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TALKING THE TALK, WALKING THE WALK: CANDIDATE PROFILES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN INTERVIEWS

CORNELIA ILIE

Introduction

The study of language as communication implies and leads necessarily to the examination of language use in various social, cultural and political settings. Particular linguistic practices are shaped by and help to shape social, historical and cultural conventions, which become apparent in intertextual and metadiscursive patterns, as well as in collocations and co-selections of lexis and grammar. Acts of dialogic communication are forms of discursive socialisation and indicate, among other things, the interlocutors' status, role, position, identity and power relations. Due to the complexity and interdependence of these specific elements, there is a close and often overlapping relationship between the dialogue in the private sphere and the dialogue in the public sphere. As was shown in Ilie (2001), the talk show, as a sub-genre of media discourse, exhibits dialogue features belonging both to the private sphere (conversational dialogue) and to the public sphere (institutional dialogue). Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to draw a line between conversational and institutional aspects of talk shows since «conversational talk often acquires certain institutional characteristics, while conversely, institutional talk may exhibit a more conversational character» (Ilie 2001: 219).

A closer examination of various instantiations of *dialogue in the public sphere* can reveal three main subtypes: *dialogue within institutions* (e.g. broadcasted debates between participants at professional conferences, between MPs in parliament, between experts in a particular field, a.s.o.), *dialogue between institutions* (e.g. broadcasted monitored debates between representatives of various societal institutions: health care organisations, education establishments, trade unions, political parties, a.s.o.) and *dialogue between citizens and institutions* (e.g. broadcasted debate programmes in which citizens are questioning institutional representatives and debating current issues). In many instances the dialogue in the public sphere takes the form of a *media interview* which is monitored by a media representative – a reporter/journalist who both designs and conducts the dialogic interaction. The media interview has become a prototypical form of media dialogue performed for the benefit of the public at large. By virtue of its own nature, the media interview is a very complex form of interview in that it enables interviewers, on the one hand, and interviewees, on the other, to gain access to the public arena and to promote their respective agendas. At the same time, both interviewer and interviewee are fully aware that they are conducting a dialogue for the sake of an overhearing and/or overlooking audience. This is why the inter-

viewer and the interviewee can be seen to pursue double agendas: on the one hand, the institutionally oriented agenda aimed at carrying out the pre-established institutional goals, and on the other, the audience-oriented agenda aimed at adjusting to and meeting audience expectations.

In media interviews, the interviewer establishes and follows a particular institutional agenda by asking carefully targeted questions, most of which are meant to solicit information and/or opinion, while some others require simply the interviewee's confirmation or acknowledgement of information regarding particular events, pieces of information, statements, etc. While striving after a neutrality stance and an objective role, the interviewer exhibits nevertheless to a certain extent the bias of choosing a line of questioning that may reveal certain assumptions, prefigure a positive/negative attitude towards certain standpoints or suggest preference for certain answers. Moreover, the interviewer acts in a double capacity: as media representative with a particular institutional agenda to follow, and as a representative of the public at large with another, more open, agenda to follow.

In terms of discourse structure and form, the *media interview* lies at the interface between institutional and non-institutional (conversational) forms of talk. Like other forms of public dialogue, media interviews display a 'public-colloquial' language use and behaviour, bridging the gap between institution-specific linguistic features and conversational speech patterns. At the same time, it is important to note that "institutional discourse represents a continuum including a range of varieties, some of which are more, some less institutionalised" (Ilie 2001: 218). Thus, the news interview can be regarded as a more strongly institutionalised discourse type than the talk show, because it appears to be more constrained by institutional role-distribution and predictable turn pre-allocation and less prone to spontaneous interventions. Unlike the talk-show host, who, alongside his/her role as a moderator, is often expected to play the roles of entertainer, moraliser, adviser, therapist, arbiter and interlocutor, thereby revealing, deliberately or non-deliberately, certain sides of his/her personality, preferences, etc., the news interviewer is supposed to assume a more neutral institutional role, i.e. to be detached and objective, and to avoid voicing his/her personal opinions and preferences.

Aim and method

Both media dialogue and political dialogue have acquired increasing importance in many areas of postmodern society. As a result, both types of dialogue can be seen to attract large audiences and to involve a continuously increasing number of people. At the same time, both types of dialogue are undergoing a process of convergence, in that political dialogue is becoming increasingly mediatised, whereas media dialogue is increasingly concerned with politics and the mediatisation process is being shaped accordingly. An important percentage of media interviews are political interviews. As a result of growing media openness and public scrutiny, the study of various types of political interviews has registered an unprece-

dented development during the last two-three decades. However, a number of issues related to the correlation between the interview as social interaction/event and the interview as mediated dialogue have been under-researched.

A particular subcategory of political interviews which has been less researched is the *election campaign interview*. This is a rather complex form of interview since it displays features of at least two types of interviews: political interviews and job interviews. In an election campaign interview the interviewer and the interviewee have to perform more than one role. Thus, the interviewer can be seen as a talk monitor, as an investigator, as a questioner, as an interlocutor. The interviewee, i.e. the political candidate, can be seen to act as a respondent, as an interlocutor, as a job seeker. For the purposes of the present study I have chosen to examine interviews with the two Democratic presidential candidates in the 2008 American presidential election campaign, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The analytical approach uses the tools of pragma-rhetoric (Ilie 2006, Ilie forthcoming) by focusing on multifunctional communicative acts and on multi-voiced rhetorical acts of information elicitation and argumentative persuasion. Dialogic practices in the media have become increasingly complex and this is why their analysis requires trans-disciplinary perspectives. Pragmatics and rhetoric are two complementary perspectives that are integrated in one analytical framework in order to examine the emergence and the co-construction of ongoing interpersonal communication and behaviour.

The interview tradition – a brief survey

Nowadays most of us take for granted the use of the interview as a form of media interaction meant to provide the intended audience with news and information of public and private interest. However, it is important to bear in mind that the interview tradition, which has become the staple form of media discourse, represents a development of the 20th century. For example, the interview was almost entirely absent from the cinematic tradition before the 1930s and its technique and structure have changed significantly over time. On reporting on the emergence of the new interview technique, the BBC documentary-maker Swallow (1956) signalled a significant fact: the professional expert was replaced by the enquiring reporter, a man whose initial knowledge is no greater than that of the viewer on whose behalf he conducts the enquiry. The reporter asks the questions that a sensible layman would ask.

This renewed role cast of the interviewer has gradually resulted in a blurred boundary between the public and the private sphere with regard to the scope and focus of the interviewing process. Thus, most interviewees, including high profile ones, are nowadays also faced with questions concerning rather personal details with respect to their private lives, hobbies, leisure, etc. Due to the growing tendency towards more individualised interest/enquiry, the media interview is often regarded as a particular kind of social encounter (Corner 1991).

One of the most common definitions of news interviews was provided by Heritage (1985: 112):

The news interview is a functionally specialized form of social interaction produced for an overhearing audience and restricted by institutionalized conventions.

Definitions like these are meant to outline the basic nature and function of interviews, but do not provide further insights into the various aspects of the interviewing process. As was noted by Heritage and Roth, “in most Western societies, interviewers are specifically not authorized to argue with, debate, or criticize the interviewee’s point of view, nor, conversely, to agree with, support, or defend it” (1995:1). According to the authors, interviewers have well-defined goal-oriented interactional and institutional tasks in keeping with the principle of neutrality. In a more recent study, however, Heritage (2002) admits that, in spite of the interviewer’s generally postulated neutrality, news interview questions are unavoidably ‘slanted’ in various ways. It is, after all, the interviewer who has control over the question-asking process and the liberty to reiterate or rephrase certain questions in order to elicit a particular answer. The power balance between interviewer and interviewee depends a lot on the extent to which the interviewer exerts his/her institutional power to decide on the structure, content, and focus of the line of questioning, on the one hand, and the extent to which the interviewee has the opportunity to share with the interviewer the task of shaping the interview.

Taking into account the eventful evolution and radical changes undergone by the media on the eve of the 21st century, Heritage’s definition raises today new questions: How much restricted is the news interview today? To what extent have the institutionalised conventions being kept in place and to what extent have they changed? Have new conventions been adopted? What about the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee?

It was David Silverman who introduced the notion of “the interview society” (1993) and characterised the interview as a widespread social and professional form of dialogue and information-eliciting interaction. A number of scholars have explored the institutional features of media interviews, such as questioning-answering patterns (Harris 1991, Bull 1994, Ilie 1999), evasive interviewee responses (Harris 1991), turn-taking mechanisms (Heritage 1985, Blum-Kulka 1983, Greatbatch 1988), topical organisation and interview roles (Greatbatch 1986, Corner 1991), footing and interviewer neutrality (Clayman 1992) and interruptions (Beattie *et alii* 1982, Ilie 2005).

Some of the central goals of the interview have partly changed over time. Initially, the purpose of the interview was to provide information, official and less official, about institutions, institutional activities and institutional actors, to the public at large. The end-goal was to help form public opinion and set the political agenda.

Gradually, the interviewer started scrutinising, on behalf of the wider public, the efficiency of institutional actors and the way in which institutional activities are being carried out. This double role of the interviewer, i.e. as media representative and as spokesperson of

the general public, is not unproblematic, since it raises a crucial question: whose interests does the interviewer pursue, those of the media company that hired him/her or those of the general public?

During the post-modern period the interview has increasingly become a double-edged communication tool used to handle information circulating to and from the citizens, to form and reflect public opinion and to set the public and political agenda jointly with representatives of the public. However, due to growing openness and public scrutiny it has reached the point where its allegedly major purpose is not only to attract and raise the citizens' curiosity and interest, but to actually involve the citizens and to motivate them to use their influence and contribute actively to setting the political agenda.

Dialogue frameworks in political interviews

A political interview aims at investigating political matters having to do with the daily work of politicians in general, and of Government and Administration representatives in particular. In analytical terms, the notion 'political interview' has been referred to as a type of speech event (Hymes 1972) or an activity type (Levinson 1979). A political interview involves interactional moves, which assign pre-established roles to interviewer and interviewee, and commit the interviewer and the interviewee to particular rights and obligations in relation to institutional conventions, on the one hand, and to the intended audience, on the other. The dialogue in a political interview presupposes a certain shared knowledge between interviewer and interviewee, and between them and the wider overhearing audience. It is the interviewer's role to mediate the exchange of knowledge and information according to his/her assessment of the audience's presumed wishes and needs. An important task of the interviewer is to elicit relevant factual information and to try to correlate it with specifically elicited personal information regarding the interviewed politician.

Like other types of media interviews, the political interview is a hybrid subgenre of mediated dialogue in that it displays features of both a social encounter dialogue and a mediated probing dialogue. The former type of dialogue allows for free turn-taking and spontaneous role shift (as in casual conversation), whereas the latter is expected to follow normative institutional rules for verbal interaction and behaviour in the public sphere. Through a convergence of these two types of dialogue, the political interview is an instantiation of a semi-institutionalised dialogue at the interface of rule-based answer-eliciting questioning dialogue and casual conversational dialogue. In spite of the occasional conversational touch, the political interview has gradually become one of the most important ways in which the political debate is conducted and "a crucial testing ground for politicians" (Harris, 1991: 77). Chilton views political interviews "as a sub-genre of the institution 'political discourse'" (2004: 72) since the participants are aware of particular social structures and of the discourse practices associated with or constituting those structures. The view taken here is that the institutional practice of political interviewing is a socio-historically and

politically based rhetorical process in that the ensuing dialogue gets articulated through deliberate linguistic choices, interpersonal behaviour patterns and purposeful audience targeting.

An important subcategory of political interviews is the *election campaign interview*, which is specifically aimed at scrutinising and challenging political candidates, at unveiling their status and power relations, at exposing their strengths and weaknesses, at inducing them to publicly spell out their political commitments. In doing that, election campaign interviews enable interviewees to gain access to the public arena and to promote their own political agendas in order to reach and persuade a large number of electors. Ideally, election campaign interviews are meant to provide citizens with the opportunity to receive continuously updated information about the election candidates, details about their past political activities, current initiatives and future visions.

A less explored aspect about election campaign interviews concerns the ways in which they act as institutional platforms providing political candidates with the opportunity to market themselves by showing why they deserve to be elected to the political position they are competing for. This aspect has considerable significance if we regard the election campaign interview as a hybrid interview which exhibits features of both a *political interview* and a *job interview*. Accordingly, in the election campaign interview the interviewed candidates display double roles: the role as public persons actively involved in political campaigning and high-level decision-making, on the one hand, and the role as job seekers competing for one of the top ranking jobs in a country's political hierarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that election campaign interviews should attract greater interest than other political interviews. This is particularly noticeable in a country like the United States, where presidential election campaigns tend to attract as much interest abroad as at home.

Interviews with the 2008 American Democratic presidential candidates

The present study focuses on interviews with the two democratic presidential candidates – Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – in the 2008 American presidential election, which has been regarded as a historic political event both inside and outside the United States. For a number of reasons, the race for the White House in the 2008 campaign was by far harsher and more spectacular between the two Democratic candidates than between the Democratic and the Republican candidates. Hillary Clinton, the former First Lady, has been in the public eye on the national level for a period of sixteen years. This may explain why, fairly or unfairly, most people have formed an opinion about her. Unlike Hillary, Barack Obama, the former Senator from Illinois, with seven years in the Illinois State Senate and one term in the US Senate, was a Washington outsider, starting from scratch. His popularity, unlike Clinton's, has had more to do with what he is and wants to do, rather than what he has done or not done.

Initially, the central issues of the 2008 American presidential election were full employment, health care, environmental challenge, quality of life. By struggling to get control over the discourse, each of the two presidential candidates were keen on imposing their own socio-political agenda and their own perceptions of the events. In order to have comparable data, a basic criterion for the corpus selection has been to choose interviews with the two candidates carried out by the same interviewer and/or interviewing institution. By taking into account the central issues of the 2008 election campaign, I decided to examine a set of two interviews conducted with Clinton and Obama separately. These interviews focus on energy issues and were carried out by the same interviewer, Amanda Griscom Little, on behalf of 'Grist', a non-profit environmental organisation based in Seattle, and «Outside» magazine.

Environmental and energy issues featured prominently at the beginning of the election campaign. So it is not surprising that this is the topic of both 'Grist' interviews: *An interview with Hillary Clinton about her presidential platform on energy and the environment* (9th August, 2007), and *An interview with Barack Obama about his presidential platform on energy and the environment* (30th July, 2007). What makes the two interviews very appropriate for a comparative study is the fact that most questions are identical or very similar. So both candidates are expected to provide answers to the same or similar questions. Let us consider the answers given to the very first question in (1) below:

(1)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: What makes you the strongest green candidate? What sets your energy and environmental platform apart?

A: *I believe my proposals for energy and environmental priorities are really well thought-out and comprehensive. You know, I have been focusing on these issues for years. Obviously, I have been a child advocate for most of my adult life, and as first lady I focused on the environmental effects on children's health. I have served, since I arrived in the Senate, on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and I am proud of the work that I've done to stand up against the Bush administration's many efforts to weaken environmental laws.* (added italics)

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: Why should voters consider you the strongest candidate on environmental issues? What sets your green platform apart from the rest?

A: To begin with, *people can look at my track record, I am proud of the fact that one of the first endorsements I received in the race for the U.S. Senate was from the League of Conservation Voters. I've since cast tough votes on behalf of the environment. For example, I voted against the "Clear Skies" bill that George Bush was promoting, despite the fact that the administration had heated up support for the bill in southern Illinois, which you know is a*

coal area of the country. *So I think people can feel confident that I don't just talk the talk, I also walk the walk.* (added italics)

The answers to the first question are symptomatic for each of the two candidates. They reveal that neither candidate has been a particularly strong champion of environmental issues. Clinton refers in general terms to her political proposals and to her focus on energy environmental priorities. A more concrete element is her having served on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Obama's environmental track record is, understandably, much less impressive: he mentions having cast votes on behalf of the environment and having received one of the first endorsements in the race for the U.S. Senate from the League of Conservation Voters. A more concrete element that he mentions is having voted against Bush's "Clear Skies" bill. However, although neither candidate has a very strong environmental profile, both candidates are rhetorically skilful and know how to maximise their respective strengths and to turn weaknesses into strengths. Clinton deliberately refers to her long White House experience: «*as first lady* I focused on the environmental effects on children's health». Obama is banking on his popularity among the grassroots as a successful newcomer to the scene of the American presidential candidacy: «*people* can look at my track record», «*people* can feel confident that I don't just talk the talk, I also walk the walk». Since he has not managed to accomplish too many things in the field of energy and environment, Obama is trying to turn this disadvantage into an advantage, namely the fact that he is still an average American who has not distanced himself from ordinary people.

More deep-going insights into the two candidates' views on environmental issues emerge in their answers to the second question, illustrated in example (2) below:

(2)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: In the Senate, you have supported the goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. Is this a centerpiece of your platform?

A: It is. *I joined* with Sens. [Barbara] Boxer and [Bernie] Sanders because *I thought* that their bill was the most forward-leaning in terms of what needs to be done to deal with the threat of global warming, and *I'm very proud to support their legislation.*

And obviously *I have my own proposals. I want to create a Strategic Energy Fund* that would be funded by taking money away from the oil companies, by giving them the choice to invest in renewable energy or pay into the fund. *We would take away their tax subsidies* as well, and *we would use this fund to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America.* (added italics)

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: How central will energy and the environment be to your campaign?

A: I consider energy to be one of the three most important issues that we're facing domestically. And the opportunities for significant change exist

partly because *awareness of the threat of climate change has grown rapidly over the last several years. Al Gore deserves a lot of credit for that, as do activists in the environmental community and outlets like Grist. People recognize the magnitude of the climate problem.*

Not only is there environmental concern, but you're also seeing *people who are recognizing that our dependence on fossil fuels from the Middle East is distorting our foreign policies, and that we can't sustain economically continuing dependence on a resource that is going to get more and more expensive over time. As all those things converge, we have to move boldly on energy legislation, and that's what I'll do as the next president.*

(added italics)

As in example (1), the standpoints expressed in Clinton's and Obama's answers in example (2) are quite similar. In answering the interviewer's questions, they both put forward sound ideas and valuable proposals concerning the future energy legislation. However, the ways in which they position themselves as political frontrunners on energy issues differ considerably. As an experienced politician with a substantial track record, Clinton speaks in the 1st person singular about her past and present actions, as well as about her future intentions: «*I joined*», «*I thought*», «*I have my own proposals*», «*I want to create a Strategic Energy Fund*». However, when referring to future legislative measures, she switches from the 1st person singular pronoun to the 1st person plural pronoun so as to show her commitment to working in a team: «*We would take away their tax subsidies*», «*we would use this fund to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America*». Moreover, in the last sentence of her answer she explicitly shows a strong sense of responsibility as a politician concerned not only with investments in renewable energy but also with people's job situations: «*to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America*».

Although Obama is self-assured as a politician, he avoids using the 1st person singular pronoun, which may be explained both factually and tactically. First, he is aware that his is not a very long political career and therefore his past achievements are not so numerous, so he should tone down foregrounding himself; second, he is fully aware that he owes his quickly growing popularity to the people who are supporting him, be they close collaborators or ordinary citizens. He is therefore wise first to give credit to senior politicians like Al Gore («*Al Gore deserves a lot of credit*»), and to community activists who are acknowledged for leading the way on environmental issues («*as do activists in the environmental community and outlets like 'Grist'*»). But Obama's most powerful rhetorical strategy consists in paying tribute to the common sense of ordinary people, by showing appreciation for ordinary people's awareness about the serious environmental challenges: «*People recognize the magnitude of the climate problem*»; «*you're also seeing people who are recognizing that our dependence on fossil fuels from the Middle East is distorting our foreign policies*». As a corollary, towards the end of this answer Obama uses the 1st person plural pronoun to include all those actively involved in shaping the new energy legislation: «*we have to move boldly on energy legislation*». Only in the very last sentence does Obama

speak in the 1st person singular when he hypothetically refers to himself as the next president: «that's what I'll do *as the next president*».

It is significant to note that although the two presidential candidates do share a lot of farsighted commitments and envisage similar measures for a future environmental legislation, they address these issues in different ways and from different perspectives. Clinton has a lot to show with regard to her past activities and initiatives as an experienced politician and as a White House insider. This is why it is but natural for her to self-refer in the 1st person singular. Having a more limited experience as a professional politician and executive leader, Obama maximises instead his close connections with the grassroots, enhancing his image as a politician who is used to speaking with and to listen to the citizens. To use a musical metaphor, whereas Clinton is emphasising her qualities as a gifted soloist, Obama is enhancing his profile as an orchestra conductor. They obviously appeal to and grasp the attention of different categories of voters: Clinton appeals to a more senior and homogeneous audience, whereas Obama appeals to a younger, more heterogeneous audience.

By complying with their role constraints as respondents, the two interviewees legitimise the interviewer's prerogative to elicit, test and probe their views, beliefs and actions on behalf of the wider audience of voters. At the same time, each interviewee is also aware that his/her suitability for the presidency is being evaluated by both interviewer and American voters in comparison with the counter-candidate's qualifications. While they express similar views and their answers contain comparable messages, their rhetorical strategies differ significantly. As a result, they are perceived differently by voters.

Before proceeding further I find it relevant to take a closer look at the comments addressed to Obama by the interviewer before asking the following question:

(3)

Q: *You've consistently emphasized consensus and putting aside partisan battles. Many argue that, when it comes to climate change, the maximum of what's politically possible falls short of the minimum we need to do to solve the problem. In other words, consensus won't get us where we need to go. Will you fight the political battles needed to move the consensus on this issue, even if that means aggravating partisan rifts?*

A: *Consensus doesn't mean 100 percent consensus -- there is undoubtedly going to be resistance from certain parts of the energy sector, and there may be ideological resistance within the Republican Party, and we are going to have to attend to the regional differences in terms of how people get energy. But I believe that we can put together a strong majority to move forward, as long as we are thoughtful about the potential losers in any big piece of energy legislation.*

The interviewer's question in example (3) touches upon a recurrent feature in Obama's rhetoric in general, namely his propensity to seek consensus rather than confrontation in dealing with major political issues. This tendency becomes apparent both in his speeches and in his public declarations. In this particular question, the interviewer addresses explicitly the

difficulty of reaching consensus across the political spectrum in connection with measures related to climate change. In asking the question, the interviewer's purpose is to challenge Obama's commitment to consensus-orientation so as to trigger a direct reaction from him. Obama avoids giving a straightforward answer. However, in order to uphold his rhetorical ethos (especially his credibility), he needs to re-adjust his rhetorical logos: and he does this by concentrating on word semantics. So, rather than backing from his alleged commitment to consensus, he argues for a complete relativisation of the notion of consensus, which thereby loses its original meaning: "*Consensus doesn't mean 100 percent consensus*". His statement obviously begs the question: what does then consensus actually mean? By revising the consensus principle in a most radical way, Obama reduces it to a mere version of majority-based compromise solution: "there is undoubtedly going to be resistance from certain parts of the energy sector, and there may be ideological resistance within the Republican Party [...] But I believe that we can put together a strong majority to move forward." While conceding the expected resistance from parts of the energy sector and the Republican Party, Obama's main concern is about "how *people* get energy", which is consistent with the priority that people's needs have on his agenda, as illustrated above in examples (1) and (2).

Let us consider now the answers in example (4), where the question addressed to Obama is a follow-up to the interviewer's question in example (3):

(4)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: What role will coal play in your plan?

A: *I think we have got to take a hard look at clean coal. I have advocated carbon sequestration, I have advocated power plants looking for ways to use coal more cleanly and efficiently. I doubt very much that using coal in liquid form for transportation could ever pass the environmental test, but I am willing to do the research to prove one way or another.*

The political pressure [to use coal] will remain intense, and *I think* you have got to admit that coal – of which *we* have a great and abundant supply in America – is not going away. *So how do we best manage* the possibility of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards?

It is not going to do *us* any good if *we* substitute one dirty energy source for another.

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: Do you believe that we can achieve *political consensus* on this goal of 80 percent reductions [of carbon emissions] by 2050?

A: *I think with presidential leadership we can meet this goal, and it will be one of my top priorities.* But it is going to require a thoughtful approach that accounts for the possibility that electricity prices will go up, and that low-income people may need to be compensated. *We'll have to deal with the fact* that many of our power plants are coal burning, and *consider what investments we're willing to make in coal sequestration.* *If we make sure* that the

burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, *then people will want to see us take on this problem in an aggressive way.*

In example (4) above it is enlightening to see how the issue of «carbon sequestration» is tackled rhetorically by Hillary Clinton and by Barack Obama, respectively. To the interviewer's question «What role will coal play in your plan?», Clinton provides a straightforward and informative answer: «*I have advocated carbon sequestration*». This message is reinforced in her immediately following statements: «*I have advocated power plants looking for ways to use coal more cleanly and efficiently*». In Obama's answer, the issue of «carbon sequestration» is not a top priority and it also involves complications: «*We'll have to deal with the fact that many of our power plants are coal burning, and consider what investments we're willing to make in coal sequestration*». While Clinton can report that she has already advocated carbon sequestration, Obama is still cautious about committing himself to investing in carbon sequestration. His main concern is striking the right balance between the burdens and the benefits «of a strong environmental policy», to make it possible to receive the endorsement of the «*people*»: «*If we make sure that the burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, then people will want to see us take on this problem in an aggressive way*». Obama shows that he is reluctant to take measures before they are understood and accepted by ordinary people.

As in her preceding answers to the interviewer's questions, Clinton assumes confidently the responsibility of leading the way and taking tough measures on environmental issues. So she is comfortable using the 1st person singular pronoun to refer to herself as the agent of verbs of action («*I have advocated*», «*I am willing to do the research*») or verbs of thinking («*I think*»), whose consequences are likely to affect people's present and future daily lives. Clinton displays a strong conviction and a determination to motivate people. To emphasise the big dilemma «of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards» she resorts to a rhetorical question: «*So how do we best manage the possibility of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards?* » Compared to a statement, a rhetorical question has the illocutionary force of emphatically displaying the utterer's strong conviction, while at the same time involving the hearer(s) in the ongoing reasoning process. In this particular instance, Clinton uses the 1st person plural pronoun «*we*» because she wants her audience to get mentally involved and to become aware of the difficult decisions that a political leader, like the president, is normally faced with.

The same dilemma that is conveyed by Clinton in a rhetorical question is presented by Obama as a logical problem by means of a conditional inference: «*If we make sure that the burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, then people will want to see us take on this problem in an aggressive way*». Both of them use the 1st person plural pronoun «*we*» to refer to the decision-makers: «*We'll have to deal with the fact*», «*what investments we're willing to make*», «*if we make sure*». But, as in the answers he gave to the questions in examples (1), (2) and (3), Obama refers to *people* as directly involved agents: «*people will want to see us take on this problem*». Unlike

Clinton, Obama avoids using the 1st person singular pronoun, except for the occasional, downplayed introductory «I»: «*I think with presidential leadership we can meet this goal*». In Obama's rhetorical argumentation, «people» functions not only as an 'ad populum' argument (appealing to popular sentiment and relying on people's support), but also as an 'ad verecundiam' argument (appealing to the authority of expert opinion). It is precisely the combined use of such arguments in a Grassroots campaign that contributed to Obama's electoral success. He referred less to himself and more to his audience – the public at large –, which shows that he knows how to truly engage with and connect with people.

The dichotomy of change (represented by Obama) versus experience (represented by Clinton) was a common theme in the presidential campaign, with Hillary Clinton positioning herself as the candidate with experience and Obama enacting the role of the candidate set on bringing change to Washington. The pragma-rhetorical analysis of the interviews with Clinton and Obama carried out in this paper provides comparative insights into the linguistic framing characteristic of each of the two presidential candidates.

Conclusions

For the present study I chose to examine a set of interviews carried out with the two Democratic presidential candidates – Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – during the 2008 American presidential election campaign. It was a historic campaign in many respects. The two democratic presidential candidates were running a very tight race and thereby a very demanding campaign. From several viewpoints they instantiate difference in similarity, and similarity in difference: two highly eligible presidential candidates who were repeatedly being evaluated by the media in terms of campaigning and voting results, as well as discourse and activity performance.

The election campaign interview can be seen to exhibit features of both a political interview and a job interview. Accordingly, in the election campaign interview the interviewed candidates display double roles: the role as public persons actively involved in political campaigning and high-level decision-making, on the one hand, and the role as job seekers competing for the top ranking job in their country's political hierarchy.

The analysis has focused on the answers provided by the two candidates to identical or similar questions posed by the same interviewer. The comparability of questions has contributed to a systematic and consistent examination of the similarities and differences between Clinton and Obama in terms of topic framing, leadership role, personal achievements, future visions. While at first sight the two candidates appear to display similar and compatible standpoints and attitudes, their language use reveals differences in the focus and strength of their commitments, their political priorities, their relations with the voters, and their rapport with the interviewer. Although Clinton and Obama expressed very similar views on several crucial issues for the 2008 election campaign, they were per-

ceived as embodying two separate political symbols: old vs. new, senior (political veteran) vs. junior (political newcomer).

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