

A Pragmatic Study of Derogation in American Election Campaign Speeches

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Abstract—Language is sometimes used for influencing people negatively. This is done via the use of various derogatory strategies. Therefore, the present study deals with derogation pragmatically in American election campaign speeches. Precisely, the current work attempts to answer the following questions: (1) How is derogation approached pragmatically in American election campaign speeches? (2) Through which impoliteness strategies is derogation realized? (3) What is the target of derogation? Is it the public face or the personal face? And what are the foci of derogation? The study aims to find answers to the previous questions through reviewing the literature related to derogation and adopting an eclectic model for analyzing the data under investigation. Besides, a statistical means represented by the percentage equation is used to calculate the results. The main conclusion is that American presidential rivals use different impoliteness strategies to derogate each other; through this derogation either the public face or the personal face is threatened.

Index Terms—derogation, impoliteness, focus of derogation, face, American election campaign speeches

I. INTRODUCTION

Derogation is a deliberate act which is typically defined as the act of belittling or disparaging others (Web Source 1). It is pragmatically realized by appealing to various impoliteness strategies. Therefore, the current study adheres to Culpeper's (1996, 2005), Bousfield's (2008), and Garcia-Pastor's (2008) impoliteness strategies to examine how derogation is verbally expressed.

As for political campaigns, they are considered as a fertile area where political rivals employ various impolite strategies that result in derogatory utterances which threaten and attack the personal or public face of a particular target, whether present or absent in the communicative event. Investigating all this lies within the domain of pragmatics which is the study of the speaker's intended meaning. Accordingly, the present study sheds light on derogation in American election campaign speeches from a pragmatic perspective. In relation to this aim, it is hypothesized that: (1) Derogation is pragmatically approached through various impoliteness strategies, (2) Political rivals in American presidential political campaigns use criticism, insult, as well as other impolite strategies to derogate and disparage each other, (3) The target of derogation in American election campaign speeches is others' public face and the focus of derogation is moral shortcomings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Derogation

Derogation is defined as an act which belittles or disparages someone. It is the expression of low opinion and lack of respect for someone (Web Source 1). The Collins Cobuild English language dictionary (1987) defined derogation as the use of expressions that "show what a low opinion somebody has of someone or something" (p. 30). Using derogatory expressions is intended to hurt. Racial and sexist slurs and making a joke about someone are all derogatory. Hornby (2004) defined derogation as "showing a critical attitude towards others, or insulting others" (p. 339).

Hom (2012) stated that insults, criticisms, and slurs are symbolic vehicles intended to derogate targeted individuals or groups. According to Fraleigh and Tuman (2010), slurs, such as slut, nigger, and bitch, are terms that are usually used to derogate certain members and are widely considered among the most taboo and offensive of all derogatory linguistic expressions. Broadly speaking, Ilie (2001) argued that there are three basic foci of derogations: "physical impairments, low intellectual capacity, and moral shortcomings" (p. 250).

Political derogations have certain goals such as: embarrassing and humiliating political rivals belonging to opposite parties and expressing different ideological views, challenging the authority and institutional role of political rivals, redressing the political balance, etc. (Ilie, 2001).

(a). Derogation and Impoliteness

Culpeper (1996) defined impoliteness as the "parasite of politeness" or "the use of intentionally face threatening acts" (p. 355). Culpeper (1996) suggests five strategies that speakers resort to for the sake of producing derogatory utterances. These strategies are as follows:

1. Bald on record impoliteness: performing the face threatening act in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way. This impoliteness strategy is used when the speaker intends to attack the face of the hearer through the use of directives and the modal "must".
2. Positive impoliteness: a strategy which includes minor strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants. These minor strategies include the following list: the use of inappropriate identity markers and address forms, the use of obscure or secretive language (e.g., mystifying the other with a jargon or the use of a code known to others but not the target), snubbing the other and making him feel uncomfortable, the use of taboo words, the use of profane language, calling the other names, and the use of derogatory nominations. Other minor strategies include: be disinterested, unconcerned, and unsympathetic. Culpeper et al. (2003) mention that the target of the threat is evident and the utterances are of assertive/expressive type.
3. Negative impoliteness: a strategy that includes minor strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants through scorning, ridiculing, condescending, and explicitly associating the other with negative aspects. Other minor strategies include: belittle the other (e.g., through the use of diminutives), emphasize your relative power, and personalize through the use of the pronouns *I* and *you*.
4. Sarcasm or mock- politeness: is one of the strategies of impoliteness. It means performing the face threatening act with insincere strategies. Thus, sarcasm, according to Culpeper (1996) includes "statements of impolite beliefs designed in a polite manner" (p. 356). Accordingly, sarcasm comprises the use of insincere politeness strategies.
5. Withhold politeness: is the absence of politeness work where it is in prospect.

Bousfield (2008) mentioned other strategies that have not been mentioned by Culpeper (1996, 2005). He listed the following strategies that result in derogatory utterances. These are: (1) criticizing and dispraising the hearer, some action or inaction by the hearer or some entity in which the hearer has invested face. A criticism can be powerfully or institutionally impolite and derogatory and (2) questioning others stance, beliefs, rights, obligations, ethics, etc. Generally, Bousfield stated that challenges are represented in a form of question. They could cause a positive face threat since they implicate an underlying criticism of the intended hearer in some way or another.

In a similar vein, Garcia-Pastor (2008) presented a number of positive face-oriented impoliteness strategies. These are as follows: (1) conveying dislike for others, their things, actions, values, and opinions, (2) using aggressive punning, (3) being ironic/sarcastic, and (4) belittling or diminishing the importance of the hearer and his things, actions, values, and opinions.

(b). *Derogation and Face*

Face is an essential concept in politeness and impoliteness theories. It can be defined as "individuals' self-esteem" (Culpeper, 1996, p. 355). Many acts can threaten or attack face such as criticism and insult.

Political speeches, specifically campaign election speeches, are replete with face threatening acts at the propositional, interactional, non-verbal, and paralinguistic levels (Wilson, 1990). These acts are intended to disparage others' prestige, reputation, and self-image. Threats to the hearer's positive and negative face may be observed concurrently. Hence, derogatory expressions are abundant.

(c). *Target of Derogation*

Harris (2000) stated that the target of derogation means which face is threatened by the derogatory remarks: the public face or the personal face.

Threats to personal face comprise derogatory remarks about someone's personality, while threats to public face include derogatory remarks about someone, underlining his professional stance. Public face is widely threatened in terms of ethics, whereas personal face is threatened in terms of character, style, and intelligence. Thus, the targets of derogation are diverse including ethics, character, intelligence, talking style, sexual power, decisions, opinions etc. (Harris, 2001).

B. *Election Campaign Speeches*

Elections are the centerpiece of democracy. Wilson (1990) stated that election campaign speeches are essential tools for the purpose of manipulating the public and shaping their thoughts through the use of specific linguistic means by which politicians intend "to increase their chances of winning the election, to assert themselves against political opponents, and to advertise their own political position" (p. 50). Similarly, Wodack and Koller (2008) argued that an election speech is "the most crude and emotionalizing in tone. It aggressively attacks the enemy more fiercely than other speeches since vindication against the rival and the acquirement of power are its main purposes" (p. 249).

Generally, political communication can be characterized, in many respects, by impoliteness than by politeness. Thus, many aspects of derogatory or pejorative language are evident in political discourse. Moreover, antagonism and aggressiveness are consequences and impolite derogatory communicative acts are frequent. In politics, derogatory expressions are intended to harm and disarm political rivals.

C. *Model of Analysis*

The model of analysis adopted in this study is eclectic. It is divided into three levels. The first level concerns the target of derogation. Under this heading, it will be shown whether other's personal or public face is threatened by the derogatory remarks. The second level elucidates the focus of derogation which may be physical impairment, intellectual capacity, and moral shortcomings. The third level addresses derogation as an act which is realized through the use of certain impoliteness strategies. In this level, some of: Culpeper's (1996, 2005), Bousfield's (2008), and Garcia-Pastor's (2008) impoliteness strategies are employed. Figure 1 below summarizes the eclectic model of analysis:

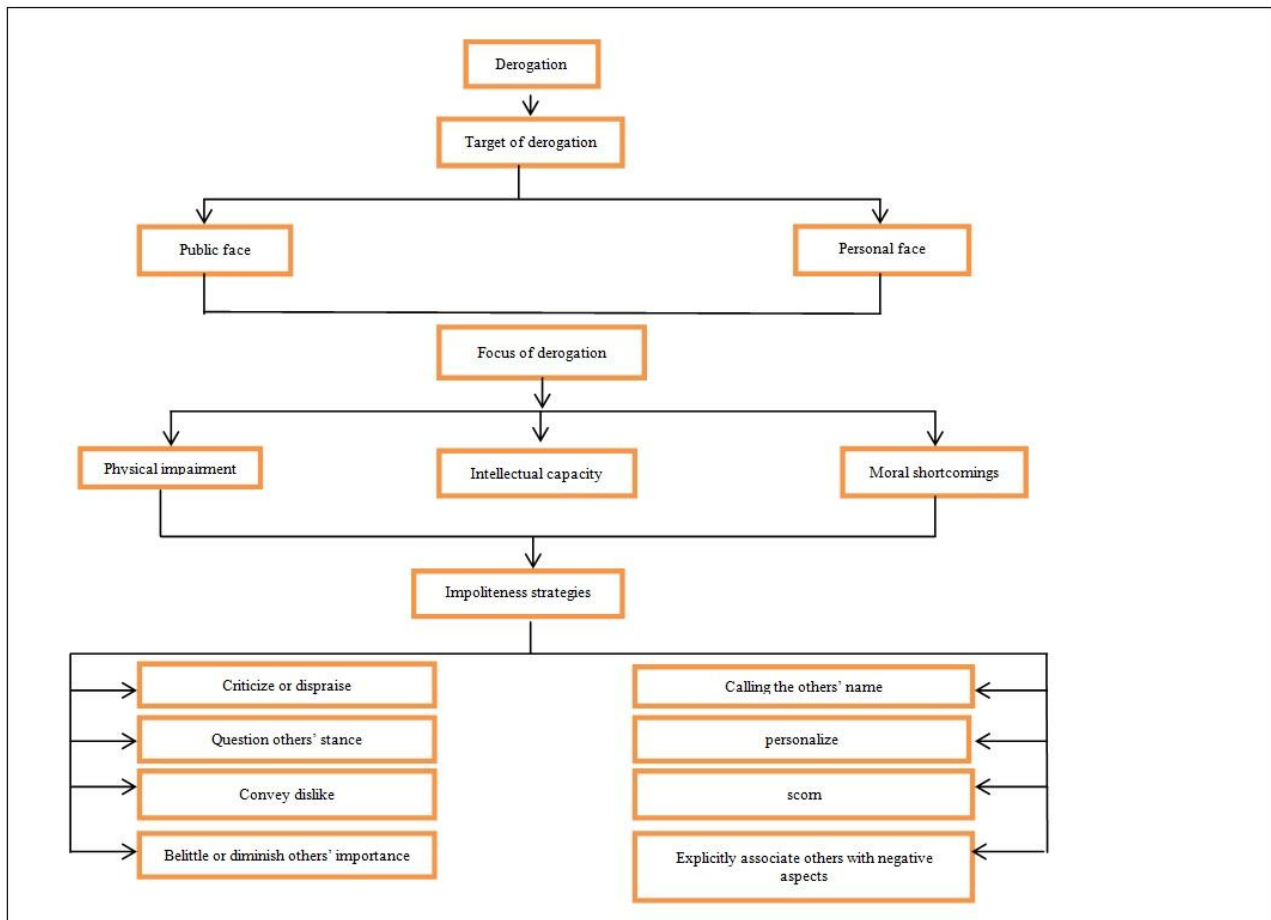


Figure 1. The Eclectic Model of Analysis

III. DATA DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

A. Data Description

The data of the study is represented by the following American election campaign speeches: (1) Donald Trump's campaign speech in Wisconsin, (2) Donald Trump's NYC Speech on Stakes of the Election, (3) Hillary Clinton's Campaign Speech in Reno, Nevada, and (4) Hillary Clinton's Campaign Speech in San Diego.

B. Data Analysis

The selected extracts are analyzed in accordance with the modal diagrammed in Figure 1.

(a). Donald Trump's Campaign Speech in Wisconsin

1. Extract 1

My opponent would rather protect the offender than the victim. Hillary Clinton-backed policies are responsible for the problems in the inner cities today and a vote for her is a vote for another generation of poverty, high crime, and lost opportunities. (Web source 2)

In the previous extract, Trump talks about the riots in Milwaukee and Chicago wherein policemen and many citizens have been killed and wounded. He criticizes Hillary Clinton for being responsible of these riots. The target of derogation is the personal face as the derogatory remarks are about Hillary's personality which is threatened in terms of character, decisions, and intelligence as well as the public face since derogation is about Hillary Clinton underlining her professional stance as the Secretary of State. The focus of derogation is intellectual capacity since Trump criticizes Clinton for having low intellectual capacity in keeping order in the country. The pragmatic strategies used to realize

derogation are: (1) criticizing and dispraising Hillary Clinton's action of protecting the offenders against the policemen and inaction of being unable to put an end to the riots. (2) conveying dislike for Clinton and her actions arguing that "a vote for her is a vote for another generation of poverty, high crime, and lost opportunities" (Web source 2). (3) calling Hillary's name without any title of address.

2. Extract 2

To defeat crime and Radical Islamic Terrorism in our country, to win trade in our country, you need tremendous physical and mental strength and stamina. Hillary Clinton doesn't have that strength and stamina. She cannot win for you. Most importantly, she has bad judgment. Bad judgment on terrorism, bad judgment on foreign policy. (Web source 2)

The target of derogation in the previous extract is the public face and the personal face since Trump is derogating Clinton's professional stance as well as her personality, decisions, and ability. The focus of derogation here is Clinton's physical impairment and intellectual capacity. The strategies used to derogate are the following: (1) belittling or diminishing the importance of the other- Trump belittles Hillary Clinton and accuses her of being weak "Hillary Clinton doesn't have that strength and stamina" (Web source 2) and of having "bad judgment on terrorism, bad judgment on foreign policy" (Web source 2). He makes a comparison between himself and Clinton representing Clinton as a weak leader lacking strength and stamina to defeat crime and terrorism in America while showing himself as one with "tremendous physical and mental strength and stamina" (Web source 2). (2) conveying dislike for Clinton's alleged weak personality. (3) calling Hillary's name without any title of address. (4) criticizing and dispraising Hillary for lacking "strength and stamina" (Web source 2) and for having "bad judgment" (Web source 2).

(b). *Donald Trump's NYC Speech on Stakes of the Election*

3. Extract 3

When I see the crumbling roads and bridges, or the dilapidated airports, or the factories moving overseas to Mexico, or to other countries, I know these problems can all be fixed, but not by Hillary Clinton – only by me. Hillary Clinton who, as most people know, is a world class liar – just look at her pathetic email and server statements, or her phony landing in Bosnia where she said she was under attack but the attack turned out to be young girls handing her flowers, a total self-serving lie. The other candidate in this race has spent her entire life making money for special interests – and taking money from special interests. (Web source 3)

The derogatory remarks in the previous extract are directed to Hillary Clinton underlining her ethics. Thus, the target of derogation is the public face. Besides, Hillary's personal face is also threatened since the derogatory remarks are directed to her character. As for the foci of derogation, they include low intellectual capacity (since Trump criticizes Hillary Clinton for being unable to fix the problems in the US.) and moral shortcomings (since Trump calls Hillary a liar who makes money for special interests). Derogation in the extract is realized by the following impoliteness strategies: (1) personalizing through 'I' and 'you': Trump derogates Hillary's capacities in leading the US saying that he is the only one who will fix the problems there. (2) calling the other name without any title of address is another derogatory strategy used by Trump who kept saying Hillary without any title of address. (3) Trump is conveying dislike for Hillary's personality, inactions (being unable to fix the problems in the US) and values ("making money for special interests" (Web source 3)- as if he is making her responsible of stealing the country's money at the expense of Americans). (4) in saying "Hillary Clinton is a world class liar" (Web source 3), Trump is associating her with a negative aspect, which is lying. (5) Trump belittles Hillary's policies as Secretary of State.

4. Extract 4

Hillary Clinton has perfected the politics of personal profit and theft. She ran the State Department like her own personal hedge fund – doing favors for oppressive regimes, and many others, in exchange for cash. Hillary Clinton wants to be President. But she doesn't have the temperament, or, as Bernie Sanders' said, the judgement, to be president. No Secretary of State has been more wrong, more often, and in more places than Hillary Clinton. Her decisions spread death, destruction and terrorism everywhere she touched. She lacks the temperament, the judgment and the competence to lead. Hillary Clinton may be the most corrupt person ever to seek the presidency. (Web source 3)

The target of derogation in Trump's speech is the public face since his derogatory remarks are about Hillary underlining her professional stance as Secretary of State. Moreover, Hillary's personal face is threatened since the derogatory remarks are also directed to her character, decisions, and doings. The focus of derogation is Hillary's low intellectual capacity ("disgraceful performance" (Web source 3)) and moral shortcomings ("personal profit and theft" (Web source 3)). Trump resorts to the following impoliteness strategies to derogate Hillary and her in/actions: (1) calling others name (Hillary) without any title of address in order to derogate her in front of Americans. (2) criticizing and dispraising Hillary's policy of perfecting the "politics of profit and theft" (Web source 3) and her performance in running "the State Department like her own personal hedge fund – doing favors for oppressive regimes, and many others, in exchange for cash" (Web source 3). (3) belittling the rival- in saying "she doesn't have the temperament, or the judgment, to be president" (Web source 3) and "She lacks the temperament, the judgment and the competence to lead" (Web source 3), Trump tries to belittle or diminish the importance of Hillary and her capacity to be a president of the United States. (4) in saying "Hillary Clinton may be the most corrupt person ever to seek the presidency" (Web source 3) and "No Secretary of State has been more wrong, more often, and in more places than Hillary Clinton. Her

decisions spread death, destruction and terrorism everywhere she touched” (Web source 3), Trump explicitly associates Hillary with negative aspects (i.e., corruption and wrong). (5) in criticizing and belittling Hillary, Trump conveys dislike for Hillary and her actions.

(c). *Hillary Clinton’s Campaign Speech in Reno, Nevada*

5. Extract 5

From the start, Donald Trump has built his campaign on prejudice and paranoia. He is taking hate groups mainstream, and helping a radical fringe take over the Republican Party. His disregard for the values that make our country grate is profoundly dangerous...Donald Trump misses so much. (Web source 4)

Derogation in Hillary Clinton’s speech is targeted to the personal face because she derogates Donald Trump’s personality, ability, and opinions. The foci of derogation are low intellectual and moral shortcomings. Hillary disdains Trump’s prejudice and paranoia in building his campaign. Pragmatically, Hillary resorts to the following impoliteness strategies for the sake of derogation: (1) Hillary criticizes Trump for being unfit as a president saying “Donald Trump misses so much” (Web source 4). Moreover, she criticizes his actions of building “his campaign on prejudice and paranoia”, helping “a radical fringe take over the Republican Party”, and showing “disregard for the values that make our country grate” (Web source 4). (2) Hillary belittles or diminishes the importance of Trump and his actions because she keeps criticizing him and his actions and inactions stating, in many occasions, that he is not appropriate as a president. (3) calling the other name without any title of address wherein Hillary keeps saying Donald Trump without any address term. (4) in criticizing and belittling Trump, Hillary conveys dislike for him as well as his actions, values and opinions.

6. Extract 6

Now Trump’s lack of knowledge or experience or solutions would be bad enough. But what he’s doing here is more sinister. Trump is reinforcing harmful stereotypes and offering a dog whistle to his most hateful supporters. It’s a disturbing preview of what kind of President he’d be... A man with a long history of racial discrimination...should never run our government our command our military. Someone so detached from reality should never be in charge of making decisions that are as real as they come. And that is yet another reason why Donald Trump is simply temperamentally unfit to be president of the United States”. (Web source 4)

The target of derogation in the previous extract is the personal face since Hillary derogates Trump’s personality, decisions, values, and opinions. The foci of derogation are moral shortcomings and low intellectual capacity “lack of knowledge or experience or solutions. Donald Trump is simply temperamentally unfit to be president of the United States” (Web source 4). Hillary Clinton derogates Donald Trump resorting to the following impoliteness strategies: (1) Hillary criticizes Trump for lacking knowledge, experience, or solutions. She also criticizes his action of “offering a dog whistle to his most hateful supporters” (Web source 4) and his sinister actions “what he’s doing here is more sinister” (Web source 4). (2) Hillary explicitly associates Donald Trump with negative aspects through accusing him of being racist and being “detached from reality” (Web source 4). (3) calling the other name without any title of address is another derogatory strategy employed by Hillary in her speech about Donald Trump. (4) in criticizing Trump and associating him with negative aspects, Hillary conveys dislike for Trump as well as his actions,, values and opinions.

(d). *Hillary Clinton’s Campaign Speech in San Diego*

7. Extract 7

Donald Trump’s ideas aren’t just different – they are dangerously incoherent. They’re not even really ideas – just a series of bizarre rants, personal feuds, and outright lies. He is not just unprepared – he is temperamentally unfit to hold an office that requires knowledge, stability and immense responsibility. This is someone who has threatened to abandon our allies in NATO – the countries that work with us to root out terrorists abroad before they strike us at home. (Web source 5)

In the previous extract, the target of derogation is the personal face since Hillary Clinton derogates Trump’s personality, intelligence, values, and opinions. The foci of derogation are moral shortcomings and low intellectual capacity. Hillary disdains Trump and his ideas implying that he lacks knowledge, stability and responsibility. She resorts to the following impoliteness strategies for the sake of derogating Trump: (1) she criticizes and dispraises Trump for being unprepared and unfit to “hold an office that requires knowledge, stability and immense responsibility” (Web source 5). (2) she also belittles him and diminishes the importance of his ideas stating that his ideas are “dangerously incoherent. They’re not even really ideas – just a series of bizarre rants, personal feuds, and outright lies” (Web source 5). (3) Hillary calls Trump’s name without any title of address; this means that she does not respect him, on the contrary, she derogates him. (4) in criticizing Trump for being unprepared and unfit as a president, Hillary conveys dislike for Trump and his ideas.

8. Extract 8

Unlike him, I have some experience with the tough calls and the hard work of statecraft. I don’t understand Donald’s bizarre fascination with dictators and strongmen who have no love for America. Now, I’ll leave it to the psychiatrists to explain his affection for tyrants. And defeating global terrorist networks and protecting the homeland takes more than empty talk and a handful of slogans. It takes a real plan, real experience and real

leadership. Donald Trump lacks all three. What happens to the moral example we set – for the world and for our own children – if our President engages in bigotry? Because making Donald Trump our commander-in-chief would be a historic mistake. (Web source 5)

The target of derogation in the previous extract is the personal face since Hillary Clinton derogates Trump's personality. The foci of derogation are moral shortcomings and low intellectual capacity "making Donald Trump our commander-in-chief would be a historic mistake" (Web source 5). Hillary resorts to the following impoliteness strategies for the sake of derogating Trump: (1) she personalizes through the use of *I* and *you*; she states that she has "some experience with the tough calls and the hard work of statecraft" (Web source 5), while Donald Trump does not. In saying so, she tries to emphasize her relative power. (2) Hillary criticizes Trump for being fascinated with dictators and for his "affection for tyrants" (Web source 5). She directly criticizes Trump and indirectly conveys that he is a dictator and a tyrant like the dictators and tyrants he is fascinated with. (3) she belittles or diminishes the importance of Trump and his values, opinions and actions stating that he lacks "real plan, real experience and real leadership" (Web source 5). (4) Hillary questions Trump's stance, beliefs, rights, obligations, and ethics in "What happens to the moral example we set – for the world and for our own children – if our President engages in bigotry?" (Web source 5); in her question, she implicates an underlying criticism. She intends to say that Trump is a bigot who does not deserve to be a president. Moreover, (5) Hillary conveys dislike for Trump as a person. (6) calling Donald Trump's name without any title of address is another impoliteness strategy employed by Hillary for the sake of derogation.

C. Discussions of the Results

After analysing the data qualitatively, it is time to analyse them quantitatively. Thus, Table 1 and 2 below show the frequencies and percentages of the impoliteness strategies used for the sake of derogation by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton:

TABLE 1
THE STATISTICS OF THE IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES USED FOR DEROGATION BY DONALD TRUMP

Impoliteness strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Criticize and dispraise	5	18%
Convey dislike	4	14%
Call others' name	11	39%
Belittle or diminish others' importance	4	14%
Personalize through I and You	1	4%
Associate others with negative aspects	3	11%

TABLE 2
THE STATISTICS OF THE IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES USED FOR DEROGATION BY HILLARY CLINTON

Impoliteness strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Criticize and dispraise	8	27%
Convey dislike	4	13.5%
Call others' name	10	33%
Belittle or diminish others' importance	4	13.5%
Personalize through I and You	1	3%
Associate others with negative aspects	2	7%
Question others' stance	1	3%

The tables show that both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton use the same strategies of impoliteness for the sake of derogation with slight differences. Yet, Hillary Clinton uses another strategy which is not used by Donald Trump. This strategy is questioning others' stance to convey a covert criticism.

IV. CONCLUSION

Derogation is approached pragmatically in American election campaign speeches through the use of different impoliteness strategies which are intended to harm and disarm political rivals. Political rivals, namely Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, resort to the following impoliteness strategies for the sake of derogation: criticizing and dispraising, conveying dislike for the rivals, their actions, opinions, values, and decisions, calling others name without any title of address, belittling or diminishing others importance as well as the importance of their actions, personalizing through 'I' and 'you' for the sake of emphasizing one's positives and emphasizing others' negatives, and associating the rival with negative aspects. Hillary Clinton resorts to another strategy which is not used by Donald Trump. This strategy is questioning the rival's stance to convey a covert criticism.

The target of derogation in American election campaign speeches is either the public face or the personal face. Donald Trump derogates Hillary Clinton's public face through directing derogatory remarks to Hillary underlining her professional stance as Secretary of State as well as her personal face, while Hillary Clinton derogates Donald Trump's personal face through directing derogatory remarks to his character, values, ethics, opinions, and decisions. The foci of derogation in American election campaign speeches are physical impairment, low intellectual capacity, or moral shortcomings.

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