal podium debate *vs* the more conversational chat debate;
- e) presidential debate *vs* non-presidential (vice-presidential) debate;
- f) primary *vs* final debates;
- g) domestic *vs* international debates.

Several studies on presidential debate format reveal that the format itself produces different effects on communication outcomes (Gronbeck 2004; Pfau 1984). Similarly, it influences candidates' speaking styles and language choices (Hart & Jarvis 1997) and the debate content (Kaid et al. 2000).

2.1.2 Debate content

Debate dialogue is a predominant form of campaign communication. Hence, it possesses its specific features. Generalizations of the scientific literature on this issue (McKinney & Carlin 2004; Pfau 1984) have led us to two related domains: the presence of verbal and visual/nonverbal content.

The analysis of verbal content encompasses campaign issues of debate discussions, candidates' arguments, their development, candidates' interaction patterns, clash and attack strategies, forms and functions of their responses, and the overall language style (McKinney & Carlin 2004).

Alternatively, the visual message is paramount since voters encounter these authoritative communication events first and foremost as a televised experience. Moreover, we cannot agree with the pettiness of the visual part of the message that was once claimed by Hellweg et al., mentioning that "the visual component of television communication dwarfs the verbal dimension" (1992: 73). The analysis of the visual content comprises the examination of camera presentation: screen composition, more advantageous camera angles, split screens, different screen graphics, shot switching, even/uneven camera treatment for the candidates, close-up shots, quick shot-cutting, the rapidity of shot switching, candidates' nonverbal behaviours in debate (smiling shots, eye contact, etc.), and the comparison of both contents (McKinney & Carlin 2004: 218-219).

Yet one more component – the auditory one – is worth investigating. Intonation, which includes the melody of the voice, its loudness, and the speech tempo, is a powerful identity marker. Intonation has several functions (attitudinal, grammatical, focusing, discourse [cohesive], psychological), the indexical one comes to the fore in this context. Wells states that:

"Just as with other pronunciation features, intonation may act as a marker of personal or social identity. What makes mothers sound like mothers, lovers sound like lovers, lawyers sound like lawyers, clergymen sound like clergymen, newsreaders sound like newsreaders, officials sound like officials? Partly, their characteristic intonation" (2006: 11).

The potential for the strategic use of different prosodic means cannot be underestimated. Therefore, analysis of presidential debates in terms of their auditory content appears to be on the rise.

2.1.3 Debate effects

Empirical debate research has flourished over the past six decades. One of the critical issues contemporary linguists address is the functional capacity of debates or their influence on the audience.

Debates are considered to be beneficial under four conditions: (1) when at least one of the candidates is relatively unknown, (2) when voters have not still made their decision, (3) when the race appears close, and (4) when party allegiances are incapacitated (McKinney & Carlin 2004: 210).

In general, all debate effects can be classified into four categories: behavioural, cognitive, candidate image evaluation, and latent effects.

Behavioural effect: debates help the viewers who have not made up their minds to form their voting preference or change candidate selection;

Cognitive effect: debates are considered to facilitate viewers' acquisition of issue knowledge;

Candidate image evaluation effect: debates may influence viewers' perception of a candidate's character or image traits;

Latent effect: debates may activate citizens' various civic and democratic tendencies, promoting civic engagement and strengthening the electoral process (ibid., 212-213).

2.2 Silence as a form of communication

We can notice the heterogeneous character of studies on silence by examining the phenomenon's key definitions and classifications as provided in the scientific literature (Анохіна 2008; Jensen 1976; Jones 2011; Tissi 2000; Wainberg 2017). Given this, silence has been studied in different domains: *philosophical, psychological, artistic, and linguistic*. The interest of *modern linguistics* is predominantly focused on the study of communicative silence as part of nonverbal communication, which is often closely related to verbal.

Anthropological literature offers varied examples that silence is socially constructed. That is, certain human groups are noisy and emotional. Others, on the contrary, are discreet and modest (Clair 2003;

Jones 2011). Moreover, silence is culturally determined. In Japan, it is accepted behaviour and has even been institutionalized, compared with most Western societies where it is to be avoided. Supporting this statement, Trudgill mentions:

"There are even 'rules' about silence. It has been said that, in a conversation between two English speakers who are not close friends, a silence of longer than four seconds is not allowed (which means that people become embarrassed if nothing is said after that time – they feel obliged to say something, even if it is only a remark about the weather.)" (2000: 244).

Correspondingly, Americans are reported to be uncomfortable with long periods of silence, which are regarded as dead time or the moment of awkwardness on radio and television (Clair 2003: 2).

There are different approaches to silence classification. Based on the functions silence performs and the register it is used in, Anokhina (Анохіна 2008) singled out such types of silence as tactical, status, religious, ritual, mystical, esoteric, national, and psychological. According to Wainberg (2017), there are 15 types of silence: obsequious, traumatic, sacred, taboo, coerced, phobic, historical, introspective, tactical, polite, therapeutic, rhetorical, prosodic, complicit, and political silence.

2.3 The notion of pause in political discourse

Traditionally, a pause has been regarded as a complete stop of phonation, i.e., a break in speaking, a brief silence in the acoustic signal (Goldman-Eisler 1958; Polieieva & Vasik 2020; Zellner 1994: 43). Since pauses are more easily perceived if they last around 200-250 ms, this duration is regarded as the standard auditory threshold for the perception of a pause (Zellner 1994: 44). However, contemporary linguists have further significantly extended the essence of pausation in spontaneous speech. Cenkova (1989), e.g., introduced a new definition of a pause. Therefore, it is not an interruption in the flow of speech but a significant variation in intonation and rhythm or even the juxtaposition of two semantically independent items. Given this, the existing taxonomy of pauses can be quite heterogeneous. From a descriptive point of view, two classifications of pauses are accepted (Zellner 1994: 42). The first one is a physical and linguistic categorization, and the second one is a psychological and psycholinguistic classification. In this study, the categorization suggested by Magno Caldognetto et al. (1982) and later elaborated by Tissi (2000) is taken as a starting point. Studying typology, distribution, and duration of pauses in spontaneous speech, they concluded that pauses fall into two categories: the first one includes proper pauses (initial, juncture, and clause-internal pauses), whereas the second one embraces filled pauses, parenthetical remarks, repetitions, corrections, and false starts. In terms of the length, pauses are divided into brief (< 200 ms), short (220-500 ms), average (520-800 ms), long (820-1200 ms), and extra-long (> 1200 ms) (Забужанська

2016: 71). The current study does not include the analysis of physiologically inevitable pauses, i.e., those that generally occur during the inspiration phase of respiration and focuses primarily on those which are the external reflection of some of the cognitive processes involved in speech production (Goldman-Eisler 1958; Zellner 1994).

Numerous works on the importance of prosodic means in different types of discourse (Забужанська 2016; Polieieva & Vasik 2020) have generally strengthened the opinion that pauses are used as a powerful rhetoric strategy. They "amplify emotional impact of the utterance on the audience by acting as certain regulators between the addresser and the addressee" (Polieieva & Vasik 2020: 295). In this context, the research conducted by Petlyuchenko and Chernyakova (2019) revealed that pauses along with the set of kinetic-mimic means are involved in the expressive highlighting of the essential segments. Consequently, skillfully structured political speeches and adequate social behaviour contribute to creating the president's image (Stashko et al. 2020).

3. Material and methods

The three-step coherent methodology offered a tool to conduct this phonetic research. The aforementioned three successive stages included selecting the material, acoustic analysis, and the linguistic interpretation of the obtained results. Considering that the speeches in two languages (English and Ukrainian) were under analysis and to provide accurate resulting material, we focused more on acoustic analysis. This strategy is reinforced by Abassi, who claims that "acoustic research of speech provides a scientific method for conducting an objective analysis of speech sounds by measuring the physical properties and their acoustic realizations" (2018: 50). Thus, such computer programs as Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2021) and Speech analyzer (2022) were used to conduct the research, Praat being the most famous program used by phoneticians. It allows exercising multi-level markup of speech, including the construction of oscillograms and intonograms.

The material under investigation consisted of speeches by American and Ukrainian presidents during presidential debates. The corpus consisted of 2 debates produced by American presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump and Ukrainian presidents Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Petro Poroshenko. The total duration of the analyzed speeches is 3 hours 1 minute 43 seconds (Biden and Trump debate – 1 hour 32 minutes 10 seconds and Poroshenko and Zelenskyy debate – 1 hour 29 minutes 33 seconds). The communicative situation in which each political speech occurred was defined according to Hymes' model or SPEAKING Grid (1962):

Setting/Scene: time, place, physical circumstances;

Participants: speakers and hearers of different identities or categories;

- Ends:** goals and purposes of a communicative event;
- Act sequence:** format and order of parts of the communicative event;
- Key:** tone, manner, or spirit of a communicative act;
- Instrumentalities:** forms and styles of speech;
- Norms:** social rules or norms governing the event;
- Genre:** the kind or type of communicative event.

The constructed model helps to understand the society and culture of an ethnic group through the communication process. Its justification as related to the debates in question can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The justification of the material within Hymes' SPEAKING Grid (1962)

№	SPEAKING Model	Details of the findings	
		American debate	Ukrainian debate
1	Setting/Scene	Live broadcast; Belmont University Hall	Live broadcast; The National Sports Complex Olimpiyskiy – the main sports and cultural arena of Ukraine
2	Participants	Presidential candidates (male, American), live studio audience who promised to remain silent and not to interrupt	Presidential candidates (male, Ukrainian), politicians, activists, spectators and viewers, direct interaction with the audience
3	Ends	The overall purpose of the studied debates was to bring about behavioural and candidate image evaluation effect	
4	Act sequence	Alternating rebuttals and a questioning period follow the constructive speeches at the beginning	
5	Key	Sarcastic tones; formal, contentious manner	
6	Instrumentalities	A totally oral channel, a formal register	
7	Norms	General rules of the debate (Musgrave 1957)	
8	Genre	debate	

The program also postulated the determination of the pause ratio, which is generally calculated by the following formula

$$K_p = \frac{t\Sigma_1}{t\Sigma_2},$$

where K_p – is the pause ratio,

$t\Sigma_1$ – is the total length of the speech including pauses,

$t\Sigma_2$ – is the total length of the speech excluding pauses.

The number of pauses was calculated by hand, while their length – with the help of the Praat program by analyzing the oscillograms and measuring the physical property of pauses.

It is generally accepted that the pause ratio is equal to one when speaking without pauses, while an increase in the number of pauses leads to an increase in the pause ratio (Забужанська 2016: 71).

4. Results and discussion

Let us carry out a more detailed inspection of the pause ratio of the given speeches. Biden and Trump's (Final 2020 presidential debate..., *s.a.*) final domestic presidential debate was conducted formally with a single moderator facilitating the candidates' clash.

The debate opened with a provocative question concerning the fight against the coronavirus pandemic – the topic the American public cares most about. It is common knowledge that the pandemic influenced all spheres of people's lives (Matvienko et al. 2021) and is daily reported in media (Panasenکو et al. 2020). Accordingly, the candidates could answer the question of how they would lead the country during the next COVID-19 spikes within 2 minutes uninterrupted.

Donald Trump was the first to answer the question. His oration is overloaded with pauses, in particular filled ones (*Ah, eh*). The pause ratio of his speech is 1.1. Moreover, not wishing to pause Trump resorts to such disfluencies as his interruptions (repetitions, corrections, and false starts). That can be seen in the following examples (1-3):

- (1) *We are fighting it. We are fighting it hard.*
- (2) *We have a problem. There is a worldwide problem. A worldwide problem.*
- (3) *We are rounding the turn. We are rounding the corner.*

Conversely, according to the abovementioned formula, Biden's pause ratio is 1.5, which means that pauses occupy 30% of the total duration of his speech. The analysis of oscillograms elucidates that the speaker frequently makes extra-long pauses (lasting more than 1200 ms), especially after mentioning the numbers related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is exemplified by the following statements (4-7) (/ – a short pause; /// – an extra-long pause):

- (4) *220,000 Americans dead ///.*
- (5) *And what we have is / thousands of deaths a day ///.*
- (6) *70,000 new cases per day ///.*
- (7) *The expectations are we are going to have another 200,000 Americans dead ///.*

With the help of these pauses, Biden intends, first and foremost, to reach the viewers' minds in terms of the threat COVID-19 imposes on the population. The detailed analysis reveals that the speaker is not afraid of loitering away his time when answering the moderator's first question. One can assume that, in general, reasonable arguments with long juncture pauses serve to create an image of a confident politician.

The empirical data also provides evidence that Biden often refers to both emotional pauses and pauses in selecting text blocks. He uses them so skillfully that these pauses become a trigger to irritate the opponent. After almost every one of these pauses, Trump commences interrupting his opponent. In this case, he looks unprofessional because of not following the established order of debate. The following example (8) demonstrates that Biden pauses at every word, which annoys the current president.

(8) *He / has / no / plan / for healthcare.*

The tactics of using pauses to highlight text blocks helps J. Biden appeal to the voters:

(9) *The American people should speak. You should go out and vote. You are in voting now. Vote and let your senators know how strongly you feel.*

However, Trump interrupts again, as if he feels the need to fill every pause in his opponent's speech. At the end of this passage, Biden decides to ridicule Trump's intemperance and makes a sarcastic remark:

(10) *That was a really productive segment, weren't it? Keep yapping, man.*

Analysing the debates materials between Trump and Biden, one can see that Trump's speech is not full of pauses in contrast to his opponent's oration. Most of Trump's pauses are emotional. Therefore, this politician deliberately avoids a hesitant pause to look confident and strong. He often praises himself, and this is where the emotional type of pause comes in handy:

(11) *Dr. Fauci said: President Trump / saved / thousands of lives. Many of you, a Democrat governor, said: President Trump did a phenomenal job!*

This trick does not go unnoticed: Biden bursts out laughing in response to express his disapproval and contempt for Trump. For his part, Trump shows his contempt for Biden through harsh criticism of his education, the quality of which he questions. Trump claims that Biden graduated from college with "the lowest or almost lowest score of all". Again, he uses an emotional pause to ridicule Biden's mental abilities:

(12) Did you use the word smart !?... uhh... So you said you went to Delaware State, but you forgot the name of your college. You didn't go to Delaware state. You graduated either the lowest or almost the lowest in your class. Don't ever use the word "smart" with me.

As regards the Ukrainian presidency, presented by Poroshenko and Zelenskyy in this paper, one cannot but mention their famous debates at the Olympic Stadium in Kyiv, Ukraine, in April 2019 (Головні дебати країни..., *s.a.*). The debate was final with two moderators and had the same structure as the aforementioned debate between the American politicians. Zelenskyy was the first to conduct a five-minute speech uninterrupted. The analysis of the pausal organization of his speech reveals that the politician is a skilled orator since he uses different types of pauses. Moreover, the pause ratio is 1.8, which means silent pauses occupy 49% of his speech. The speaker provides some arguments for the audience and gives the audience the time to digest the information. Therefore, his pauses are extra-long ranging from two to five seconds. The following examples demonstrate the use of emphatic intra-syntagm pauses (13) and juncture pauses (14):

(13) Ukr. – "Чи міг би я колись уявити, що я /// простий хлопець /// з Кривого рогу /// буду боротися /// за крісло президента /// проти людини, /// яку ми впевнено /// і беззаперечно /// обрали президентом в 2014 році ///." [Eng. – "Could I ever imagine that I, /// a simple guy /// from Kryvyi Rih ///, will fight /// for the presidency /// against a man /// whom we have confidently /// and unquestionably /// elected president in 2014 ///."];

(14) Ukr. – "Я сам був за пана Порошенка. /// Але я помилився. /// Ми помилилися ///." [Eng. – "I myself was for Mr. Poroshenko. /// But I was wrong. /// We were wrong ///."].

As to Poroshenko's five-minute uninterrupted speech, it has a completely different pausal organization. Though he is regarded as a trained and even skilled orator, who is aware of the importance of making pauses and the effect the silence can produce on the voters, the reaction of the audience prevents him from making use of silence as a form of communication. At the beginning, the pause ratio of his speech is 1.5, which means that pauses occupy 30% of his speech. However, he fails to make completely silent pauses as whenever he is silent, the audience is not. Consequently, the

voters fill this silence with the exclamation "Ганьба!" ("Shame on you!"). That forces the politician to accelerate his tempo. As a result, the pause ratio in the middle and at the end of the speech equals 1.

The results obtained also testify to the fact that long pauses bring about some offensive remarks by Petro Poroshenko (15-21) and Volodymyr Zelenskyu (22-26):

(15) *Ukr.* – "Ви не кіт в мішку, /// Ви – мішок! /// А в Вашому мішку чорти і коти, включаючи олігархів, колишніх регіоналів і всього того, що загрожує моїй державі. І ми вас не допустимо до влади, пане Володимире." [*Eng.* – "You are not a pig in a poke ///, you are a poke!" /// And in your poke there are devils and cats, including oligarchs, former regionals, and everything that threatens my state. And we will not allow you to power, Mr. Volodymyr."];

(16) *Ukr.* – "Ви /// назвали Україну повією!" [*Eng.* – "You /// called Ukraine a prostitute."];

(17) *Ukr.* – "Ви /// – яскрава обгортка, яка покриває тих, хто втік з нашої країни." [*Eng.* – "You are /// a bright wrapper that covers those who fled our country."];

(18) *Ukr.* – "Пане Зеленський. Ви, талановитий актор, зробили гарну продюсерську компанію й зробили різнобарвні цікаві продукти. Сьогодні ми почали важливу дискусію. Але, крім абсолютно голосливних звинувачень, ми від пана Володимира не почули нічого. Ні щодо стратегії, ні щодо напрямків та кроків. Ні щодо рішучих позицій, як ми маємо захистити державу. /// Ви поки що живете минулим, /// Ви поки що готові поширювати лише неправду." [*Eng.* – "Mr. Zelenskyu. You, as a talented actor, have made a good production company and made a variety of interesting products. Today we have started an important discussion. But, apart from completely unsubstantiated accusations, we did not hear anything from Mr. Volodymyr. Neither in terms of strategy, nor in terms of directions and steps. Not about decisive positions on how we should protect the state. /// You are still living in the past, /// you are still ready to spread only lies."];

(19) *Ukr.* – "Наша спільна позиція: /// ми маємо захистити державу від Вас. Ви не Голобородько. Ви сюди приїхали не на тролейбусі й навіть не на велосипеді. Ви /// – головний провідник олігархів. І точно – одного олігарха-втікача." [*Eng.* – "Our common position: /// we must protect the state from you. You are not Holoborodko. You didn't come here by trolleybus or even by bicycle. You are /// the main leader of the oligarchs. And for sure – one fugitive oligarch."];

(20) *Ukr.* – "Не може війну з російським агресором вести актор. Талановита людина, але /// без будь-якого досвіду." [*Eng.* – "The actor cannot wage war with the Russian aggressor. A talented man, but /// without any experience."];

(21) *Ukr.* – "Якщо ми не маємо відповіді на це питання, /// то це слабкий глава держави,

який не може утримати удари Путіна. Я вірю, що пан Володимир (Зеленський) не має наміру затягнути Україну назад в Російську імперію. Але Путін має цю мрію. Тому ми маємо прибрати всі ризики з українського майбутнього." [Eng. – "If we do not have an answer to this question, /// it is a weak head of state who cannot withstand Putin's blows. I believe that Mr. Volodymyr (Zelensky) does not intend to drag Ukraine back into the Russian Empire. But Putin has this. That's why we have to remove all risks from Ukraine's future."];

(22) Ukr. – "Ви брешете!" [Eng. – "You are lying!";

(23) Ukr. – "Ось такий Ви головнокомандуючий!" [Eng. – "This is how you are the commander in chief!";

(24) Ukr. – "Краще бути котом в мішку, /// ніж вовком в овечій шкурі." [Eng. – "It is better to be a pig in the poke /// rather than a wolf in sheep's clothing.";

(25) Ukr. – "Ви не пророк!" [Eng. – "You are not a prophet!";

(26) Ukr. – "У Вашому оточенні були хабарники. Але це все неважливо. Я зараз кажу вам як просто людина: Ви й ці люди забрали найголовніше в нас – п'ять років." [Eng. – "There were bribe-takers around you. But it doesn't matter. I am telling you now as a simple person: You and these people have taken away the most important thing from us – five years.";

The overall analysis of the Ukrainian presidential debate (= political discourse) demonstrates that the candidates in question exchanged mutual accusations, jokes, and rhetorical questions during their debate at the stadium in Kyiv. However, Ukrainian voters did not hear from both candidates about the strategic development of Ukraine for the next five years, which each of them proposed. The pause frequency, duration, and localizations are abnormal. It can be explained by the excessive emotionality of Ukrainians. The temporal segmentation is not equivalent to the syntactic structure of utterances. Regarding the American presidential debate, it is less emotional, though emotional pauses are present in the candidates' oration. However, the data from a comparative study supports the hypothesis that on the micro level (in this context, the level of language) the silence effect, manifested by the extensive use of pauses of different types and length, has a high conflicting capacity regardless of the different cultural background.

5. Conclusions

By political communication, we understand a broad field concerned with the spreading and exchange of information and its influences on politics, policymakers, the news media, and citizens. It encompasses political campaigns, media debates, social media posts, or formal speeches. Political communication techniques and strategies allow policy advocates, campaign executives, elected

officials, and other political professionals to create, shape, and distribute messages that can influence the political process.

The analysis of televised political campaign debates required covering such important research vectors as debate formats, debate content, and debate effect. On the whole, we argue that debate format plays one of the key roles in choosing the tactic of the speech presentation, particularly the use of silence. The rhetorical potential of silence cannot be underestimated either on the macro- or on the micro-level.

The research enables us to state that deliberate linguistic mutism can create an image of a confident politician. Although final debates are crucial since, as a rule, the opponents can dot the i's and cross the t's, the time, allocated to both speakers, should not be wasted; pauses can be leveraged for political gain or to accomplish decisive political goals. The idea, that along with arguments pauses facilitate candidates' clash, is proven by numerous foregoing examples. The findings of this paper serve to support the plausible hypothesis that extra-long pauses, in particular juncture ones, serve as a conflict or confrontation trigger and therefore give rise to offensive responses by the opponent.

The prospects of further research in this sphere may be associated with an in-depth analysis of recorded speech (namely, how various prosodic features – tempo and intensity – are used as powerful manipulation tools) to get meaningful information while creating a speaker's psycho-social profile regardless of their individual physiological constraints.

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Résumé

Silence has always been used as an effective political rhetorical strategy. The debates of political figures are known to have a pragmatic focus on public opinion. The relevance of the research is due to the need for a systemic study of the effect of silence, given its socio-cultural and individual characteristics. Moreover, the paper focuses on the communicative aspect of silence manifested in interpersonal relationships and political communication. This problem is addressed by making use of methods of computerized language processing and a digitalized corpus of televised broadcasting programmes, including the recent speeches of American and Ukrainian presidents (both winners and losers of political rallies). The research presents a systematic three-step phonetic experiment aimed at analyzing pauses, which can be leveraged by speakers for political gain or to accomplish decisive political goals. The analysis of American and Ukrainian presidential debate speeches representing different cultures in terms of politics sheds light onto universal and specific features of the political discourse of the studied languages. The findings of this research paper reveal that deliberate linguistic mutism can create an image of a confident politician. However, the findings also imply that extra-long pauses, in particular juncture ones, serve as a conflict or confrontation trigger and, consequently, give rise to offensive responses by the opponent. Alternatively, they may serve to reconcile contentious debate. Being a non-verbal semiotic phenomenon, silence explicates human behaviour, filling the speech with certain emotional connotations. Consequently, not only the speaker's individual characteristics but also cross-cultural differences are mirrored in the use of pauses, creating a silence effect.

Key words: political debate, silence effect, conflict trigger, pause, speech.

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