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## RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S SELECTED TWEETS

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**Abstract** – Rhetoric is shifted away from its old version in order to meet the new demands of social media platforms. This transformation in rhetoric has invented a new term so called 'digital rhetoric' in which the speaker interacts with his/ her audience through the use of social media. Digital rhetoric is very important in which the speaker can address the whole globe not only the locals who have access to internet services. The study maintains that among the figures who utilize digital rhetoric are politicians. Among the politicians who uses digital rhetoric is the American President Donald Trump. The study states that Trump utilizes some techniques for certain purposes. Trump utilizes epideictic speech to blame others and to shift away criticism from him and to draw the public attention that he is an innocent person. In addition, Trump utilizes name calling to degrade those who are against his political actions, defend himself and to get the public support.

Keywords – rhetoric, digital rhetoric, epideictic speech, name-calling, adherence, identity

### **Introduction**

Rhetoric is one of the effective devices used in persuasive speeches of individuals. It has an impact on the world in general and society in specific.

As the world is progressing, it can be noticed advances in technology in every domain. In order to account for these developments, communities discover new ways to unity these developments with their needs. These new technologies brought new ways of communication through the use of platforms such as social media and websites, or what is so called 'digital rhetoric'. Accordingly, prominent figures take the chance to communicate with people online. Political figures are one of the prominent figures who utilize digital rhetorical platforms to be in touch with their audience, especially during their election campaigns.

In order to understand rhetoric and how it is used by political figures, it is important to understand first how digital rhetoric platforms utilize to create rhetorical communication? Thus, it is decisive to limit the view towards the effect of rhetoric and how it is utilized to create persuasive speeches within community. In order to understand how the American President Donald Trump utilizes digital rhetoric, it would be of a great benefit to fully understand how these platforms operates and have an impact on community. In addition, digital rhetoric emerges to society recently in the last few years to be the central attention of society. People use rhetoric in their daily life arguments. Accordingly, people utilize some tactics to make their speeches strong and intentional. Because politics is the center of the society, politicians utilize language which can match the style and the culture of their societies. Politicians pay a great attention to all types of audience and the content they are trying to deliver. A new term has been introduced so-called 'Society Reality'. Palczewski et al (2016:12) says that people's or group's ability to communicate with each other is based on their understanding the basic elements of language. Three essential elements integrate together to form a full understanding of the elements of language; people ideologies, systems of their beliefs and culture. These ideologies construct our interpretations of each words we are encounter. The way people interpret language is called 'symbolic action', i.e., meaning specification for each word.

## **Rhetoric and politics**

The origin of rhetoric goes back to Aristotle era. He focuses on rhetorical devices and their effect in delivering messages. Crystal (2008: 416) states that rhetoric is the study of persuasive writings or speaking, especially in public speeches. Jasinski (2001: 210) suggests that speech making can be broke down into three subfields: (1) Ecomium, which is the speech of blame or praise addressed towards an institute or a person (2) Panegyric, which is the speeches address in ceremonies and (3) Epitaphios Logos, which is the speeches address in funeral.

Rhetoric lies in the speaker's intention after delivering the message wither to persuade or to convince his audience. There are various ways for the speaker to achieve his/her intention, one of them is technology. Thus, the way people use devices in which technology brought invents new ways of achieving rhetoric not only for a small group of people but for the whole world. Losh (2009: 47) states that there is no need for computers to achieve digital rhetoric. Accordingly, she clarifies that digital rhetoric is inconsistent.

Decorum plays an important role in digital rhetoric because it expresses our behavior online in which we say and discuss things on digital platforms. Bengtsson and Bengt (2018: 99-103) defines decorum saying that it is series of behaviors in which people present virtually and can be regarded as an aspect of politeness in social media interactions. Jasinski (2001: 146-47) says that decorum and other related concepts such as appropriateness, propriety and timing are the central areas in rhetoric. Concerning Trump's decorum is through digital rhetoric in which he found himself relay on, such as Twitter platform.

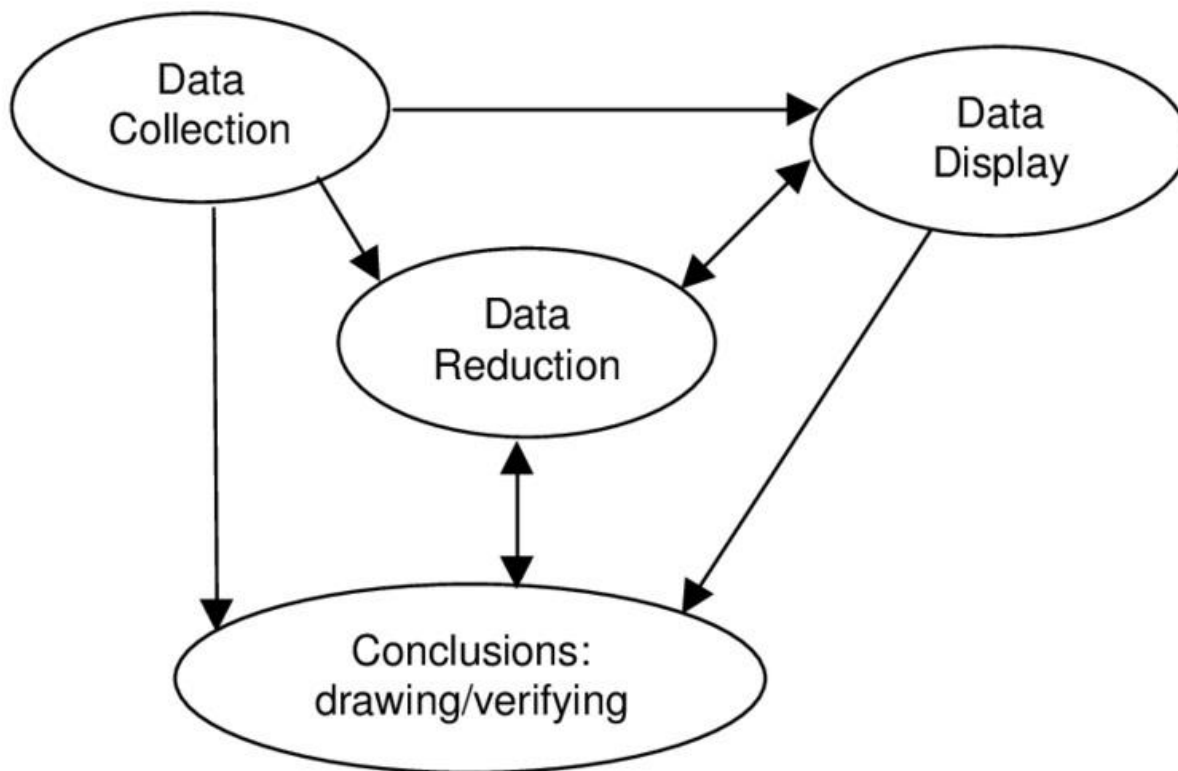
Jasinski (Ibid: 147) clarify that Aristotle divided rhetoric into three main subfields: subject matter, occasion and audience, and ethos. Subject matter means that the speaker must find a certain topic which has an impact on audience. Occasion and audience means that the speaker must choose the appropriate audience and event in order to deliver the message. Ethos means

that the speaker should maintain an image which has a common ground with the audience and it should be powerful.

The concept of decorum is the rules and boundaries that people tie to when engaging and interacting in discussions in different online platforms. Robert Hariman (1992: 152) states that decorum integrates stylistic variations with social knowledge for speakers to succeed in their political speeches. He exemplifies decorum as a grammar of a person who has self-control. From a political point of view, powerful figures and politicians need to pretend as professionals who are capable of ruling their countries to success.

### **Research Methodology**

The analytical framework of the paper is a qualitative one. It is used to focus on many aspects of language such as social problems, opinions, values, and meanings. The qualitative analysis adopts descriptive approach in order to explain and understand political tweets of the American President Donald Trump. The paper focuses on the language choices and some devices such as persuasion. The study aims at exploring certain strategies utilized by the American President Trump. The tweets are collected from Donald Trump Twitter account. The study adopts an interactive model introduced by Huberman and Miles in 1984 as shown in figure No. 1.



*Figure 1. The Interactive Model of Huberman and Miles in 1984*

### 1. The Analysis of Rhetoric in Donald Trump's Tweets

After getting a full understanding of rhetoric and decorum, now it is the time to apply them to Donald Trump's tweets. In spite of all the speeches and tweets he caused by using digital rhetoric, Trump draws people's attention toward his name and personality. Accordingly, he considers himself as a leader of his country and this concluded from the continuous addressing tweets to his audience. The following is the analysis of some selected tweets by the American President Donald Trump during his election campaign.

- *'The Democrats have been talking about impeaching Donald Trump since before he was inaugurated.'* @StoveDoocy @foxandfriends And for no reason other than the great success we are having with the Economy, the

*Military, Vets, Tax and Regulation Cuts, HealthCare, and so much more!  
(Trump 2019)*

In this tweet, Trump attacks the media mainstream to introduce himself to the world through the internet. He is talking about impeachment and he calls for Fox News to fuel and cover this topic. He wants to convince his audience through listing off the success he achieved in the following domains: economy, military, vets, tax and regulation cuts, healthcare and others (Trump, 2019). In addition, Trump intends to achieve two things through this tweet; first, he uses digital rhetoric to address two different sides of media, Fox news in which he has been in tension with and friendly media. Secondly, rhetoric interpretation suggested that Trump utilizes this tweet for ironic purposes as he wants to convey his message that Steve Doocey has a wrong impression on him since he brings all success to his country. Trump wants to clarify that Fox and other media attacked him for no reason.

- *'The very thing that they are accusing President Trump of doing (which I didn't do), was actually done by Joe Biden. Continues to be a double standard.'* @RepDevinNunes @foxandfriends *These people are stone cold Crooked. Also, who is this so-called 'whistleblower' who doesn't ...*  
(Trump 2019)

In this tweet, Trump violates decorum when he uses digital rhetoric inappropriately and blaming and mocking others to raise himself as a hero and put others down. Trump uses unpresidential style to condemn all those who are against his policy and political actions. This tweet is another example of violations against decorum standards by using harsh language which is against society agreement. In this social media, Twitter, Trump is able to carry out his message by using digital rhetoric as a source to deliver his message of persuasion to his audience. Another rhetorical apparatus used by Trump is so-called 'epideictic'. It is a rhetorical apparatus used to persuade the audience either to blame or praise

someone. Trump uses such tool to address the outside groups or individuals. Thus, the analysis of Trump's tweets always contains violations in decorum in order to persuade a large number of audience. As Losh (2009) clarifies that Trump utilizes epideictic to blame Biden and as a result he (Trump) breaches decorum in presidency and politics.

- *'Like every American, I deserve to meet my accuser, especially when this accuser, the so-called 'Whistleblower,' represented a perfect conversation with a foreign leader in a totally inaccurate and fraudulent way. Then Schiff made up what I actually said by lying to Congress ..... (Trump 2019)*

In this tweet, Trump uses a tactic to shift blaming towards whistleblower and calling Schiff for introduce a lie to Congress. He regards himself as a victim when he says 'I deserve to meet my accuser'. Accordingly, he turns the table on those who wants to accuse him and he becomes as if he was attacked by outsiders. Trump is the president who utilizes digital rhetoric to show his views, and get a large number of followers. In spite of breaching the standards of decorum, Trump succeeds to employ traditional rhetoric, like epideictic, to persuade his audience.

- *Two stone cold losers from Amazon WP. Almost every story is a made up lie, just like corrupt pol Shifty Schiff, who fraudulently made up my call with Ukraine. Fiction! (Trump 2020)*

In this tweet, Trump expresses his feelings in a strong way towards some individuals by calling them *stone cold losers*. He uses colloquial expressions such as *pol*, *stone cold* and *losers* to shift away from conventional language trying to underestimate figures who stand in his way. These colloquial expressions have certain meaning and purposes. The purpose is that when he uses such expressions people will memorize them for a long time. Thus, Trump utilizes such tactic in order to defend himself against those who stand against him. That's why he uses epideictic

technique to address blames on others in order to elevate his reputation and to draw the Americans support.

- *Just watched a world class loser, Tim O'Brien, who I haven't seen or spoken to in many years, & knows NOTHING about me except that he wrote a failed hit piece book about me 15 years ago. Fired like a dog from other jobs? Saw him on Lyin' Williams Trump Slam Show. Bad TV .... (Trump 2019)*

In this example, Trump calls O'Brien *a world class loser*. Once again, Donald Trump violates decorum conventions to achieve and to deliver his message. He uses deflection against those who cause threatening on him. He elevates himself by degrading other when he compared O'Brien to *a dog* and *a world class loser* because these utterances have an impact on audience and draws readers' attention.

- *.... I am so amazed that MSNBC & CNN can keep putting on, over and over again, people that have no idea what I am all about, and yet they speak as experts on 'Trump'. Same people since long before the 2016 Election, and how did that work out for the Haters and Losers. Not well! (Trump 2019)*

Once again, epideictic rhetoric plays a vital role in Donald Trump's digital rhetoric tweets. Now he is addressing his *Haters and Losers* from 2016. In this tweet, Trump uses two concepts of adherence and identity. Concerning adherence, Trump utilizes adherence to prove his correspondence with traditional such as charity, hardworking and liberty in which he said are neglected in the American society. Accordingly, Trump wants to put an emphasis on these values in order to boost his followers. Secondly, he uses the aspect of identity in which he regards himself as a member of the American community. By using this aspect, Trump is not only victimizing himself but to deflect the accusation and make the accuser is the wrongdoer in the eyes of the public.



- *To the people of South Carolina, Tom Steyer is a joke, laughed at by everyone, a total incompetent. He made money in coal, now he 'hates' coal. Did you see him fawning over Crazy Bernie? Has no chance, a loser for South Carolina, doesn't deserve your vote! (Trump 2020)*

In this tweet, Trump calls Tom Steyer as a joke who everyone laughed at. He shifted the criticism on him to other figure by using the concept of adherence through sharing people opinion on that person. In addition, he uses identity concept by addressing South Carolina people in which Tom Steyer is famous there. Donald Trump addresses citizens of South Carolina in order to place Steyer as the man who is against the American values and saying that Steyer becomes famous from the work now he hates. He wants to deliver a message to his audience to re-elect him as he is the best of all.

- *The only crime in the Impeachment Hoax were committed by Shifty Adam Schiff, when he totally made up my phone conversation with the Ukrainian President and read it to Congress, together with numerous others on Shifty's side. Schiff should be Impeached, and worse!*

In this tweet, Trump uses name calling as a rhetorical device. At the beginning, he shifts the blame from him and places it on the other figure in order to defend himself and his presidential image. He refers to Schiff as *Shifty* in which he invented this name by himself. By giving such nickname for Schiff, he wants to tell the audience that this figure is double-faced in order to enhance his reputation and image among the public. Trump plays the role of a victim by blaming others which is one of the rhetorical devices employed by his.

- *Where's the Whistleblower? Just read the Transcript, everything else is made up garbage by Shifty Schiff and the Never Trumpers! (Trump 2019)*

In this tweet, Trump uses name calling tactic in order to gain support by those who do not support him *Never Trumpers*. By using such expression,

he plays the role of a victim and innocent person. Christian Fuchs (2018: 204) clarifies that this technique has to do with intertextuality of rhetoric in which it is used by Trump to repeat his ideas such as thank his supporters and followers and outbursts on his enemies.

- *Hard to believe that @FoxNews will be interviewing sleazebag & totally discredited former FBI Director James Comey, & also corrupt politician Adam 'Shifty' Schiff. Fox is trying sooo hard to be politically correct, and yet they were totally shut out from the failed Dem debates! (Trump 2019)*

Zompetti (2019: 46) says that Trump uses discursive strategy in order to elevate his status and enhance his image in the coming elections. Trump utilizes epideictic speech to gain support by the American audience and by shifting blame onto other leading figures. He is trying to victimize himself by saying that such credited Fox News interviewing bad and corrupted people. Trump continues using nicknames for those who oppose him and his political actions and to strengthening his position in the coming election.

- *Nervous Nancy Pelosi is a disgrace to herself and her family for having made such a disgusting statement, especially since I was with foreign leaders overseas. There is no evidence for such a thing to have been said. Nervous Nancy & Dems are getting Zero work done in Congress .... (Trump 2019)*

Once again Donald Trump employs name calling and repetition by calling Nancy as 'Nervous'. The words he uses reflects his desire to draw readers' intention towards the figures who threatening him and calling specifically his followers and American people in general to re-elect him. He reframes the situation to appear as a victim. The term *Nervous* is used to attack her position and reputation. By the end of his statement, he is trying to blame not only Nancy Pelosi but the whole democratic party as doing nothing and achieve zero progression.

- *Nervous Nancy Pelosi is doing everything possible to destroy the Republican Party. Our Polls show that it is going to be just the opposite. The Do Nothing Dems will lose many seats in 2020. They have a Death Wish, led by a corrupt politician, Adam Schiff! (Trump 2019)*

Immediately, Donald Trump begins with name calling Nancy as *Nervous* and trying to hinder the Republican Party. Once again he is trying to victimize himself by saying that despite Nancy and others are trying to destroy and encounter his work but the polls are going to show the opposite. By continuing repeating nicknames, he wants to press on the public to re-elect him and to deflect the criticism addressed to him. One can notice that how Trump utilizes such techniques to build an image in his audience minds on him and on his opponents.

- *Nancy can't fix it. The Do Nothing Dem have done great harm to our Country! (Trump 2020)*

Theye and Melling (2018: 325) suggest that Trump lacks political skill but he is trying to elevate his status and accordingly, his weakness becomes strength. According to this clarification, it is obvious that Trump doesn't have a political experience in comparison to his opponents. He employs this kind of strategy in order to get authenticity among his opponents. The use of name calling, adherence, identity and epideictic speech to separate him from his opponents or those against him.

- *I'm fighting for the American people, but the Democrats' sole focus is fighting against ME with their fraudulent Witch Hunt. Go to StopTheMadness.COP and tell Democrats in Congress that Enough is Enough! (Trump 2019)*

In this tweet, one can find a number of rhetorical devices. Trump uses certain graphology by capitalizing his word *ME* to indicate that he is an outsider and accusing the Democrats to fight against him. In addition, he victimizing himself and appears to be innocent. He personified the

campaign conducted against him as *Witch Hunter*. Rowland (2019: 344) clarifies that in spite of violating and disrupting the decorum which can obstacle his success, Trump manages to activate support inside his followers and supporters. Accordingly, he uses such words like *madness* and *witch hunter* to show that Democratic Party is against prosperity of America.

- *The people that know me and know the history of our Country say that I am the hardest working President in history. I don't know about that, but I am a hard worker and have probably gotten more done in the first 3 ½ years than any President in history. The Fake News hates it! (Trump 2020)*

In this tweet, Donald Trump presents a number of rhetoric devices. At the onset, he states to back up his supporters and glorify himself as the best candidate for the next campaign. Secondly, he considers himself as a hardworking and the best president in the history of America. He draws people's attention that he is the best candidate of all times and deserve to get another presidential post. Through his speech, he is the hero who brought prosperity and unity for American people. He ends his tweet with a deflection. Once again he uses epideictic speech to blame what he calls Fake News in order to shift the criticism away from him.

### **Conclusion**

The research reaches the following conclusions:

Digital rhetoric is used recently by those who seeks to lead or gain power by utilizing social platforms as a media to achieve and deliver his message. Donald Trump adopts some tactics to violate the decorum of rhetoric. He uses the traditional rhetoric to convince his supporters and American audience in general that he is the suitable political and leader who brought freedom and prosperity to America. Trump employs *epideictic speech* to blame his opponents and to shift the criticism away

from him in order to convince his people that he is innocent. Trump adopts a tactic called *name calling* to assign nicknames to his opponents in order to defend his position and gain his audience support. Accordingly, the purpose of using such tactic is to shift away the accusations against him. In addition, Donald Trump utilizes two other concept so-called Adherence and Identity. The first refers to Trumps adherence to traditional principles such as charity, liberty and hardworking. Trump, by using such tactic, is trying to deliver a message saying that he is stick to traditions which were neglected by American society. The latter refers to his identity as a member in the American community. By using this tactic, Trump wants to deliver a message that he is one of the society members and has a right as any member in the society. Trump wants to tell his supporters and American community that he is the best president in the history of America because he has the most support, adore by American people and the one who brought prosperity to America.

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