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**JOHN KERRY'S
POLITICAL RHETORIC:
AN ACCOUNT
OF THE MAIN RHE-
TORICAL FEATU-
RES OF HIS ORAL
DELIVERY**

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ABSTRACT

An accurate use of language is a key factor in achieving personal and public objectives in all spheres of our everyday interaction, but the exploitation of the appropriate linguistic resources becomes crucial for those professionals involved in the field of politics. Obtaining the support of the masses, legitimising political policies, or succeeding in public debates and parliamentary negotiations may depend to a great extent on the kind of language a politician employs and its adequacy to each political event. This paper analyses the oral delivery of senator John F. Kerry –the favourite Democratic Party candidate for the US presidency in the 2004 presidential elections– in four public events (two debates and two speeches) celebrated before the election day. Our study focuses particularly on the analysis of a series of rhetorical patterns and linguistic devices employed by the senator in order to empower his argumentations, namely: three-part statements, contrastive pairs, lexical and syntactic repetition, purposive selection and use of pronouns, addressing formulae, introductory formulae for personal opinion and ideology, and the usage of discourse organisers. The results of this study hint, *inter alia*, that behind the apparent spontaneity of Kerry's oral delivery there is a selective use of linguistic devices, which is necessarily the product of prior consideration and thoughtful discourse elaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the quintessential instrument of persuasion. The ability to accurately exploit the appropriate linguistic resources in accordance with the specific requirements of each communicative situation is in fact a most valuable asset in achieving personal or public objectives. By way of a subtle manipulation of language, skilful orators have traditionally been able to exert great influence on the preconceptions, beliefs, aspirations and fears of the masses, to the extent of causing people to accept false assertions as true postulates, or even to support policies contrary to their interests (Thomans & Wareing, 1999). Language is thus a powerful instrument for those interested in controlling people's ideas. Subsequently, language inevitably constitutes a valuable tool in politics, as it is a crucial element in gaining the public support necessary not only to legitimise political policies, but also to achieve any political end in democratic systems.

Authority and the management of power seem to bear a strong connection with politics. Fairclough (1989) and Thomans & Wareing (1999) study this association and suggest that the acquisition of power in politics is primarily founded on the persuasion of citizens that the ideas of their political leaders coincide with their own views and interests. Additionally, they propose that the best way for politicians to achieve the "consent" of the wide public –and hence, the necessary license to implement their policies– is to create an "ideology"¹ and to have citizens to voluntarily accept it as their own.

According to this line of reasoning, the wide range of potential linguistic choices a politician can make to build up his or her discourse may have a crucial effect in shaping an ideology that will lead people to more easily accept his or her arguments. Moreover, it seems that the language used by politicians often provides an implicit rationale through which the issues under discussion in each communicative situation are to be identified and understood. Political leaders often play with the audience's presuppositions and the activation of the pertinent mental schemata by selecting or evading certain lexical items in order to increase the credibility of their assertions and to create and diffuse a particular ideology. This often allows most politicians' claims –including those which, in other contexts,

might clearly become unsustainable– to be deemed as self-evident within the piece of discourse they are embedded in, as they are conceived under the same ideology that has been created and nurtured throughout the development of the same discursive event (Thomans & Wareing, 1999).

As it might be expected, the very nature of political language has since ancient times drawn the attention of many orators, theorists, and linguists, as this kind of discourse is a gold-mine of examples exploiting to the maximum all the resources offered by language with the aim of providing most valid and compelling arguments. A large number of linguistic studies (Edelman, 1977; Bolinger, 1980; Fairclough, 1989; Arnold, 1993; Thomans & Wareing, 1999; etc) have focused indeed on the analysis of the techniques and kinds of language used by politicians to reinforce their ideological roots in the masses and to attain specific objectives in their political programmes. The present paper is framed within this line of research, as it analyses the oral discourse of John Forbes Kerry, the Democratic Party candidate for the US presidency who confronted George Bush in the 2004 presidential elections.

John Kerry, J.D. and B.A. in Political Science, is at present a member of the United States Senate in Massachusetts, his current home place. The senator has a long professional experience as an attorney and lieutenant governor in the aforementioned state, but also as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during part of the Vietnam War. He has been a member of the Democratic Party since 1972 and, according to most pre-electoral poll predictions, he was the most likely candidate to reach the US presidential office on 2 November 2004. Even though these predictions failed –the Republican Party eventually won the elections–, pre-electoral polls did reflect to some extent the popularity levels of both candidates to the presidential office: during the election campaign period –especially in its last stages– George Bush's popularity levels seemed to experiment a significant fall while Kerry saw his importance and popularity increase at high rates in the US socio-political panorama.

Bearing this in mind, the particular aim of this study is to unveil some of the rhetoric strategies and linguistic devices used by the Democratic candidate by focusing on the analysis of his oral delivery in four public events previous to the election day. We shall contend that the use of these linguistic devices endows his discourse with extra doses of persuasion, which in turn seems to help him to become a prominent figure among the members of his party, to gain a favourable public opinion, and, definitely, to increase the number of voters along the US electorate before the elections.

Two speeches and two debates are distinguished within the public events selected for our analysis. The speeches were delivered by Kerry in two different political rallies, and the debates were broadcasted by two well-known thematic television channels. Apart from unveiling general rhetoric patterns in Kerry's oral delivery, our study will also make explicit subtle differences between such patterns depending on their appearance in speeches or debates.

2. METHOD

The oral delivery of John Kerry is analysed in this paper on the grounds of a corpus made of four transcriptions of the Democratic candidate's interventions in the aforementioned speeches and debates. These transcriptions were extracted from *Project Vote Smart*,² a “campaign information website” created in 1992 by several American political leaders. According to the description provided in the website, *Project Vote Smart* has the objective of providing the voter with trustworthy, neutral, factual and unbiased information. Whatever the case may be, the website offers voters a wealth of informa-

tion on the presidential candidates, their voting records, and, among many other things, a series of transcriptions of the main political leaders' interventions in public events.

The transcription of one of the debates, the “Democratic Candidates Debate”, was cross-checked with a tape-recorded version of the same event in order to confirm its authenticity, which proved the reliability and accuracy of the contents of the transcription. Since the remaining three transcriptions were drawn from the same source and coincided in design and form with the examined debate, they were accepted as valid for the purposes of our study.³ Nevertheless, they were not compared with their taped versions due to the impossibility of obtaining their recordings. A short description of the four discursive events is provided in the following two paragraphs.

Our two speech selections are part of Kerry's official launch for the 2004 presidential elections. The first of them was given by the senator to Democratic supporters in Milwaukee (henceforth, this speech will be referred to as MS), Wisconsin on 8 April 2004. The second speech was delivered by Kerry to voters in Lake Worth (hereafter, LWS), Florida on 19 April 2004. Kerry was accompanied in this event by other members of the Democratic Party like senator Joseph Lieberman, senator Bob Graham or congressman Kendrick Meek,⁴ who would each have a chance to address the audience in their respective turns.

The two debates took place some months earlier. On 3 May 2003, ABC News broadcasted the “Democratic Presidential Candidates Debate” (DPD), which gathered nine Democratic candidates for the USA presidency⁵ for the first time in a live televised event. The “Democratic Candidates Debate” (DCD), however, was celebrated in New York on 25 September 2003. CNBC and the Wall Street Journal gathered this time ten Democratic candidates,⁶ who were to answer the questions posed by the moderator, Brian Williams, and three journalists: Gerald Seib, from the Wall Street Journal, and Ron Insana and Gloria Borger, both from CNBC.

2.1. CORPUS COMPILATION

Although two speeches and two debates compose the definitive corpus for this study, our original corpus consisted only of the transcription and the video-recording of the DCD. Hence, our aim was initially to uncover some of the typical patterns of John Kerry's speech by establishing generalisations out of the data drawn exclusively from his interventions in this debate.

However, a series of drawbacks in our initial corpus were soon detected. Firstly, since the CNBC allowed only two hours within its schedule for the DCD, the ten candidates were not allotted enough time to properly answer and comment on the vast number of issues that arose during the event (they were allotted 60 seconds to answer direct questions, and 30 seconds for each rebuttal time). The interventions of Kerry in the debate were, thus, very few and rather short. As a direct consequence, the linguistic samples drawn from our initial database could not be regarded as representative of Kerry's speech. Furthermore, the possibility of establishing valid generalisations on the candidate's speech behaviour grounded merely on the scarce data drawn from such debate was almost null.

These flaws motivated the inclusion of the transcriptions of further events in our database. *Project Vote Smart* offered a selection of transcribed “public statements” pronounced by Kerry in a variety of events. Among all of them, we determined to restrict our corpus to two common kinds of public communicative events where politicians try to make the best use of their argumentative skills, namely: speeches and debates. Thus, the pieces of discourse selected for our final corpus compose four ins-

tances of Kerry's public oral delivery with self-promotional ends, wherein the candidate struggles to convince the audience—as well as the questioners and his Democratic Party competitors present in both debates— of his efficiency as a political leader and proficient aptitudes for the presidential office.

Some advantages were directly derived from the expansion of our corpus into four pieces of discourse, and from the analysis of Kerry's oral delivery from these two perspectives. The generalisability and representativeness of our database, for instance, increased substantially. On the one hand, a larger and more comprehensive corpus allowed for more reliable and closer-to-reality results, as well as more significative conclusions from the occurrence analysis of each of the variables considered in this study. On the other hand, the fact that this study comprehends two kinds of events of different communicative nature such as speeches and debates helped to provide a wider and more reliable picture of the actual language used by the candidate in public events. Moreover, the speech-debate distinction yielded the possibility of comparing and learning subtler variations on Kerry's political discourse patterns regarding his delivery in each kind of event.

Apart from these previous considerations, other criteria—like the number of words and the diversity of topics— were followed in the selection of the particular speeches and debates for our final database. As displayed in Table 1, the 6530 words that compose our corpus are evenly distributed between speeches and debates. Only two debates could be collected to conduct this study, and, in our endeavour to achieve a balanced number of words in both kinds of discourse, the selection of the speeches was determined by the amount of words comprehended in the previously obtained debates. Hence our choice of the LWS and MS.⁷

Number of words		
D e b a t e s		Total amount in debates
DPD	1588	3134
DCD	1586	
S p e e c h e s		Total amount in speeches
LWS	2097	3396
MS	1299	
Total number of words in the corpus:		6530

Table 1: Number of words in the compiled corpus

Other criterion considered in the selection of speeches and debates was the diversity of topics tackled in each event. As a matter of example, the diversity of topics embraced in both debates, which were selected before the speeches, determined the selection of the latter: among all the speeches scheduled within the candidate's presidential campaign that were available in the website at the stage of our corpus compilation, we chose the LWS and the MS mainly on the basis of their general character. The selected speeches were indeed the only ones to handle a wide variety of general topics, whereas all the other instances were almost monothematic speeches that did not fit the requirements of this study.⁸

2.2. LINGUISTIC VARIABLES

The set of linguistic traits considered and analysed in this study is divided into two subcategories, namely: certain rhetoric devices used in general political discourse (Thomans & Wareing, 1999; Beard, 2000) that seem to have been adopted by Kerry and employed in his oral delivery for very specific purposes, plus some other devices that seem to be characteristic of Kerry's particular political idiolect.

On the one hand, and prior to our first corpus analysis, a number of linguistic devices which are usually considered as typical features of political discourse owing to their highly regular occurrence patterns in this kind of language were selected. Thomans & Wareing (1999: 41) affirm that "politicians [...] often adopt identifiable habits of speech to increase the impact of their ideas", and identify a series of rhetorical mechanisms (such as "three-part statements" and "the purposeful use of pronouns") as some of the most common devices used in political discourse. These two devices were adopted as two of the variables analysed in this study, together with "contrastive pairs" and "lexical/syntactic repetition", also regarded by Beard (2000) as typical features of political language.

On the other hand, after an initial analysis of our corpus, we developed a second set variables comprehending "addressing formulae" or expressions like "I believe/I think" which appeared with high frequency rates and seemed particularly characteristic of John Kerry's political idiolect. Kerry's use of "discourse organisers" is also conceived in this study as one of the distinctive features of his political discourse, as the presidential candidate uses repeatedly a closed set of these items with very particular and restricted discourse functions.

The following list reflects the linguistic devices considered in our analysis:

- Rhetoric devices commonly used in political discourse:
 - Three-part statements.
 - Contrastive pairs.
 - Repetition.
 - Purposive use of pronouns.
 - Inclusive/exclusive "we", including 1st person plural extensions "us" and "our"
 - "I" vs. "we"
 - Indefinite "one" and "you"
- Distinctive features in John Kerry's political discourse:
 - Discourse management. The use of discourse organisers.
 - Addressing formulae.
 - Expressing an ideology: "I believe / I think".

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reflects the outcomes of our analysis on Kerry's usage of the linguistic devices listed above in speeches and debates. Our results are presented in 10 subsections, each of them corresponding to a different linguistic device. In general, the explanations and contentions provided within each

subsection make reference to the presidential candidate's overall use of the rhetoric device at issue in the four events. An explicit distinction between speeches and debates is made when a given variable shows any usage divergence between the two kinds of discourse. A series of commented examples extracted from our corpus are provided to illustrate our claims in each specific case.

3.1. THREE-PART STATEMENTS

Three-part statements present information in clusters of three items, which often gives extra emphasis to the points advanced by the politician. In spite of the fact that the occurrences of three-part statements in both speeches almost double those in the debates, there is no significant difference regarding the functions performed by these devices in the two types of discourse.

Some of the three-part statements uttered by Kerry are composed of single words or very simple phrases. Nevertheless, our analysis hints that, in most cases, Kerry uses instead more complex syntactic structures and even full sentences. This is the case of (1), where this candidate shows himself almost as the "saviour and protector" of the middle class.

(1) *"I'm not going to let that happen to Bill's family. I'm not going to let that happen to the middle class. I'm not going to let that happen to people across this country. We're going to put fairness back into the American economy."* (LWS)⁹

Three-part statements are frequently used in Kerry's delivery in order to develop his argumentations in an orderly fashion. This use seems to be emphasised in debates. It is in these events where candidates must improvise (and sometimes make "on-the-spot" amendments) on their prepared texts, as for example, when they strive to provide a clear answer to a direct appellation or when they are allowed a rebuttal turn:

(2) *"We need to export our capitalism and our democracy, and they go hand in hand. But we need a president who is prepared to negotiate the tough trade agreements that protect people. And here at home we need a president who doesn't abandon workers who do suffer some consequences as a result of-"* (DPD)

The hyphen in (2) indicates the end of Kerry's allotted time for his intervention. This chunk of speech was indeed uttered by the Democratic candidate to finish one of his turns in the DPD. It seems that three-part statements especially increase the dramatic effect of the message Kerry intends to convey when he uses them to finish a line of reasoning (as shown in (2)), or when they are uttered at the end of an intervention, as illustrated in (3) and (4):

(3) *"... I believe we can achieve these ideals and I ask you to join me in the effort to make America safer, stronger and more secure"* (DPD)

(4) *"We come here today first and foremost to say to our troops how proud we are of them, how grateful we are for their service to country, and how much we support them even as they carry out a difficult task and a difficult policy. (Applause.)"* (MS)

In the main, this rhetorical strategy involves three different items (or concepts), but it is also common to find a single unit repeated three times. Combining repetition with three-part structures seems to give further strength to the point at issue:

(5) “It’s a Johnny one-note economic policy, of *tax cut, tax cut, tax cut*, mostly for the wealthiest people in the nation, at the expense of all the other choices of our country.” (LWS)

As we shall see below, repetition is a most productive device. In (5) this strategy allows Kerry to cunningly embed (and emphasise) the idea that the Republican economic policy is not only weak, but also unfair because –according to his statements– it is merely based a series of thoughtless tax cuts.

It is not surprising to perceive a tendency of the Democratic nominee to criticise Bush’s Republican administration. In fact, the effect of these critiques is often enhanced in his discourse with different rhetorical devices. The three-part statements in (6) and (7) help Kerry to present Bush and his administration as a totally detached and uninvolved government.

(6) “When people have lost their work you don’t just stand idly by and watch it breeze by *while people can’t afford to buy health insurance, while children get hurt, while people are unable to get the training they need to move to a new job*”. (MS)

(7) “Every one of us came into public life because we came with a sense of what we could do to make a difference for people’s lives. *Not a difference for the few, not a difference for the most powerful. Not how we can just reward our friends who contribute in politics, through the American money system.*”. (LWS)

3.2. CONTRASTIVE PAIRS

This rhetorical device establishes semantic and formal connections between two groups of words by means of structural similarity and contrastive shades of meaning. Example (8) is a prototypical instance of a similar syntactic structure repeated in order to convey a semantic contrast.

(8) “I believe it is the role of the president of the United States to *maximize* the ability to be successful and to *minimize* the cost to the American people...” (MS)

These expressions have a powerful effect in the audience, as the use of contrasting elements in a message seems to intensify its meaning and ease its retention in the mind of the public (Beard, 2000). This strategy is used by Kerry with three main functions:

- (i) Contrastive pairs are used by Kerry in some points of his delivery as an efficient discourse management device. Example (9), for instance, is based on the comparative of proportion –it establishes a comparative correlation by means of two parallel structures, namely, “the sooner... the better...”. In this example the Democratic candidate skillfully introduces a wealth of concepts within a single statement by embedding a very productive chain of recurring structures in each part of the contrastive pair (“*to the*” is repeated in the first part, and “*the better + clause*” structures

the second half of the contrastive pair). Notice that the repetition of part of the contrastive pair strengthens Kerry's argumentations:

(9) "... and *the sooner that we have a president who understands that and—and begins to commit America to the science, to the discovery, to the alternatives, to the renewables, to begin to press America towards the great journey towards energy independence, the better off America will be, the better our health will be, the more effective our economy will be, and frankly, the better our national security will be, and the better world citizen we will be.*" (DCD)

- (ii) Kerry makes big efforts to distinguish his own policy from the policies of his adversaries (whether president Bush or the other Democratic candidates for presidency), and, in several occasions, he makes use of contrastive pairs for this specific purpose. It is also remarkable that using contrastive pairs to compare his policy with those of his adversaries allows Kerry to discredit his rivals and their policies:

(10) "*Under President Bill Clinton, [under the Democratic policy of President Clinton] families' income went up \$7,100 over those eight years. Under George Bush, [a Republican policy] family incomes have gone down \$1,200 across America*". (LWS)

(11) "*...unlike George Bush and his friends at the big oil companies, I'm going to work for a real energy policy for this country that decreases America's dependence on foreign oil and helps lower the cost to American families*" (LWS)

- (iii) The two functions of contrastive pairs described above are used by the candidate both in speeches and debates. However, the third function is found exclusively in debates, as Kerry uses these contrastive structures to deny the assertions of other candidates –example (12) is part of a rebuttal time allowed after the intervention of Governor Dean– or to clarify certain concepts (13):

(12) "*The 10 percent bracket wasn't George Bush's idea; it was our [democrats'] idea.*" (DCD)

(13) "*I'm not insensitive to the jobs. I'm desperately concerned about those jobs.*" (DCD)

3.3. REPETITION

Repetition is widely used as a cohesive device in many types of specialised discourse as well as in everyday language. However, this study regards repetition as a particular feature of political discourse on account of its cohesive effects, but also owing to its specific potential to strengthen an orator's speech. This function seems to be most appreciated in political discourse, and in fact comes to the forefront in the samples of Kerry's discourse analysed in this study.

In repetitions, a linguistic item tends to be employed as a constant reference point in the development of an argument. This item may be a single word, but also a syntactic structure whose recurrence helps to strengthen the argumentation in question. As described in some examples of the variables analysed in previous sections, repetitions frequently appear in combination with other rhetoric devices (see examples (2), (5), (9) above and (14) below).

(14) “I’m running for president of the United States because I really believe it is time for this country to ask again *why not*. *Why not* in the richest country on the face of the planet healthcare for all of our citizens accessible and affordable? *Why not* early childhood education so that all of our children get the best start in life? *Why not* invest in our future and our jobs by creating energy independence for America? *Why not* have a military that is strong but at the same time advances our ideals around the globe? And *why not* have a president who understands the truth that the flag and patriotism do not belong to any one party; they belong to all Americans? I believe we can achieve these ideals and I ask you to join me in the effort to make America safer, stronger and more secure.” (DPD)

This example constitutes Kerry’s last speaking turn in the DPD. Here, Kerry manages to introduce a considerable amount of concepts in a relatively short stretch of time. This is achieved by means of a recurrent structure that allows him to state his ideals in an orderly and very emphatic fashion. This emphasis reaches its climax with a closing three-part list (“*safer, stronger and more secure*”) which, combined with a twist of patriotism, caters for an ambience full of “great expectations” –that might have been fulfilled providing he had been elected president.

Similarly, the repetition of negative statements referring to George Bush in the following example creates an unfavourable image of the Republican leader which totally discredits his work as an U.S. president. Once more, Kerry ingeniously presents Bush as a totally uncommitted president who, according to the Democrat, does not seem to fulfil the requirements of his office nor takes account of the opinion of American citizens:

(15) “...I notice President Bush is taking some days off down at Crawford, Texas, and I’m told that when he takes days off, you know, he totally relaxes. *He doesn’t* watch television. *He doesn’t* read the newspapers. *He doesn’t* make long-term plans. *He doesn’t* worry about the economy. I thought about that for a moment, and I said, sounds to me like it’s just like life in Washington, doesn’t it? It’s sort of -- (laughter, applause).” (MS)

3.4.1. Purposive use of pronouns.

Politicians manipulate language through a wide variety of linguistic strategies. Techniques like making a premeditated use of pronouns are recurrently used to shape an ideology and to furnish certain pieces of discourse with the necessary strength to have particular effects on the audience. Indeed, it seems possible that audience attitudes towards a speaker may be influenced –or even reversed– through a calculated and purposive use of certain pronouns. This usage, for instance, helps politicians to avoid or assume responsibility by concealing or foregrounding agency in specific contexts and situations,

which may become critical in a politician's career. In this section we shall analyse three different kinds of purposive use of pronouns in Kerry's discourse.

3.4.2. Inclusive/Exclusive "we".

This subsection analyses the use of first person plural pronoun ("we", "us", "our") from the perspective of its reference scope.¹⁰ In this regard, we talk of inclusive "we" when the individual or group of individuals spoken to are comprehended within the referential area of the pronoun. Exclusive "we", however, excludes the individual or group of individuals spoken to from its intended referential scope.

Instances of inclusive and exclusive "we" are found in debates and speeches, but some important differences regarding the inclusive scope of the pronoun in the two kinds of events must be highlighted here. In speeches, only two groups may be included within the reference scope of the pronoun. Therefore, all instances of inclusive "we" include the audience (sometimes within a wider group, for instance, the American people as a united nation), whereas the occurrences of exclusive "we" necessarily exclude the audience. In debates, however, three reference groups are distinguished, namely: the speaker, the audience, and the Democratic candidates. The scope of inclusive "we" uttered by Kerry in both debates tends to include the audience and other Democratic party members present at the event in question. However, it should be borne in mind that some uses of "we" make reference to "Democratic leaders", and thus imply inclusion for the leaders and exclusion for the audience present at the debate.

An analysis of Kerry's usage of first person plural pronouns hints that the presidential candidate purposefully combines inclusive and exclusive uses of the pronoun "we" to achieve different effects. In most instances, the politician uses inclusive "we" in order to establish a closer relationship with his audience. In contrast, exclusive "we" is chiefly used by the presidential candidate to distinguish the Democratic party from the Republican party, or to separate the political duties of the government from those of the audience present at the political event at issue. Consider the following examples:

(16) "...that have not been as present as they might be to Americans, but the images of a tank being hit by a rocket, RPG, the images of the wounded, *our* soldiers, our young men scrambling out of the tank, bloody, and I think no American can see those images and..." (MS)

(16) is an example of inclusive "we" (inclusive "our") in a speech event whose referent includes the audience present at the event as well as the whole American community. Here, the use of inclusive "we" enhances the patriotic feeling connected with the content of the message. Needless to say, close links between the audience and the speaker are established through the inclusive use of the pronoun. The referential scope of (17), however, is somehow different:

(17) "...That is the price of serving your country. And *we* honor it, every single one of us here today. *We* come here today first and foremost to say to *our* troops how proud *we* are of them, how grateful *we* are for their service to country, and how much *we* support them even as they carry out a difficult task and a difficult policy. (Applause.) No matter what *our* feelings about the war, *we* support the troops. (Applause continuing.)" (MS)

The example of inclusive “we” in (17) makes reference only to the people present at the speech campaign event. Once again, this use of “we” accompanies the topic of the message and denotes a relationship of proximity between the candidate and the people attending the speech.

The scope of the inclusive “we” in (18) includes Kerry, the audience, his Democratic colleagues and all Americans. The referential area is rather broad in this example, which fosters a feeling of comradeship between those included within the pronoun scope. Notice that Republicans seem to be excluded from the pronoun reference scope, as the example constitutes a critique to the current presidential administration:

(18) *We* need to export our capitalism and our democracy, and they go hand in hand. But *we* need a president who is prepared to negotiate the tough trade agreements that protect people. And here at home *we* need a president who doesn't abandon workers who do suffer some consequences as a result of-” (DPD)

Now consider the scope of “we” in the following example, where part of the people present at the speech event are excluded:

(19) “I'm not going to let that happen to Bill's family. I'm not going to let that happen to the middle class. I'm not going to let that happen to people across this country. *We're* going to put fairness back into the American economy.” (LWS)

This example is an instance of exclusive “we” referring to the Democratic party in a speech campaign event, where the audience is excluded from the pronoun's scope. This exclusion allows for a subtle distinction between the role of the Democratic party and the role of prospective middle class voters (the audience) concerning the improvement of the American middle class economic situation. Thus, Kerry and the Democratic Party are presented as the active providers of the solution to the aforementioned economic problems. The prospective voters –excluded from the pronoun's scope–, by contrast, are presented as direct but passive beneficiaries of the Democratic government's actions (provided they should win the elections).

3.4.3. “I” vs. “we”

In certain occasions Kerry purposefully includes himself within the “vast majority” –as is the case of the instances of inclusive “we” analysed above– whether to establish a feeling of proximity with his audience or else to hide his agency. In other cases, the presidential candidate purposefully uses “I” instead of “we” in order to affirm his own identity. This allows him to overtly declare his agency when required by the context –as in example (20) below, where Kerry is allowed a rebuttal time in the DCD to clarify his own views over a problematic issue. It is important to stress here that, although the function described in this subsection is also found in speeches, it seems to be more characteristic of debates, where the presidential candidate needs to defend his particular position, his policy, or even his own ideology. The use of “I” in example (21), for instance, is intended to demonstrate the candidate's determination and the strength of his leadership faculties

(20) “Well, *I* gave a speech in Detroit several days ago which reflects an economic policy that *I*’ve laid out over the last years that will address the manufacturing loss. *I*’m not insensitive to the jobs. *I*’m desperately concerned about those jobs.”(DCD)

(21) “Yesterday *I* laid out the most fundamental part of this choice: our economy, and how we put America back to work. *I* am determined to put America back to work and harness the creative energy of this country. (Applause.)” (MS)

3.4.4. Indefinite “one” and “you”

The use of indefinite pronouns is not restricted to specific genera nor particular types of discourse. Hence it is not to be considered as an exclusive characteristic of political discourse. The inclusion of “indefinite one” and “indefinite you” in this study is thus derived from the fact that both pronouns –in their indefinite sense– are very frequently used by Kerry in speeches and debates. The use of indefinite “one” and “you” should perhaps be better conceived as a distinguishing feature of Kerry’s oral delivery. In most cases, and as shown in (22) and (23), the candidate uses indefinite “one” or “you” to put forward examples, hypothetical cases and generalisations:

(22) Now, I think we can provide coverage. I believe that every American ought to be able to buy in and have access to affordable health care through the same plan that the president, Congress, senators, give themselves. I will lay out how *you* can do that, how *you* can buy into Medicare from 55 years old to 64, and also how we can cover children. But, you know, just in fairness—and this is not a squabble, this is just a legitimate debate about how *you* get somewhere.[...] when he left as governor, 90.4 percent of the people of the state of Vermont were covered. So if *you* are going to approach it incrementally, *you* have got this problem of bringing people into the system and getting to the percentage that America ought to get to. (DPD)

(23) “When *you* have a \$7 billion no-bid contract to Halliburton, it breaks faith with the American people. I mean, *one* wishes that they built bridges and schools in America because maybe then Bush would invest in them, and that’s the kind of thing we need to do.”(DCD)

3.5. DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT. THE USE OF DISCOURSE ORGANISERS.

The Democratic candidate is very much concerned with the correct organisation of his discourse, which makes his oral delivery fairly clear indeed. In this section we are to illustrate the particular linguistic devices used by Kerry to organise his delivery. Some of the resources he tends to employ in order to structure discourse are, for instance, three-part statements, contrastive pairs, repetition, metalinguistic expressions, and different lexical items used for very specific functions, namely: “now”, “well”, “number one/number two”, and “first of all”.

“Now” is constantly used by Kerry in his speeches with three main functions: to switch topic, to recapitulate, and to expand a topic from his personal perspective. In (24), for instance, “now” is used by Kerry both to move from one topic to another (T1-now-T2) and to resume his speech after a pause:

(24) “(applause) *Now*, I came here today to talk about how we make America strong here at home, and I think all of you understand that we are at a special new moment in American politics”. (MS)

In (25), however, “now” is used to recapitulate about what has been previously said before continuing with the same topic from his personal perspective. In such instances, “now” might perhaps be considered as a linguistic marker indicating Kerry’s personal ideology:

(25) “*Now*, these are the choices of this campaign. Yesterday I laid out the most fundamental part of this choice: our economy, and how we put America back to work.” (MS)

Just as “now” is a particular variable of Kerry’s speeches, “well” is a linguistic trait exclusive of his delivery in debates, as it is used by the candidate as a filler to gain time before resuming his speaking after a direct appellation. In examples (26) and (27) Kerry uses “well” before answering a direct question by each debate moderator, whereas in (28) the candidate uses “well” to gain time before beginning a rebuttal turn.

(26) “*Well*, George, I’d like to comment also if I may on the health care...”(DPD)

(27) “*Well*, let me begin, Brian, by, first of all, saying I hope...” (DCD)

(28) “*Well*, I gave a speech in Detroit several days ago which reflects an economic policy that I’ve laid out over the last years that will address the manufacturing loss...” (DCD)

As mentioned above, “first of all / secondly” and “number one / number two” are also frequently used in Kerry’s speeches and debates in order to manage discourse. In example (29), we find Kerry criticising the concurrent American tax code. The main critique, which is introduced by “first of all” and hence given primary importance, makes reference to the alleged complexity it has recently acquired. “Secondly” suggests a further step in the critique, provided his audience is able to understand the tax code.

(29) “Go through it [the American tax code]. *First of all*, see if you can understand it. But *secondly*, see if you can find how many pages really apply to you...” (LWS)

In example (30), the candidate organises his 30-second delivery in a rebuttal turn into two blocks. “First of all” is used to clarify a previously commented issue, and then by means of “number one” / “number two” Kerry establishes a division between two different parts of his argumentation:

(30) “...Dick is—*first of all*, no one is going to find \$228 billion to put into health care. Nobody believes it’s there, and it can’t be found, *number one*. *Number two*, it is given to those companies without any demand on the cost of health care in the country. I’ve offered a plan which costs about \$75 billion a year but which controls costs by...” (DCD)

The combination of discourse organisers in (31) and (32) demonstrates Kerry’s concern for clarity and accuracy in his delivery.

(31) “*Well*, let me come back—what Governor Dean said in San Francisco, not to my face, was that I didn’t have the courage to stand up for gays in America. *Now*, I led the fight—in 1985, I was the original author of the 1985 civil rights act. I... [...] *In addition to that*, when he questions my courage, I really think that anybody who has measured the tests that I think I have performed over the last years...” (DPD)

In (31) Kerry uses “well” to redirect his speech back to a previous question he wants to comment in order to set the topic for his succeeding speech. Once he has readdressed the course of his delivery (and, incidentally, dodged a difficult direct question), Kerry uses “now” to narrow down even further his introduced topic. Thus, by means of this particular use of discourse organisers Kerry switches his speech from an introductory move (recalling a personal accusation from Governor Dean) to the setting of his own defence. The immediate use of another discourse organiser (“in addition to that”) makes even more apparent his concern for clarity and organisation.

Now consider (32), Kerry’s last intervention in the DCD:

(32) “*I think there are two things*. *Number one*, young people don’t believe that Social Security will be there for them. I intend to take the politics out of how we are going to guarantee that Social Security is sound into the future, and that requires leadership. And, *secondly*, I am going to ask Americans to join in the great effort of living up to our responsibilities on a global plight basis, not unlike George Marshall did with the Marshall Plan...” (DCD)

Once more, Kerry succeeds in producing an organised and clearly structured delivery by means of discourse organisers like “number one” (followed by topic1), and “secondly” (followed by topic2). We deem it important to highlight here that Kerry, in his effort to be clear, begins his final argumentation by using “I think there are two things”, which might be considered as a metalinguistic device to make explicit the structure of his successive delivery.

3.6. ADDRESSING FORMULAE

Kerry frequently addresses his interlocutors by means of their first name. This use of addressing formulae has different purposes depending on the context and the addressee. The following examples show

how Kerry's embedding of the first names of the moderators –see (33) and (34)– and the journalists –see (35)– in his discourse establishes a relationship of proximity between them:

(33) “*George*, I said at the time I would have preferred if we had given diplomacy a greater opportunity, but I think it was the right decision to disarm Saddam Hussein” (DPD)

(34) “Well, let me begin, *Brian*, by, first of all, saying I...” (DCD)

(35) “We Democrats fought hard to put those tax cuts in place, *Ron*” (DCD)

The senator also addresses most of his fellow party-members by means of their first name, which diminishes confrontational levels in the debate. In addition, as illustrated in (36), Kerry allows himself referring to other senators, congressmen and governors by their first name, which reduces the social distance between them, as well as other possible differences in their political statuses:

(36) “Well, I think what *Dennis* is saying is important and what *Dick* is saying is important...”. (DPD)

Nevertheless, in many occasions senator Kerry does not seem to share Governor Dean's views. In fact, in the debates, the opinions of each candidate are constantly in overt conflict. Thus, while Kerry often employs bare first names to refer to his fellow party-members, he keeps distances with Governor Dean by addressing him through the formula “office + surname”:

(37) “I think *Governor Dean* –excuse me– made a statement which I found quite extraordinary, and I still do”. (DPD)

(38) “Well, let me come back - what *Governor Dean* said in San Francisco, not to my face, was I didn't have the courage to stand up for gays in America [...] My position in fact is stronger than *Governor Dean's* [...] I don't need any lectures in courage from *Howard Dean*” (DPD)

Notice that, as his delivery develops in (38), the conversational topic becomes more personal. In this case, the use of governor Dean's first name is not intended to create a relationship of proximity –as in many other examples–, but reflects a shift from political to more personal spheres; furthermore, the emotive load and personal involvement become even more apparent in the last part of Kerry's intervention. Now consider next example:

(39) “I think *Governor Dean* is absolutely wrong, and he's wrong in his facts. [...]...If *Governor Dean* has his way and *Congressman Gephardt*, they're going to pay \$3,000 additional taxes.” (DCD)

In (39) Kerry criticises the policy proposed by Governor Dean and Congressman Gephardt. Unlike in (36), Kerry refers here to Gephardt by means of his office and surname –instead of using his first name– in order to keep a distance in terms of opinions. If he had used, say, “Dick” instead of

“Congressman Gephardt”, the first name would have worked as a downtoner making thus his criticism somewhat milder.

Although addressing interlocutors by their first name is obviously much more used in debates owing to their highly interactive nature, sometimes Kerry also uses first names to refer to individuals in the audience of his speeches. In example (40) the senator demonstrates social proximity and comradeship with the middle class by referring to an audience member, who embodies the prototype of the middle-class American worker, with his first name.

(40) “And more and more families are just like *Bill*”. (LWS)

3.7. EXPRESSING IDEOLOGY: “I BELIEVE / I THINK”

The expressions “I believe” and “I think” are continuously used by the senator, in speeches as much as in debates, to make explicit his own ideology and, by extension, to announce his policy as a candidate to the presidential office.

(41) “*I believe* it is the role of the president of the United States to maximize the ability to be successful and to minimize the cost to the American people, both financially and in lives. That’s common sense.” (MS)

(42) “No European country is made safer by a failed Iraq. And yet those countries are distinctly absent from the risk-bearing of this effort. Why? *I think* Americans have a right to ask why. And the answer to that question lies in both of those speeches I made...” (MS)

(43) “That means we would trade with no countries. It is—it is a policy for shutting the door. It’s either a policy for shutting the door if you believe it or it’s a policy of just telling people what they want to hear. *I think* there—there’s a middle ground that’s smart for America. No president can shut the door to globalization and no president should.”(DCD)

Notice that a sense of patriotism is attached to the opinions of the candidate expressed in examples (41) to (43), wherein expressions like “the United States”, “American people”, “Americans”, and “America” appear in the sentences introduced by “I believe” and “I think”. This, in addition to the fact that Kerry’s views are presented as a positive factor for the whole American community, paves the way for the image of a presidential candidate who is strongly concerned with the American people.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the previous section we have attempted to illustrate with examples the main rhetorical devices used by John F. Kerry in order to shape discourse and convince his interlocutors and the audience of the validity of his claims. This section provides a brief outline of the most outstanding rhetorical features that characterise the discourse of the Democratic presidential candidate.¹¹

A most remarkable feature of Kerry's discourse in the four events analysed in this study is his organisation and concern for clarity. This concern is reflected in a very personal and productive use of a defined set of discourse organisers, but also in the use of other devices such as three-part statements, contrastive pairs or repetition, which results in the production of tightly-woven pieces of discourse.

Three-part statements, contrastive pairs, and repetition are frequently used in Kerry's delivery as discourse management devices. Nevertheless, the candidate also employs them in speeches as much as in debates in order to give special prominence to certain parts of his discourse. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that, in the case of debates, Kerry often finishes his interventions with some of these devices. The clarity and strength that his argumentations acquire with the use of these devices yield optimal results in creating a solid image of the candidate as a sensible and committed politician with very clear ideological convictions and political goals.

The particular use of pronouns made by Kerry in his oral delivery is not whimsical, but obviously the product of prior introspection intended to achieve very specific objectives. Instances of "inclusive we", for instance, are rather frequent in his discourse, and this grammatical form –in its inclusive function– is deliberately used by the candidate to diminish the social distance with his audience.

A similar function is attached to the addressing formulae employed by Kerry in the analysed speeches and debates; one of the most peculiar characteristics of his delivery is the use of first names, which helps him to establish a relationship of proximity with his interlocutors in the debates and with the audience in his speeches. Additionally, expressions like "I think" and "I believe", which are very frequent in his oral discourse, are used by the candidate to express his political beliefs and personal opinions. These, in turn, are purposefully devised to reflect some of the major needs of the middle class, and to provide potential solutions to fulfil such needs. Kerry's opinions are thus identified somehow with the opinions of the audience, which caters for a closer relationship between both parts.

Some events like the debates analysed in this study have a very interactive nature and thus may require the participants' use of their best improvisational abilities. Nonetheless, in spite of this fact, the results of our analysis seem to indicate that Kerry's delivery in speeches as much as in debates is not spontaneous, but thoroughly prepared in advance.

One could conclude from these results that the discourse produced by Kerry in political contexts follows a series of patterns that provide for a clear and ordered style full of ostensible spontaneity. However, this "spontaneity" conceals a selective use of linguistic devices product of previous premeditation and discourse elaboration.

Finally, we deem it necessary to note here that our contentions are derived exclusively from our analysis of the four events that compose the corpus for this study. The analysis of the same rhetoric devices in other corpora might yield somewhat different results, especially if those corpora were compiled out of the oral delivery produced by Kerry in other political events taking place after November 2004. The patterns in Kerry's oral delivery may have changed after that date, as he is no longer a candidate to the presidential office, but one of the members of the Opposition to the current Republican government.

NOTES

- 1- The notion of ideology is described by Thomans & Wareing (1999: 34) as "...any set of beliefs which, to people who hold them, appear to be logical and natural".

- 2- Detailed information on *Project Vote Smart* (www.vote-smart.org) –including the dates of access to the transcriptions used in this paper– is provided in the References section.
- 3- The selected transcriptions contain some irregularities that differentiate them from the original speech. That is, the contracted forms of words typical of oral discourse that were actually produced by Kerry in both speeches and debates were not reflected in the transcriptions (they were transcribed into full forms). Nevertheless, these irregularities do not affect the purposes of our study, as our main concern here is not pronunciation or the determination of formal and informal register cues in political language, but the study of general rhetoric patterns.
- 4- All the civil and political authorities appearing in this paper are referred to by the particular office they were holding at the time of the speeches and debates analysed in this paper.
- 5- At the time of the event: governor Howard Dean from Vermont, senator John Edwards from North Carolina, congressman Richard Gephardt from Missouri, senator Bob Graham from Florida, senator John Kerry from Massachusetts, congressman Dennis Kucinich from Ohio, senator Joseph Lieberman from Connecticut, ambassador Carol Moseley Braun from Illinois, and reverend Al Sharpton from New York.
- 6- Those attending the former debate plus the retired general Wesley Clark, from Arkansas.
- 7- MS contains an inferior number of words because the introductory and last sections are omitted in the transcription as a consequence of certain technical problems with the sound system installation. Nevertheless, the reasons for its inclusion in the final corpus in spite of its incompleteness are explained in further paragraphs.
- 8- Speeches based on very particular and local issues were discarded in order to avoid that the specific topical development underlying the events at issue should constrain anyhow the language (especially the lexicon) appearing in the speeches included as part of our corpus. ‘General’ samples were given priority in our selection of speeches, chiefly in order to be consistent with the aforementioned diversity of topics embraced by both debates.
- 9- In the examples, italics indicate the exact elements that compose the rhetoric device under analysis.
- 10- Third person singular and plural pronoun usage is not considered in this study because the occurrences of these pronominal forms in the analysed discourse do not seem to bear any relevant purposive load.
- 11-Our contentions apply exclusively to the results obtained from the corpus analysed in this study. The analysis of the same rhetoric devices in other corpora, especially might provide somewhat different results.

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