Use of retractors and explainers in charismatic rhetoric: the case of four American presidents

O uso de retratores e explicadores em retórica carismática: o caso de quatro presidentes americanos

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Abstract

This study examines the use of retractors and explainers in prepared political speeches of American charismatic presidents. It is based upon the results of psychological analysis of 24 speeches of John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, and Gerald Ford. The research shows that certain differences may be found in the use of explainers and retractors not along the axis "Charismatic versus Non-Charismatic Presidents", but with regard to their party affiliation. Rhetoric of Democratic presidents (Kennedy, Obama) is characterized by a more explanatory communication style than of Republican ones (Reagan, Ford), which results in respective differences in the use of explainers. As for the retractors, all the four presidents under study tend to use the category moderately, which reveals them as emotionally controlled individuals, able to reconsider their decisions if necessary.

Keywords: charisma; psychological analysis; retractors; explainers.

Resumo

Este estudo analisa o uso de retratores e explicadores em discursos políticos preparados de presidentes americanos considerados carismáticos. O estudo baseia-se em resultados da análise psicológica de 24 discursos de John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, e Gerald Ford. A pesquisa mostra que podemos encontrar diferenças no uso de explicadores e retratores não relativamente ao eixo "Presidentes Carismáticos versus Não-Carismáticos", mas em relação à sua filiação partidária. A retórica dos presidentes democratas (Kennedy, Obama) é caracterizada por um estilo de comunicação mais explicativo do que a dos republicanos (Reagan, Ford), o que resulta em diferenças respectivas no uso de explicadores. Quanto aos retratores, todos os quatro presidentes em estudo tendem a usar a categoria de forma moderada, o que os caracteriza como indivíduos emocionalmente controlados e capazes de reconsiderar as suas decisões, se necessário.

Palavras-chave: carisma; análise psicológica; retratores; explicadores.

1. Theoretical bridge between charisma and personality research

The concept of charisma is used in everyday communication to denote personal magnetism of an individual, his or her ability to be liked and followed. These characteristics of charismatic individuals are believed to contribute to the emergence and effectiveness of leadership. However, leaders should not necessarily be charismatic in order to become successful and conversely – the attribution of charisma to a person does not guarantee that the latter will manage to be an efficient leader. For instance, Mumford et al. (2008) classify outstanding leadership into three types: charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic, while arguing that different contexts may require different behavioral patterns and different sets of psychological traits from a leader.

In fact, charisma should not be perceived exclusively as a set of personality attributes. Klein and House (1995) regard charisma as an interplay between specific personality qualities of the leader, particular followers' characteristics and context features, which favorably influence the establishment of charismatic relationship between leader and followers. Similarly, Conger and Kanungo (1989) define charismatic leadership as an influence process consisting of leader, followers and context and dynamic relationship between them. Such an approach explains why the same behavioral patterns of the leader may be perceived differently by various audiences and why the charismatic leader may have ups and downs in his or her political career though the public image undergoes little change.

Although charisma is a complex phenomenon based on the interdependence of three structural components – leader, followers and context, specific personality characteristics of the leader play an especially important role in forging a charismatic appeal. House (1977) claims that these characteristics include the qualities of dominance, self-confidence, a need to influence, and a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of leader's beliefs (Conger, 1989: 30). According to Bass (1989), charismatic leaders generally exhibit such attributes as extraordinary emotional expressiveness, self-determination, and freedom from internal conflict (Bass, 1989: 46). Conger and Kanungo (1989) claim that the distinguishing attributes of charismatic

leaders include vision, emotional expressiveness, articulation skills, high activity level, and exemplary behavior (Conger and Kanungo, 1989: 325).

Being the advocates of treating charisma as a constellation of personality attributes, Verčič and Verčič (2011) argue that a charismatic leader is usually perceived as "a good communicator, inspiring and visionary, honest and reliable, attracting other people's attention and dominant in uncertain situations" (Verčič and Verčič, 2011: 17).

In this regard an important contribution to specifying the charismatic attributes has been made by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Research Program. As a result of the longitudinal and cross-cultural study, the scholars have determined two groups of charismatic attributes: universal and culturally endorsed. Thus, in universal terms charismatic leaders are supposed to be motive arousers, encouraging, communicative, trustworthy, dynamic, positive, and motivational; to have foresight and to build up followers' confidence (Den Hartog et al., 1999: 250). On the other hand, such attributes as being enthusiastic, risk-taking, ambitious, self-effacing, unique, self-sacrificial, sincere, sensitive, compassionate and willful are culturally endorsed (Den Hartog et al., 1999: 250).

Most personality attributes, some of them – in a direct way, others – more implicitly, are manifested in the communication style of political leaders. For instance, a number of studies (Pennebaker and King, 1999; Fast and Funder, 2008) demonstrate reliable correlations between word use and the Big Five personality dimensions (both observed behavior and self-reports of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience). Moreover, even function words, which contain rather limited semantic loading, may reveal additional information on speaker's gender, age, emotional state and personality characteristics. Articles, prepositions, and conjunctions may carry an array of psychological meanings and set the tone for social interactions (Chung and Pennebaker, 2007: 355). These observations are united under the heading of a linguistic style – the way how people put their words together to create a message (Chung and Pennebaker, 2007: 345).

In our current research we will try to study the use of relevantly narrow linguistic categories of explainers and retractors in political discourse and to observe how these categories correlate with politicians' behavioral patterns. We presume that the speeches of charismatic John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama have

equally moderate mean scores of retractors and equally low scores of explainers, which are discourse indicators of the ability to reconsider previous decisions and non-rationalizing verbal style respectively. At the same time we expect the speeches of non-charismatic Gerald Ford to contain different mean scores of retractors and explainers comparing to the charismatic American presidents under study.

2. Methodology

Retractors and explainers are defined as separate categories of psychological analysis by Walter Weintraub (Weintraub, 2003). At its core psychological analysis is based upon quantitative content analysis. All the categories are manually coded and the frequency is calculated per 1000 words. High or low scores of each category allow researchers to make conclusions about specific psychological characteristics of a speaker. The validity of observations increases when the sample of unprepared speeches is taken for the analysis.

According to Weintraub, retractors, also referred to as adversative expressions, are used to "weaken or reverse previously spoken remarks" (2003: 144). The most commonly used retractor is the conjunction *but*. Other examples of the category in our research include expressions such as *however, nevertheless, although, though, despite the fact that, on the other hand, on the other end, contrary to, while* (in the meaning of *though*), and words *yet* and *still* at the beginning of the sentence.

Weintraub (2003) argues that "the frequent use of retractors suggests a difficulty in adhering to previously made decisions and imparts a flavor of impulsivity to the speaker's style" (Weintraub, 2003: 144). Conversely, the moderate use of retractors is associated with "the ability to reconsider a decision after it has been made" (Weintraub, 2003: 148). We presume that the speeches of charismatic leaders should be characterized by moderate frequencies of retractors as a charismatic politician is not expected to reveal high levels of impulsivity. At the same time rational use of retractors provides opportunity for maneuvering, that is to say – reconsideration of decisions if it is necessary. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *The speeches of charismatic presidents will include equally moderate frequencies of retractors.*

In contrast to retractors, Weintraub (2003) defines explainers as "words and expressions that suggest causal connections or justification of the speaker's thoughts and actions" (Weintraub, 2003: 145). While the most widely used explainer is *because*, in our research, under the category of explainers, we also count the following expressions: *that is why*, *therefore*, *since* and *for* in the meaning of *because*, *so* in the meaning of *therefore*.

High explainers score indicates "a didactic, apologetic, or rationalizing verbal style", whereas speakers who use few explainers tend to be perceived as "categorical and dogmatic" (Weintraub, 2003: 145). Taking into account that, according to Le Bon (1952), communication of a charismatic leader should be based on emotional expressiveness rather than on rationalizing style and he or she should "never attempt to prove anything by reasoning" (Le Bon, 1952: 51), we may presume that:

Hypothesis 2: *The speeches of charismatic presidents will include equally low scores of explainers.*

3. Sample

Our research is based upon the corpus of 24 political speeches, which includes 18 speeches of three most charismatic U.S. presidents over the last 50 years (John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama), and 6 speeches of the least charismatic American president of the period – Gerald Ford.

The time span of 50 years is taken due to two reasons. First of all, rapid development of mass media significantly influenced American presidential rhetoric since every president's statement and remark are subject to media scrutiny, at the same time allowing politician to appeal to larger audiences and build up his or her public image more efficiently. All in all, Seyranian and Bligh (2008) argue that the modern presidency in the USA has begun with Franklin D. Roosevelt and it may be briefly characterized by historical changes such as increased media exposure and public scrutiny, the beginning of oral traditions, more frequent speeches, and changes in presidential motives and qualifications (Seyranian and Bligh, 2008: 61). Secondly, due to the dynamic development of language itself, the modifications of presidents'

linguistic style may occur regardless of their personality characteristics, thus the selection of smaller time period ought to minimize the influence of this factor.

The selection of presidents is based on the previous studies on charismatic leadership. First of all, Fiol et al. (1999) conducted study in which eight reputable political historians were asked to identify all 20th century American presidents through Ronald Reagan as charismatic, non-charismatic, or uncertain, based on their relationships with cabinet members. The charismatic leadership was defined by the effects the leader had on his followers: whether the latter had high degree of loyalty, identified with the leader, emulated his values and goals, saw him as a source of inspiration, derived a sense of high self-esteem from their relationship and had exceptionally high degree of trust in the leader (Fiol et al., 1999: 466). Thus, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan were identified as the most charismatic 20th century American presidents.

Seyranian and Bligh (2008) extended Fiol et al.'s (1999) study, having included 17 presidents beginning with Theodore Roosevelt (1901) through George W. Bush (2000). Ten reputable political scientists were asked to provide generalized ratings of presidential charisma in two ways: as a dichotomous measure (to categorize a president as charismatic or non-charismatic), and as a continuous measure (to rate him on scale from 1 (not charismatic at all) to 7 (extremely charismatic)). According to this study, presidents that scored highest in charisma (who were in the top 75% quartile of ratings across presidents, or above 4.63) included Theodore Roosevelt (M=6.30), Franklin Roosevelt (M=6.10), John F. Kennedy (M=5.60), and Ronald Reagan (M=5.50), while the remainder of the presidents [except for Bill Clinton with M=4.90] received lower charisma ratings (Seyranian and Bligh, 2008: 60).

As for Barack Obama's attributed charisma, to our knowledge, its empirical assessment is provided in Williams et al.'s (2012) study. At the final stage of the research the scholars asked 414 undergraduate and graduate students from four American universities to rate Barack Obama's attributed charisma, employing eight items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. This approach is primarily associated with assessing leader's influence on followers through emotional attachment and identification with the vision. For each charismatic item a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was employed. With

reliability coefficient of 0.93, the aggregated data evaluated Barack Obama's attributed charisma at the level of 5.14.

Based on the aforementioned data, we may conclude that personalities of John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama form a specific cluster in terms of perceptions of charisma (with mean indices of 5.60, 5.50 and 5.14 respectively), which, coupled with their belonging to the same historical period, increases the validity of general assumptions that may be drawn while analyzing the specific features of their verbal communication styles.

As for the least charismatic American president over the period of the last 50 years, Seyranian and Bligh (2008) measure the level of Gerald Ford's charisma as the lowest one with a mean index of M=2.20.

Moreover, the selection of political speeches for analysis is not random either. Both Ronald Reagan and John F. Kennedy had six speeches included into the index of the 100 most significant American political speeches of the 20th century (Lucas and Medhurst, 2009). Since we have not found any comparison studies of different speeches of Barack Obama and Gerald Ford with regard to their "greatness", we have selected six speeches of each president on the basis of two criteria: 1) they should be well known and represent major landmarks in their presidential career; 2) the types of audiences, speeches and context variables should match the ones of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan.

In order to control the influence of contextual variables on the category frequencies, we have grouped all the speeches into six sets. Thus, Speech 1 set includes first inaugural addresses of the four presidents.

Speeches delivered before politicians took presidential office, namely, "Houston Ministerial Association Speech" by John F. Kennedy, "A Time for Choosing" by Ronald Reagan, "A More Perfect Union" by Barack Obama, and "Remarks upon Accepting the 1976 Republican Presidential Nomination" by Gerald Ford, belong to Speech 2 set. It should be noted that "A Time for Choosing" was delivered by Ronald Reagan in 1964 while supporting presidential candidate, but not while running as one. Another reservation concerns the candidate speech by Gerald Ford, which was delivered when the latter was an incumbent president.

Speech 3 set contains speeches delivered abroad: "Ich bin ein Berliner" by John F. Kennedy, "Brandenburg Gate Address" by Ronald Reagan, "A New Beginning" by Barack Obama, and "Address before the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe" by Gerald Ford.

In Speech 4 set we have included speeches either delivered abroad or at least indirectly connected with foreign policy issues: "Cuban Missile Crisis Address" by John F. Kennedy, "40th Anniversary of D-Day Address" by Ronald Reagan, "Nobel Prize for Peace Acceptance Speech" by Barack Obama, and "Remarks Announcing a Program for the Return of Vietnam-Era Draft Evaders and Military Deserters" by Gerald Ford.

Speech 5 set contains university commencement addresses by John F. Kennedy, Barack Obama and Gerald Ford. As no commencement address by Ronald Reagan was included into the index of the 100 most significant American political speeches of the 20th century, we have referred his "Evil Empire" speech, delivered at the Association of Evangelicals, to this set.

Speech 6 set may be called Miscellaneous, as it includes "Civil Rights Address" by John F. Kennedy, "Shuttle "Challenger" Disaster Address" by Ronald Reagan, "President-Elect Victory Speech" by Barack Obama and "The 1975 State of the Union Address" by Gerald R. Ford.

The inclusion of diverse speech material which "cuts across a period of time, across different substantive topics, across different audiences, and inside or outside of the leadership group" is designed to help us determine the stability of certain leadership traits (Hermann, 2003: 206). Moreover, Hermann (2003) claims that "by examining different aspects of the context such as the topic, audience, and whether the focus of attention is on the domestic or international domains, we can learn if leaders are sensitive to certain cues in their environment and not to others" (Hermann, 2003: 206). It also gives the researcher insights into whether leaders may adapt their public image to the situation they find themselves in, in which way they are likely to change their behavior and what contextual features may cause such change (Hermann, 2003: 206).

4. Results and discussion

In political communication retractors are used for several reasons: to reverse previously spoken statements and present an alternative viewpoint; to "achieve "pseudo-consensus", an apparent but not genuine agreement with another speaker's point of view" (Weintraub, 2003: 144); and to add up stylistic coloring to political speeches through producing contrast, also referred to as antithesis (Den Hartog and Verburg, 1997; Clark and Greatbatch, 2011). The examples of retractors in our research would be:

(1)   Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect. *But* we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in (Kennedy, "Ich bin ein Berliner").

(2)   We must maintain defenses of unassailable strength. *Yet* we seek peace; so we must strive to reduce arms on both sides (Reagan, "Brandenburg Gate Address").

(3)   In Ankara, I made clear that America is not – and never will be –at war with Islam. We will, *however*, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security… (Obama, "A New Beginning").

Our research demonstrates that the speeches of John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama contain similar mean frequencies of retractors: 8.3, 6.6 and 8 respectively (see Diagram 1), which generally supports our Hypothesis 1.

Another observation concerns the fact that the frequencies of retractors do not fluctuate drastically in the speeches of charismatic presidents, which displays the category as less context-dependent. For instance, in 10 out of 18 speeches the frequencies of retractors range from 5 to 8. We consider this range as a moderate use of the category, based on the mean score of retractors for seven post-World War II American presidents, which was measured at the level of 6.5 units per 1000 words (Weintraub, 2003). In our research standard deviation is 2.2 for John F. Kennedy, 2.5 for Ronald Reagan and 1.3 for Barack Obama while the range indices are 6.6, 6.6 and 3.3 respectively.

Diagram 1. Overall mean frequencies of retractors (units per 1000 words)

|	Kennedy	Reagan	Obama	Ford
	8,3	6,6	8	7,6
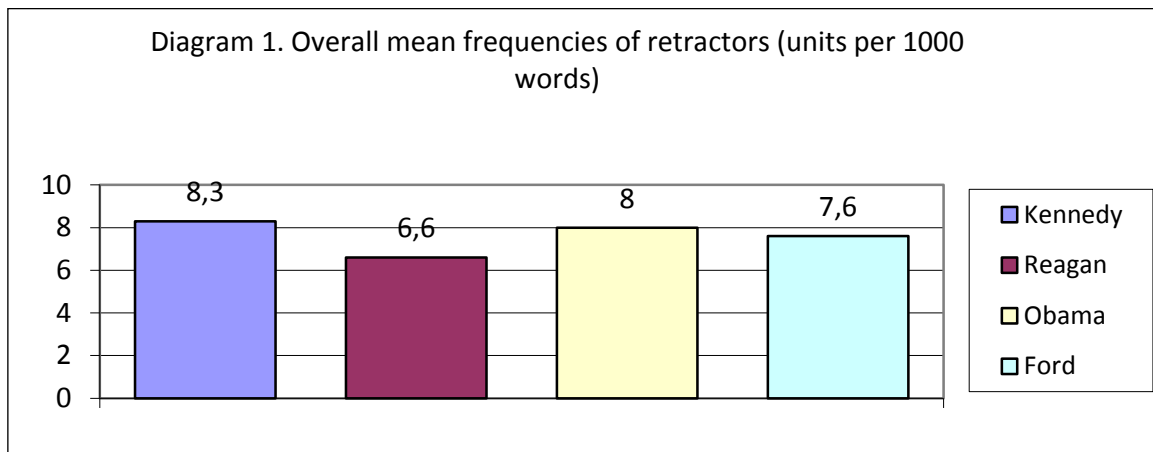
It should be noted that the overall mean score of retractors in the speeches of Gerald Ford is similar to those of charismatic presidents – 7.6. However, the range of scores (8.2) and standard deviation (3) is bigger for Gerald Ford in comparison with charismatic presidents.

John F. Kennedy used retractors most frequently in his "Inaugural Address" – 12.3 whereas the lowest score of the category for him is in "Cuban Missile Crisis Address" – 5.7 (see Diagram 2). Again, relatively low use of retractors in the latter may be perceived as the intention to position oneself as a decisive leader who has a clear solution for the security crisis the nation faces and who will adhere to the course of action he announces.

Ronald Reagan used retractors most frequently in "Shuttle "Challenger" Tragedy Address" – 10.7, while his "Inaugural Address" contains the lowest score of the category – 4.1.

The mean scores of retractors in the speeches of Barack Obama have insignificant variance. The only exception is "Nobel Prize for Peace Acceptance Speech", which has the highest score of the category – 10.1. The lowest score of the category is 6.8 units per 1000 words in "President-Elect Victory Speech".

Diagram 2. Frequencies (axis 0Y) of retractors in different speech sets (axis 0X)
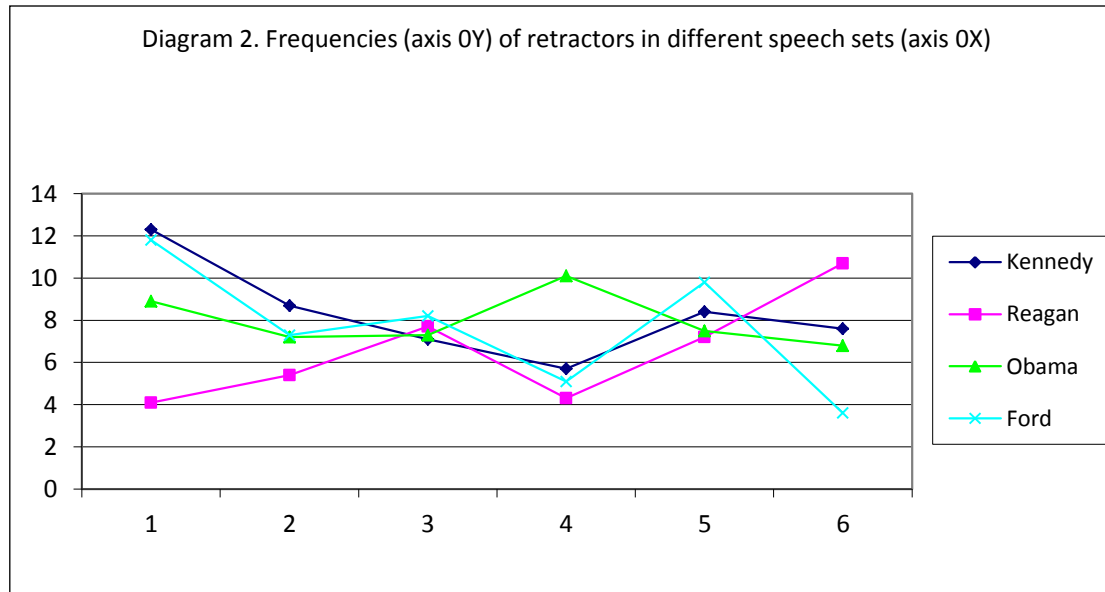
Gerald Ford uses retractors least frequently in "1975 State of the Union Address" – 3.6, whereas the highest score of the category is in his "Inaugural Address" – 11.8 Contrary to the scores of charismatic presidents, Gerald Ford uses retractors moderately (from 5 to 8 units per 1000 words) only in two speeches out of six under study.

It should be noted that all the four presidents under study have practically identical scores of retractors in the speeches delivered abroad. Thus, the mean score of the category in "Ich bin ein Berliner" (Kennedy) is 7.1, in "Brandenburg Gate Address" (Reagan) – 7.7, in "A New Beginning" (Obama) – 7.3 and in "Helsinki Address" (Ford) – 8.2. Moderate use of retractors in the above mentioned speeches adds more diplomatic style to the communication of the presidents, allowing them to make clear statements, at the same time leaving space for maneuvering. When there arises a need to deliver a sharp and explicit message to the international community, the amount of retractors decreases, as it was the case with "Cuban Missile Crisis Address" by John F. Kennedy (mean score of retractors – 5.7) and "40th Anniversary of D-Day Address" by Ronald Reagan (mean score of retractors – 4.3).

In general, our findings prove that the speeches of both charismatic and non-charismatic leaders have similar frequencies of retractors and that these frequencies are moderate. A rather stable use of the category by charismatic speakers indicates that the category does not heavily depend on the context in which a speech is uttered.

At the same time the moderate use of retractors characterizes American presidents as emotionally controlled personalities, able to reconsider their own decisions in case of necessity.

Unlike retractors, explainers are employed to rationalize the message, demonstrate causal connections between particular statements or events and justify one's point of view. The examples of explainers we have identified in our research include:

(4)   Freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. *That is why* there is a mosque in every state in our union (Obama, "A New Beginning").

(5)   Our problems are manmade; *therefore*, they can be solved by man (Kennedy, "American University Commencement Address").

(6)   *Since* this is Notre Dame I think we should talk not only about your accomplishments in the classroom, but also in the competitive arena (Obama, "Commencement Address at the University of Notre Dame").

(7)   Divided there is little we can do – *for* we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder (Kennedy, "The Inaugural Address").

(8)   *So* as we begin, let us take inventory (Reagan, "The Inaugural Address").

The mean score of explainers for the first seven post-WWII American presidents is 5.5 units per 1000 words (Weintraub, 2003). The average frequency of explainers in the speeches of John F. Kennedy is 4.9, in the speeches of Ronald Reagan – 2.9 and in the speeches of Barack Obama – 5.2 (see Diagram 3).

The overall mean score of explainers in the speeches of Gerald Ford is 3.1. At the same time all of his speeches under study contain lower than average level of explainers. We may conclude that charismatic leaders should not avoid reasoning in the speeches, though it was suggested by Le Bon (1952). Contrarily, it is more important to balance emotional and rational components of the speeches in the way that one's communication style does not sound too apologetic or too categorical. The

speeches of John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama demonstrate such moderation, whereas Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford project an image of more rigid and decisive politicians, for whom decision-making process does not encompass extensive discussions.

Diagram 3. Overall mean frequencies of explainers (units per 1000 words)
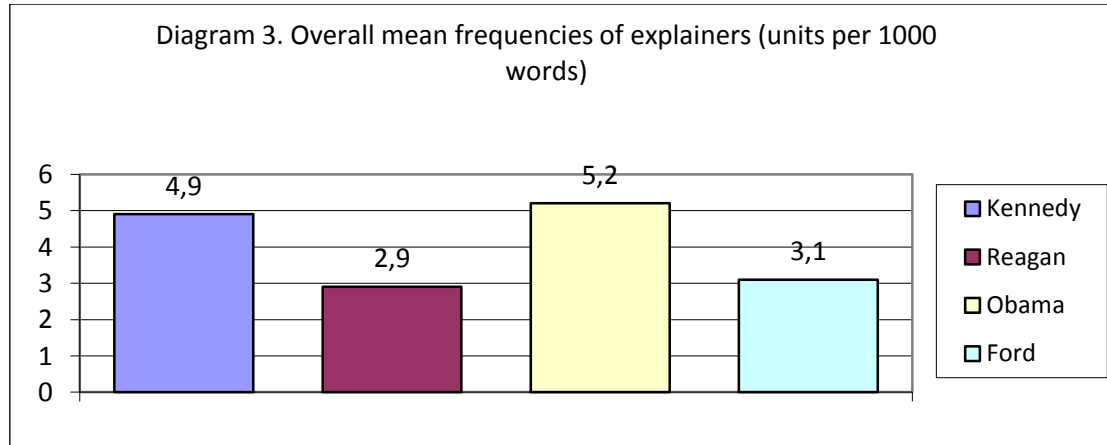

Such a consistent pattern made us shift perspective on the presidential discourse. We assume that the above mentioned personality traits may be linked not to the charismatic appeal of politicians, but to their party affiliation. A number of empirical studies (e.g. Benoit, 2004; Jarvis, 2004; Cho and Benoit, 2005; Cho and Benoit, 2006) prove that partisanship influences political discourse features not only in terms of its ideological content, but also in terms of deeper psycholinguistic structures. According to Jarvis (2004), Democrats need to be "careful with their discourse in the face of many loosely organized cadres of heterogeneous interests" whereas Republicans are "constrained in a different manner, required to bespeak more confident claims prized by a more unified group" (Jarvis, 2004: 414).

Benoit's (2004) study reveals even more differences in Democratic versus Republican discourse. For instance, Democratic candidates discuss policy more than Republicans whereas Republicans tend to devote more attention to character in their speeches. Such a division is natural as Republican politicians "embrace the philosophy of a limited role for government and of heightened individual responsibility" (Benoit, 2004: 92). That is why they stress governmental policy less than Democratic politicians, who often look to the government to solve societal problems (Benoit, 2004: 92). In terms of policy there are typically Democratic (education, health care, environment)

and typically Republican (taxation, foreign policy, crime) issues. In terms of character utterances the Democrats employ more empathy words (e.g., cares for voters, compassionate, understands voters), and linguistic units associated with drive (e.g., hard-working, determined, strong). On the other hand, Republicans use more words related to sincerity (e.g., consistency, honesty, trust) and morality (e.g., ethical, just, moral).

Since Republicans are less prone to debate over their policy issues and they often appeal to the moral values of the followers, which are dogmatic and do not require extensive explication, the representatives of this party will tend to be less explanatory in their communication style. Hence Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford, who were Republican American presidents, have lower scores of explainers in their speeches than Democratic John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama.

Furthermore, based on the results of our study, we may conclude that there exists a certain dependence of the frequency of explainers on the context, in which a speech is delivered. In its turn, it influences the variance of explainers mean scores. For example, the mean scores of explainers in the speeches of John F. Kennedy range from 1.6 in "Cuban Missile Crisis Address" to 7.4 – in "Houston Ministerial Association Address" (see Diagram 4).

Diagram 4. Frequencies (axis 0Y) of explainers in different speech sets (axis 0X)
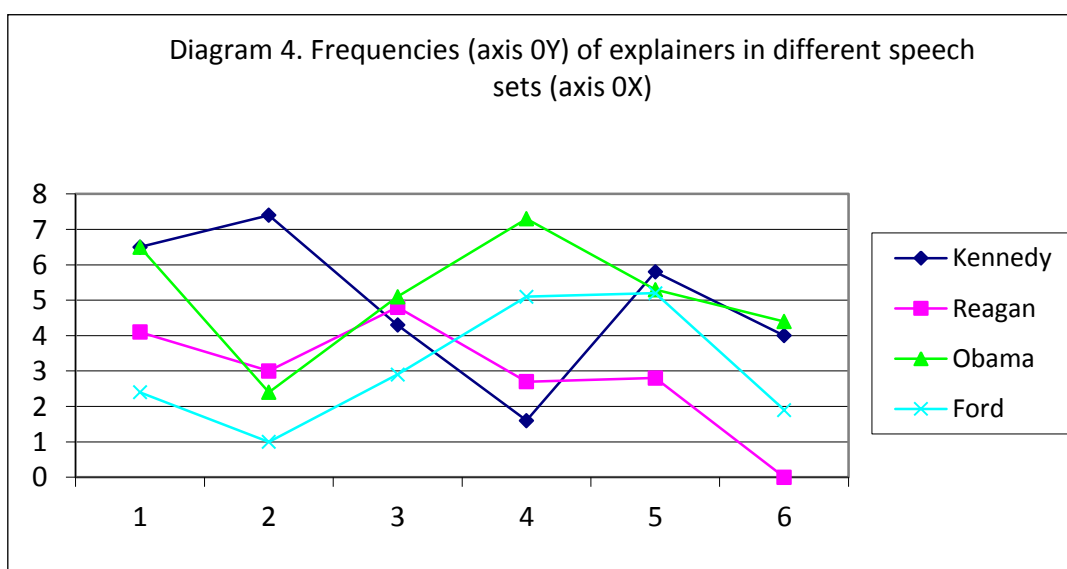
In "Cuban Missile Crisis Address" the last thing one would expect from the president of a nation under threat is an explanatory style. Due to the fact that the

threat is evident and tangible and the president is expected to come up with a detailed plan of actions, but not their justification, the amount of explainers in this speech is low. On the other hand, "Houston Ministerial Association Address" is not a presidential speech, but an address of a candidate who runs for the highest office in the country. Since John F. Kennedy was the first Catholic to be elected as U.S. president, in his address he tried to explain why his religious beliefs should not influence the final vote and perception of his candidacy by the public. It correlates with a high score of explainers in this speech.

Ronald Reagan uses explainers less frequently than John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama. The mean scores of explainers in his speeches range from 0 in "Shuttle "Challenger" Tragedy Address" to 4.8 – in "Brandenburg Gate Address". "Shuttle "Challenger" Tragedy Address" is the only speech out of 24, in which no explainer was used. It may be explained with a small length of the speech (652 words) and extreme emotionality of the address as the president was speaking to the public not on some political or security issues, but rather he was trying to re-unite the nation in the moment of grief and express his condolences to the families who were directly affected by the tragedy. Contrarily, "Brandenburg Gate Address" contains Reagan's appeal to demolish Berlin Wall and re-unite East and West Germany into one country, so relatively high score of explainers in this speech may be viewed as an attempt to justify these actions.

In terms of explainers use, the style of Barack Obama is similar to the one of John F. Kennedy. The mean scores of the category in his speeches range from 2.4 in "A More Perfect Union" address to 7.4. – in "Nobel Prize for Peace Acceptance Speech". Awarding Barack Obama with Nobel Prize for Peace after less than one year of his tenure as U.S. president and in the times, when American troops were still at war in two countries, caused a lot of controversy and debate worldwide. Frequent use of explainers may be interpreted both as an indicator of apologetic style and an attempt to justify U.S. military actions on the world scene. The low amount of explainers in "A More Perfect Union" address, to a certain degree, would contradict our previous conclusions on John F. Kennedy. In many ways "A More Perfect Union" address is similar to Kennedy's "Houston Ministerial Association Address". It is a candidate speech, in which Barack Obama mentions that his candidacy is not the most

conventional one (he was the first Afro-American to be elected as U.S. president), and in which he comments on the racially charged remarks of his former pastor Jeremiah Wright, which put the whole Obama's campaign under threat (Rowland and Jones, 2011). However, instead of rationalizing and explanatory style, Barack Obama shifts the focus of his speech and appeals to the need of re-uniting all the Americans, regardless of the color of their skin or ethnicity, in the face of economic crisis and social security issues. Hence, employment of such a strategy may justify a low amount of explainers in this speech.

In the speeches of Gerald Ford the mean scores of explainers range from 1 in "Republican Nomination Address" to 5.2 – in "Commencement Address at Chicago State University". It should be noted that all three university commencement addresses in our research have identically moderate scores of explainers (Kennedy – 5.8, Obama – 5.3 and Ford – 5.2).

To sum up, our findings do not support Hypothesis 2. Though overall mean scores of explainers and respective scores in majority of speeches are slightly lower than in the speeches of the first seven post-WWII U.S. presidents, no clear connection between charismatic appeal and the use of explainers may be traced. Moreover, on the basis of explainers analysis we may draw a clear distinction between Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan versus Barack Obama and John Kennedy. The latter two tend to use explainers moderately, trying to balance emotionality and rationality in their speeches, while Reagan and Ford are more categorical, which is rooted in specific features of Republican party discourse. In general, we may say that explanatory or apologetic style is not typical of charismatic leaders. However, the frequencies of explainers may be modified in accordance with the purpose of a speech or its topic. It may be interpreted as a capability of charismatic politicians to accommodate their communication style to the final aims of communication and as an indicator of charismatic leader's rhetorical flexibility.

5. Conclusion

Our research demonstrates that all the four presidents under study have moderate scores of retractors, which may be explained with their desire not to express

high levels of impulsivity, at the same time leaving some space for verbal maneuvering. A slight difference in the use of retractors by charismatic presidents concerns their relatively stable frequencies across different contexts, whereas for non-charismatic Gerald Ford the index of standard deviation is higher.

The differences in the use of explainers by the four presidents are more explicit. However, they are revealed not in the framework of charismatic versus non-charismatic rhetoric, but in the opposition of John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama versus Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford. Democratic presidents tend to use explainers more frequently since Democratic discourse in general is characterized by a more explanatory communication style. Nevertheless, charismatic presidents are more skillful in adjusting their use of explainers to the context requirements than non-charismatic Gerald Ford.

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