

Neurocommunication and the public: Trump's announcement to run for the 2024 U.S. presidential election

Rafael Barberá González & Rhona Patricia Lohan

Abstract

This paper analyses how political discourse reaches different audiences through neurocommunication. The specific case studied is the speech delivered by Donald J. Trump to announce his candidacy for the 2024 U.S. presidential election. A review of concepts such as neurocommunication, neuropolitics and sociolinguistics is carried out. All of these are key elements in understanding how the public perceives leaders' speeches, especially in a competitive environment where leaders are trying to reach as many people as possible. The audiovisual material of the speech is used to investigate, through a codebook, the interaction between the ideas of the speaker and the audience, the way of speaking and the tone used by the leader to convince the different audiences or the deliberate use of certain words to achieve the intended purpose, in this case, to secure votes. With these codes, results are achieved that indicate that many of the registers used in Trump's speech influence the psychology of voters when making their decisions, again in an environment where there is a large number of offers. These are factors that serve to convince and persuade the public. This paper offers, through innovative approaches and methods, an analysis of how political discourse can be competitive in the current international context. The main advantage of using these codes is that they make speeches more efficient for different audiences.

Keywords: *neurocommunication, Trump, psychology, discourse, effects*

JEL Classification: O11, M23, L13

Article history: Received: June 2023; Accepted: March 2024; Published: June 2024

1 INTRODUCTION

Researchers work with neuroscience to apply it to different areas of society. One of these is related to politics and the actors involved in it. The prefix 'neuro' has been used and is used in many studies that have resulted in verifiable research. However, some scholars consider it overused, e.g., Calderón (2017, p. 3) who points out that it is enough to consult the Internet to check the large number of "neuro-terms" that are currently used to highlight an alleged scientificity of the study in question, ranging from neuroeconomics, neuromarketing, neuropolitics, through neurotheology, neuroastronomy to neuromagic."

In any case, and despite such criticisms, for the purpose of this article we turn to the conception of neurosciences developed by Tapia and Varona (2020, p. 26) when they identify them as "the techniques and disciplines that, by measuring how the brain reacts to certain stimuli, try to explain the behavior of people in complex scenarios, such as, for example, politics." Not only is it well-acknowledged that neuroscience plays a major role in disciplines such as marketing and advertising, but it also has a notable impact in the field of political communication. Advisors, leaders, and political parties make use of neuropolitics because they are aware of the influence that their messages have on voters, especially in times of electoral campaigns.

In these campaign environments, insights from neuroscience offer opportunities that are useful for designing political messages to connect with the brains of potential voters. The theoretical significance of neuropolitics is based on definitions such as that of Dunagan (2010, p. 56), who notes that it is a framework that allows us “to reimagine culture, power and political subjectivity in light of our growing knowledge of the human brain and the extended mind.”

Neurocommunication gathers several characteristics regarding the formation of political discourse and compiles several principles of communication that are applied in politics. Moreover, as Varón and Zapata (2021) highlight, when analysed in the field of action, they can be seen as present in the formation of the current political discourse.

Thus, this article aims to analyse Donald J. Trump’s speech on November 15, 2022, from a neurocommunication-based perspective. It should be noted that the choice of this speech was concerned with the timeframe rather than the politics behind the speaker, as we believe this analysis could be conducted on any public leader in the political arena. The research questions are, on the one hand, to know to what extent verbal and nonverbal language depends on the success of the perception of the message by the brain of the receiver, and, on the other hand, to what extent the ideological affinity of the receiver varies the cognitive effects derived from a leader’s speech. It is paramount to analyse what tools a political leader can use to reach potential voters, and to examine, based on the fundamentals of neurocommunication and sociolinguistics, how all these tools, verbal and nonverbal, reach the brain of each person. The figure of Trump awakens the interest of scholars on this subject because of who he is and what he represents.

The structure of this article leads with the theoretical background, which defines and illustrates the impact of neurocommunication on political discourse, followed by a brief outline of the history of neuropolitics in the American electoral area and the use of sociolinguistics as an additional analysis. In section 3, the methodology applied to conduct the analysis, such as the codebook devised, will be presented. We then present the results attained by the analysis and conclude with a discussion on the results.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Neurocommunication: When neuroscience is combined with communication, the resulting concept is neurocommunication. Some scholars define it as research in neuroscience and behaviour applied to the optimization of the communicative process (Egolf, 2012). Others point out that the application of science to communication should aim not to deceive human beings but to better understand what they need in order to speak to each other in a more intimate and personalized way (Natal and Carruesco, 2015).

Under this phenomenon of neurocommunication are mirror neurons, which are relevant in the field of politics. When a listener encounters a word deemed relevant, novel, or surprising, their brain initiates a mechanism that facilitates the processing and comprehension of the preceding speech. According to Heyes and Catmur (2022, p. 156), “there appears to be reasonably strong evidence for the involvement of the motor system (including premotor brain areas of mirror neurons as well as motor cortex) in speech discrimination under noisy perceptual conditions.” This data, however, has yet to be verified by patient data.

These mirror neurons are found in the inferior frontal cortex, an area that controls behaviour and social interaction. As Arteaga (2018, p. 202) explains, these neurons have the ability to aid us in “understanding actions” by providing a mechanism that learns through imitating, through the simulation of imitative learning of others’ behaviour, along with grasping others’ intentions.

Understanding actors' actions and intentions is crucial in political analysis, particularly regarding leader speeches. Voters often base decisions on emotional appeals, similar to how persuasive publicity "strongly influences consumer choices" (Khan and Mujitaba, 2023, p. 5). Westen (2007, p. 16) highlights that "the political brain is an emotional brain. It is not a dispassionate calculating machine, objectively searching for the right facts, figures and policies to make a reasoned decision." Other scholars (Uña et al., 2014) highlight how neurocommunication can be used in politics. By studying how sensory information is processed, political campaigns can design more effective electoral messages and strategies to capture voters' attention and create lasting memories. Furthermore, understanding the psychological and neurological underpinnings of political behaviour is crucial. Jost et al. (2014, p. 4) introduce the field of political neuroscience as "an interdisciplinary venture that tackles questions of mutual interest to political scientists and psychologists by drawing, at least in part, on the theories, methods, and assumptions of biology, especially neuroscience."

2.2 Neuropolitics in the U.S. electoral discourse: Among the various applications of neurocommunication, one which stands out, for this paper, is neuropolitics. Chung (2018, p. 538) defines it "as the combination of neuroscience and political science [...] based on the political brain derived from the social brain through imagination and rationality. It explains the evolutionary origin of politics, the political evolution, political types and political learnings."

According to García Marzá (2013, p. 173), the objective of neuropolitics consists of explaining how the brain interacts with its political environment, how they influence each other and what is the result of this interaction. It is to analyse "the neural correlate of the activities that fall under the label of the political: decision-making and the behavior of citizens, the election of representatives, political participation, electoral behavior, affection or disaffection towards political leaders, etc."

The perception that a viewer has when seeing a candidate's face is affected by the emotions that it implies in their brain activity. Some studies demonstrate this, such as that of Kaplan et al. (2007, p. 55), who concluded, after exposing a group of Democrats and Republicans, in an event-related functional MRI paradigm, to images of candidates for the 2004 presidential election in the United States that "brain activity when viewing a politician's face is affected by the political allegiance of the viewer and that people regulate their emotional reactions to opposing candidates by activating cognitive control networks."

Another technique is electroencephalography (EEG), designed to measure neural activity through observation of electrical activity on the scalp. In terms of political decision-making, some scholars (Haas et al., 2020) are using EEG to study how quickly people respond to political cues, like candidate names or pictures, and whether these responses vary depending on their political affiliation (Democrat or Republican) or level of engagement (partisan vs. non-partisan).

However, some scholars remain critical of the existence of a clear relationship between neurology and politics. The link between brain areas/structures and political attitudes/decisions is not simple because these two factors are complex. In fact, they consider that "sometimes studies assume simplifications (to talk, for example, of 'conservative brains' and 'progressive brains') that can lead to serious deterministic prejudices, in addition to being little operational" (Gallardo, 2016, p. 92).

Increasingly, leaders and parties are seeking the advice of scientists to try to explore the emotional side of each voter. They, as well as the organizations "need to be able to reconfigure themselves in the face of such a competitive market" (Martínez de Miguel et al., 2022, p. 5).

Different techniques are employed, such as tracking eye or brain waves, to know the degree of engagement they have on citizens. “Neuroconsultants and some of their political patrons argue that the benefits are obvious: Focus groups and surveys can be unreliable because voters often do not know, cannot articulate or are reluctant to say how they really feel about a candidate” (Randall, 2015, p. A1).

As for the object of analysis of this article, the figure of Trump and his speech, he and his team of advisors relied on political neuromarketing for his election campaign in 2016. To this end, they began to “address each American political consumer’s brain in his own language, behaviour and emotions to win more voters day by day” (Hegazy, 2021, p. 246).

On the other hand, and in relation to political discourse, techniques that seek to change the opinion of, or manipulate, those who listen to such discourse are also used. “Such manipulative techniques are extensively used in every political speech so that the politician delivering the speech can achieve their aims: either to win the elections or to persuade their listeners to follow them, etc.” (Shigapova et al., 2021, p. 2).

For these techniques to achieve their effect, as Van Dijk (1997, p. 14) points out, the context in which the discourse is offered must be considered. Depending on the context, it can be qualified as political or not. “Politicians talk politically also (or only) if they and their talk are contextualized in such communicative events such as cabinet meetings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews with the media, bureaucratic practices, protest demonstrations, and so on.”

2.3 Sociolinguistics: Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship of language and society, in particular the impact of language usage on social communities and the influence of social aspects on the language choice and style of the orator. It combines the study of dialect, accent and register. While there are many differing focus points to consider, for this study, public authority within the political domain will be the principal focus.

Two key works inform our understanding of sociolinguistics’ impact on neurocommunication. First, Labov’s (1972) introduction of variationist sociolinguistics, which included the concept of the (socio)linguistic variable – the choice between alternative linguistic forms with identical meaning but differing social significance (Bell et al., 2016). Second, Gal and Woolard’s 1995 work on the “making of authority” in public spaces, was further explored in their 2001 concept of “voices from nowhere”. Language ideologies, as explained by Gal (2023), represent the common assumptions about language differences that a speaker brings to the interaction in a social context. Furthermore, she illustrates that they are not limited to the textual form but are also present in the material surroundings. They are metacommunication. Derived from Labov’s work and drawing on language ideology, Eckert proposed the indexical field, a range of possible variants and social meanings and where the variationist theory gains its performative range (Eckert, 2019). For Eckert “a potential component of linguistic performativity is the extent to which the speaker’s body and subjectivity enter into the means of expression” (2019, p. 752).

Sclafani (2017) explains Labov’s contribution as a means of identifying the style of the speaker based on the relative amount of time dedicated to the thought process and/or articulation of the speech. She furthers this by highlighting the “indexicality principle of language and identity: the social meaning of a linguistic form is made possible by the fact that in the articulation of any proposition, speakers have a choice of ways to encode their ideas through language” (Sclafani, 2017, p.89). This, puts forth the argument that Trump’s oratory styles and choices of language in his announcement speech could be deliberately construed. As Ogunrinde (2022) points out, competencies such as social aptitudes, language and communication capability

characterize relationships between people, and in these we can include those of a political leader.

While Gal and Woolard's theory on the making of authority in public spaces is considered a seminal work in many regards, Heyd and Schneider (2019, p. 437) have gone further, presenting "linguistic evidence indicating that much discursive work is put into making things ordered and homogenous." Moreover, they have found that through acts of "linguistic re-positioning," traditional elites can attempt to reposition themselves as a dominant figure in the public arena. This, they argue, is often accomplished by affectively claiming they are a part of the minority group (Heyd and Schneider, 2019, p. 438).

3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The study aims to analyse how political discourse reaches different audiences through neurocommunication. The objective is to conduct a content analysis, taking into account both verbal and non-verbal communication, of a political announcement speech to investigate how successfully the message is perceived and engaged with by the audience. Furthermore, the interest lies in understanding the cognitive impact of a speech based on the ideological affinity between a leader and their audience.

From the objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1 How does the success of message perception and engagement by the receiver depend on the mode of transmission from the sender to the receiver's brain, considering both verbal and non-verbal language?

RQ2. To what extent do the cognitive effects resulting from a leader's speech vary based on the ideological affinity of the receiver, considering the structural differences in their brains?

The content analysis of Trump's speech will be the basis of the methodology of this article. According to Krippendorff (1980), content analysis stands out as a crucial methodology in communication research. He argues that its core objective is to conduct a rigorous and systematic examination of the various messages exchanged during communication acts.

A wide range of literature analyzes the different concepts of content analysis that have become known in recent years, from the most theoretical to the most applied, even in areas such as consumer research. Moreover, content analysis tends to be juxtaposed with discourse analysis. According to Saraisky (2016, p. 27), "content analysis is positivist, objective, and quantitative while discourse analysis is interpretivist, intersubjective and qualitative." Typically, content analysis assumes that meaning can be counted and coded. Hence, the use of a codebook with an *a priori* coding system is employed, enabling the researcher to track patterns and significance of specific content and derive conclusions (Lowe, 2004). Through it, categories can be described in great depth with a list of examples taken from the data, or with general criteria that help coders interpret and apply the codes. As Stortenbeker et al. (2022, p. 5) state, "using a list of examples is objective and requires little or no interpretation by coders, which decreases the likelihood of inconsistencies in coding."

To respond to RQ1, a codebook system is applied to classify the discourse and variables such as the use of singular or plural, the way of speaking, the use of words and the tone. Finally, this section will conclude with an overall interpretation of the announcement speech in order to provide a response to RQ2.

The speech chosen for the analysis is the one delivered by Trump on November 15, 2022, in which, at his Mar-A-Lago residence in Florida, he announced his idea of running in the 2024 presidential elections in the U.S.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the application of the codebook mentioned above. It will be conducted, as reflected in Table 1, according to the research questions posed in this study.

Tab. 1 - Application of Codebook according to Research Questions. Source: own research

RQ1: Success of message considering both verbal and non-verbal language	RQ2: Cognitive effects based on the ideological affinity of the receiver
4.1 Singular or plural	4.5 Interpretation of the speech
4.2 Way of speaking	
4.3 The use of words	
4.4 Tone	

4.1 Singular or plural: Trump begins his speech by thanking everyone present on behalf of his wife, Melania, himself, and his entire family. He immediately addresses all citizens because he knows that from the first moment, he must reach the minds of all potential voters.

The first-person plural, which occurs when the speaker includes everyone else and which is frequent in political language, is widely used in his speech (“we turn the page”, “we were a great and glorious nation”, “together we built the greatest economy in the history of the world”, “we were building the wall”). Schmidtke (2021, p.1) suggests that this resource is used by populist actors in Western democracies to “challenge established political elites by invoking the image of a people whose rights are violated and whose political voice is suppressed.”

When he uses ‘we’, he also seeks action from the citizens so that they can carry out the speaker’s ideas, even from the first moments of his potential presidency (“we will bring our supply chains and manufacturing base back home”, “on day one, we will end Joe Biden’s American war on American energy”, “we will launch an all-out campaign to eliminate America’s dependence on China”, “we’re going to bring people together”). This use of ‘we’ could be considered an explicit performative, where “the performative potential is rooted in that conventional meaning” (Eckert, 2019, p.754). Trump is technically creating an obligation between himself and his audience.

He uses ‘we’ to include the values exemplified by the Americans who stand with him; he mentions all the positive things they do for society. Moreover, he uses the possessive pronoun ‘our’ (“under our leadership”, “our enemies are speaking of us with scorn”, “our historic tax and regulation cuts”) with the idea of making citizens participate in what he did or what happens to him.

He refers to ‘they’, in this case pointing to the establishment and the Democrats, to contrast their discourse with that of ‘others’ (“the Washington establishment wants to silence us, but we will not let them do that”, “the radical left, Democrats have embraced an extreme ideology of government domination and control”, “we will defeat the radical left Democrats that are trying to destroy our country”). It is a resource used to confront those who do not represent him and who, in populist terms, are considered the enemy. ‘They’ are the enemies of the United States and its people.

On the other hand, he uses ‘I’ repeatedly and does so to highlight his achievements when he was president. These successes are generally economic because it is one of the areas in which

he feels most confident (“I took decisive action and saved lives and the U.S. economy”, “No president has ever -- had ever sought or received one dollar for our country from China, until I came along and we were getting hundreds of billions of dollars”, “I made big promises to the American people, and unlike other presidents, I kept my promises”). He resorts to this resource because he knows that his followers will recognize his successes. Each time, applause ensued. He also uses ‘I’ to refer to himself as a victim of the system when ‘they’ tried to accuse him of wrongdoing.

4.2 Way of speaking: Trump has his own way of speaking and addressing different audiences. It is one of the main characteristics of his personality. This way of expressing himself helps the audience to identify the speaker.

Several studies, through the use of neuroimaging techniques, show how the brain sometimes cannot function rationally, and that is when it resorts to different shortcuts (Sánchez-Juárez, 2019). One of the experts in this article, Redolar, believes that one of these shortcuts is image. Redolar (as cited in Sánchez-Juárez, 2019) argues that nonverbal cues such as facial expressions play a significant role in shaping audience perception. For instance, a U-shaped mouth and A-shaped eyebrows can signal confidence, while U-shaped mouths combined with V-shaped eyebrows might evoke wariness. In the case of Trump, his facial expressions would represent the former group, that is, features that denote confidence.

As stated by Bosker and Peeters (2021, p. 1), “visual aspects of everyday human communication are not restricted to the subtle mouth or lip movements. In close coordination with speech, the hand gestures we spontaneously and idiosyncratically make during conversations help us express our thoughts, emotions, and intentions.” Hand movements are part of the message to be communicated, and in the case of this speech, Trump has them holding the lectern from which he speaks without hardly moving them. He only does so when he wants to emphasize a statement. Although the perception of authority of speakers is linked to frequent vertical hand movements, this is not the case in this speech.

4.3 The use of words: Trump uses negative terms when referring to the current U.S. president to discredit his attitudes and policy decisions (“for millions of Americans, the past two years under Joe Biden have been a time of pain, hardship, anxiety and despair”, “Joe Biden has intentionally surrendered our energy independence”, “Joe Biden is the face of left-wing failure and Washington corruption”, “Joe Biden has abolished America’s borders”). This is a resource that aims to become an alternative in the eyes of the audience for the next elections because everything he criticizes will become something positive when he potentially becomes president.

He even makes references to personal issues to make his fans see that Biden does not have the necessary qualifications to be president (“now we have a president who falls asleep at global conferences”, “that was not good, what he did, a lot of bad things, like going to Idaho and saying welcome to the state of Florida”).

In addition, he establishes statements, also negative, to show what in his opinion are unfavorable policies for the country (“we are now begging for energy help from foreign nations, many of whom find us detestable”, “our southern border has been erased, and our country is being invaded by millions and millions of unknown people, many of whom are entering for a very bad and sinister reason”, “the United States has been embarrassed, humiliated and weakened for all to see”, “our country is in a horrible state. We are in grave trouble”, “hundreds of thousands of pounds of deadly drugs, including very lethal fentanyl, are flooding across the now open and totally poor southern border”), arguments with which, once again, he tries to reach the minds of those who listen to him to make them see that he can turn the situation around.

On the other hand, he uses ideas of a positive nature to refer, fundamentally, to his feelings, his achievements, and his hopes. He speaks of ‘love’ (“people say, how do you speak before so many people, when there’s love in the room, it is really easy”, “it’s about our love for this great country”); of creating (“we will create communities where our children will grow up safe and strong”); of ‘winning’ (“we will win, because we will fight with every measure of our strength and with every ounce of our energy to lift up the working men and women of America”, “we, in the end, will win. Our country will win. We will win.”).

Throughout his speech, he reiterates what he considers his successes to extrapolate them to the successes of the country (“our nation was at the pinnacle of power, prosperity and prestige”).

In relation to the use of words, Lakoff (2014, p.160) refers to the elaboration of a series of mental frames that have a great effect on the audience because “once your frame is accepted within the discourse, everything you say is simply common sense. Why? Because that’s what common sense is: reasoning within a commonplace, an accepted frame.” Trump uses these frames so that, through his speech, what he says is common sense to the listener (“we have to be protected, from all of those nations out there that are looking to destroy us from beyond our shores. There are lots of nations that hate us, gravely”).

The repetition of words and phrases is a resource widely used by Trump with the clear objective of ensuring that the audience has no doubts about his ideas, projects and feelings. For instance, with the clear aim of reinforcing the accomplishments of his government and their strategies, he repeatedly uses the phrase “never been anything like this” in the following segment: “There’s never been anything like it, this great movement of ours. Never been anything like it. Perhaps there will be nothing like it again. There’s never been anything to compete with what we have all done.” Sclafini (2017) noted in her previous study on Trump’s 2016 speeches, his overuse of the phrase “we will” as an example of epistrophic punctuation, which is the repetition of short phrases employed to evoke an affective or epistemic stance, at the end of rhetorical stances. In contrast, in this study, the phrase “we will” is consistently employed (63 times) in an anaphoric manner, placing the structure at the beginning of each sentence. The emphasis is to engage the audience in active participation, for instance, in the final rally call at the end of the speech:

“And together, we will make America powerful again.

We will make America wealthy again.

We will make America strong again.

We will make America proud again.

We will make America safe again.

We will make America glorious again.

And we will make America great again.”

Further examples of the most repeated words related to the objective of this work are highlighted and in parentheses the number of times they appear in his speech. *We* (239), *They* (144), *Our* (111), *Country* (59), *Great* (38), *America* (34), *American/s* (27), *Again* (19), *China* (18), *Biden* (17), *Nation* (16), *United States* (10), *Economy* (10), *Mexico* (7), *Covid* (6).

Tellingly, he leaves little space for Covid, it having been one of the most analysed and controversial issues during his years in office.

4.4 Tone: This is one of the most relevant elements when analysing a political discourse. According to Knox and Lucas (2021, p. 649), “tone conveys beliefs, preferences, and the intensity with which they are held—or at least, the impressions of these characteristics that the speaker hopes to leave on their audience.”

Körner et al. (2022, p. 648) already noted the differences that existed in tone between Trump’s and Biden’s speeches in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election: “Trump had a more positive emotional tone in his speeches than Biden.”

In the speech analysed in this paper, Trump generally uses a slow tone in order for the audience to understand all his ideas and proposals. There are specific moments in which he raises his intonation, especially in minute 18 when he announces his candidacy (“I am tonight announcing my candidacy for president of the United States.”).

He frequently pauses his cadence so that the audience can applaud him (he is interrupted by applause on 66 occasions). The two moments in which he employs a more emotional tone are at the beginning of his speech (“you, and all of those watching, are the heart and soul of this incredible movement, the greatest country in the history of the world. It’s very simple. There’s never been anything like it, this great movement of ours. Never been anything like it. Perhaps there will be nothing like it again. There’s never been anything to compete with what we have all done.”), and at the end, when he remarks on the idea of the slogan for which he is known (“America’s golden age is just ahead. And together, we will make America powerful again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America strong again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. We will make America glorious again. And we will make America great again.”). In this case, again, he seeks to group the voters so that they can participate in his decisions and policies by using ‘we’.

Another element that stands out in the tone of his speech is patriotism. Trump knows, from his previous experience, that appealing to that sentiment is favourable to him by a sizeable portion of the electorate. Hence, he frequently uses terms such as “glorious” or “dream” (“we were a great and glorious nation”, “our victory will be built on big ideas, bold ambitions and daring dreams for America’s future. We needed daring dreams”, “the beginning of our fight to rescue the American dream”). When he refers to patriotism, he seeks to give it an emphatic intonation so that there is no doubt as to what he intends to repeat in his hypothetical future witnessing (“we need to be friends and we need every patriot on board”).

4.5 Interpretation of the speech: To interpret Trump’s speech, the video was watched repeatedly because, as Gregorio (2018) indicates, this speaker resorts to different elements that need special attention. Among them is the use of intensifiers, both positive and negative, the patriotic allusions that are the basis of his words, in addition to the use of short, direct and simple sentences, and a repetitive vocabulary.

For Trump, the resource of posing a problem and pointing out a solution is habitual in his speech. He mentions the circumstances that, in his opinion, the country is going through and then offers an alternative. These difficulties have to do with leadership, with the strength of the country, with economic policies or with geostrategic issues. For all of them, he has a solution, which, repeatedly, is related to what he did when he occupied the White House.

Issues that he knows are relevant to his potential voters deserve special attention, whereas, as noted before, COVID-19 is largely ignored. Trump focuses on cases of insecurity and crime, and on the strength of the United States (“we will begin the process of safely removing the illegal alien criminals that have been unlawfully allowed into our country”, “we were a strong nation, and importantly, we were a free nation. Now, we are a nation in decline. We are a failing nation.”). With this, he tries to repeat the strategy that led him to success in 2016. It consists of

reading the needs of the people to become their leader. He says that he knows the reality of the people and therefore acquires a degree of empathy for those who are suffering, in his opinion, from the incompetence of the government.

He identifies with his audience and seeks to create them all as a single subject. He elaborates a code with the essential criteria of belonging to the group, unifies them in the ‘us’ and confronts them with the enemy who are the ‘they’. In this enemy, he includes many and interrelates them (“the establishment, the media, the special interests, globalists, the Marxist radicals, the woke corporations, the weaponized power of the federal government, the colossal political machines, the tidal wave of dark money in the most dangerous domestic censorship system ever created by man or woman”).

Trump prefers to identify with the people and distance himself from those in charge. This, according to Panizza (2009), legitimizes the political persona due to their success in private sphere activities. Trump wants to project this success into the public sphere (“I will fight like no one has ever fought before”), to his political decisions (“I will restore public safety and American cities and other communities that need our help”) and also to his future strategies (“I will keep America out of foolish and unnecessary foreign wars”).

Trump attaches great importance during his speech to the role played by the United States on the global level and claims that, during his term in office, some of the countries with which he could have conflicts respected his figure (“China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea were in check. And respected. They respected the United States. And quite honestly, they respected me”). He also recalls that his opponents always described him as a warmonger (“they said during the 2016 campaign that if he becomes president, there will *never* be a war within weeks”). Ironically, while attempting to refute this characterization, his use of the adverb “never” inadvertently strengthens the opposing narrative. With these ideas he wants the audience to understand that he has been and will be a president who has sought to protect his country and the American people.

In this speech, Trump does not appear as the showman of other occasions. He wants to project a presidential image because of the context and the moment in which he finds himself. In any case, he says what he thinks, sometimes beyond the realm of political correctness (“We turn the page on decades of globalist sellouts and one-sided trade deals. Lifted millions out of poverty and together we built the greatest economy in the history of the world”, “this is a task for a great movement, that embodies the courage, confidence and spirit of the American people”).

5 CONCLUSION

The answer to the first research question is confirmed. In communication, both the element of perception and the process of transmitting a message from a leader to the mind of the receiver are relevant. Through the brain, the human being receives information about what is happening around them, experiences feelings and sensations, and finally makes decisions about what to do. As indicated, several factors are important in this transmission process. On the one hand, those that are purely verbal and clearly reach the receiver’s mind, and on the other hand, those that are non-verbal and have more to do with emotions.

In the specific case of Trump’s speech, the way he transmits his messages and the elements he uses to do so are effective and reach the minds of his receivers, regardless of how adept they are. The repetition of certain words and ideas, the clear identification of who are the ‘we’ and the ‘they’, and the way of speaking emphasizing those aspects he wants to highlight are well received by those who follow him. In addition, the tone he uses involves emotions and beliefs that, from the fields of neurocommunication and psychology, are highly effective.

The answer to the second research question is also confirmed. It has been shown that there are differences in the brain structures of people with different ideologies, so the effects that a message, in this case a political message, will have on them will also be different. The cognitive effects that a message has on a receiver may be based on emotional processes, but we must also take into account the processes of political choice and, therefore, they are also based on ideology.

The predisposition of a receiver towards a leader's words is different if he or she agrees or disagrees with that person from an ideological point of view. If one is in favour, one will find more arguments that reinforce a positive position while if, on the contrary, one is against these arguments, it will serve to confirm that one does not follow the postulates of that leader. In the case of Trump, this relationship is clear because his speeches have cognitive and emotional effects mainly on those audiences that agree with his ideology. His supporters' minds are receptive to his message because the arguments he uses are in line with the ideas that his addressees hold. Hence, he often repeats certain expressions to strengthen that ideological relationship with his receiver.

The limitations of this article are given, in the first place, by the number of elements chosen to analyse. The codebook could have been broader or included other factors that are also useful for analysing the object of this article. Other types of tools could be used that would be useful to determine the perception of a leader's speech by different audiences. Another limitation lies in having not carried out a comparative study of the speech analysed with previous speeches delivered by Trump. In this way, it would have been possible to analyse the evolution of the elements chosen for this work. However, the purpose of this study was to present the employment of neurocommunication tactics on a specific political discourse, which we feel was fulfilled.

This analysis may serve as a valuable source of information for researchers for further investigations in this area and for several stakeholders who are naturally invested. First, for the leaders themselves, it can help them to know what resources they have at their disposal to better convince and persuade their audiences. Some of which, with proper training, could bring them vast benefits. Second, the leaders' advisors can rely on the tools offered by political neuromarketing to use them with their clients and achieve the desired success. And third, the audiences themselves can learn more about the elements of persuasion that leaders can use to transmit their messages into their minds. In this way, they will be able to grant greater or lesser veracity.

All in all, the analysis conducted here has the potential to be addressed in future research. The speeches of political leaders occur frequently in different parts of the world, and the tools they use to reach different audiences are recurrent, and neurocommunication, increasingly, will offer new elements to expand and improve this type of work.

References

1. Arteaga, S. (2018). Cómo funciona el cerebro político? Guía de comunicación política para entender a los votantes y a la opinión pública. *Revista Jurídica Mario Alario D'Filippo*, 10(20), 187-212. <https://doi.org/10.32997/2256-2796-vol.10-num.20-2018-2155>
2. Bell, A., Sharma, D., & Britain, D. (2016). Labov in sociolinguistics: An introduction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(4), 399–408. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/josl.12199>

3. Bosker, H. R. & Peeters, D. (2021). Beat gestures influence which speech sounds you hear. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 288, 20202419. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.2419>
4. Calderón, L. (2017). La neurociencia: Una postura crítica frente al “boom” por la “neuro.” *CES Psicología*, 10(1), 1-3. DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.20028.74887
5. Chung, D. Y. (2018). Evolutionary origin of politics and political evolution: Neuropolitics. *Journal of Behavioral and Brain Science*, 8, 538-561. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jbbs.2018.810033>
6. Dunagan, J. (2010). Politics for the neurocentric age. *Journal of Future Studies*, 15(2), 51–70.
7. Eckert, P. (2019). The limits of meaning: Social indexicality, variation, and the cline of interiority. *Language*, 95(4), 751–776. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lan.2019.0072>
8. Egolf, D. (2012). *Human communication and the brain*. Lexington Books.
9. Gal, S. (2023). *Language ideologies*. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics* <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.996>.
10. Gal, S., & Woolard, K. A. (2001). *Languages and publics: The making of authority*. Routledge.
11. Gal, S. & Woolard, K. A. (1995). Constructing languages and publics: Authority and representation. *Pragmatics*, 5(2), 129 – 138. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.5.2.01gal>
12. Gallardo, B. (2016). Programas de tertulia política en Twitter: Un modelo neurocomunicativo de análisis del discurso. *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación*, 66, 86-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/CLAC.52770>
13. García Marzá, D. (2013). Neuropolítica y democracia: Un diálogo necesario. *Daimon Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 59, 171–182.
14. Haas, I. J., Warren, C. & Lauf, S. J. (2020). Political neuroscience: Understanding how the brain makes political decisions. In W. R. Thompson (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.948>
15. Hegazy, I. M. (2021). The effect of political neuromarketing 2.0 on election outcomes: The case of Trump’s presidential campaign 2016. *Review of Economics and Political Science*, 6(3), 235–251. <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-06-2019-0090>
16. Heyd, T. & Schneider, B. (2019). The sociolinguistics of late modern publics. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 23(5). 435-449. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12378>
17. Heyes, C. & Catmur, C. (2022). What happened to mirror neurons? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 17(1), 153-168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691621990638>
18. Jost, J. T., Nam, H. H., Amodio, D. M., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2014). Political neuroscience: The beginning of a beautiful friendship. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 35(1), 3-42. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12162>
19. Kaplan, J. T., Freedman, J., & Iacoboni, M. (2007). Us versus them: Political attitudes and party affiliation influence neural response to faces of presidential candidates. *Neuropsychologia*, 45(1), 55-64. DOI: 10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2006.04.024

20. Knox, D. & Lucas, C. (2021). A dynamic model of speech for the social sciences. *American Political Science Review*, 115(2), 649-666. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542000101X>
21. Körner, R., Overbeck, J. R., Körner, E. & Schütz, A. (2022). How the linguistic styles of Donald Trump and Joe Biden reflect different forms of power. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 41(6), 631–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221085309>
22. Khan, K., & Mujitaba, A. (2023). Development and validation of brand strategies evaluation scale for mobile network users. *ESIC Market*, 54(1), e291. <https://doi.org/10.7200/esicm.53.291>
23. Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage.
24. Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
25. Lakoff, G. (2007). *No pienses en un elefante. Lenguaje y debate político*. Editorial Complutense.
26. Lowe, W. (2004). Content analysis and its place in the (methodological) scheme of things. *Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), 25-28.
27. Martínez de Miguel, P., García Martínez, A., & Montes-Botella, J.-L. (2022). Revisión de la medición de las Capacidades Dinámicas: Una propuesta de indicadores para la industria del automóvil. *ESIC Market*, 53(1), e283. <https://doi.org/10.7200/esicm.53.283>
28. Natal, D. & Carruesco, F. (2015). *Si hablamos de neuromarketing, podemos hablar de neurocomunicación?* LLYC. <https://ideas.llorenteycuencia.com/2015/09/si-hablamos-de-neuromarketing-podemos-hablar-de-neurocomunicacion/>
29. Ogunrinde, A. (2022). La efectividad de las habilidades blandas en la generación de capacidades dinámicas en las empresas TIC. *ESIC Market*, 53(3), e286. <https://doi.org/10.7200/esicm.53.286>
30. Panizza, F. (2009). *El populismo como espejo de la democracia*. Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina.
31. Randall, K. (2015, November 4). Neuropolitics, where campaigns try to read your mind. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/world/americas/neuropolitics-where-campaigns-try-to-read-your-mind.html>
32. Rubio Gregorio, I. (2018). Análisis de la interpretación de discursos políticos. Estudio de caso: Donald Trump en la Asamblea General de la ONU el 19 de septiembre de 2017 [Master's thesis, Universidad Pontificia Comillas].
33. Sánchez-Juárez, A. (2019). *Neuropolítica: Cómo el cerebro del votante elige a un candidato*. UOC. <https://www.uoc.edu/portal/es/news/actualitat/2019/064-neuopolitica.html>
34. Saraisky, N. G. (2016). Analyzing public discourse: Using media content analysis to understand the policy process. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 18(1), 26-41.
35. Schmidtke, O. (2021). 'We the people': Demarcating the demos in populist mobilization—The case of the Italian lega. *Social Sciences*, 10(10), 351. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100351>

36. Sclafani, J. (2017). The sociolinguistic co-construction of political identity. In J. Sclafani (Ed.), *Talking Donald Trump. A sociolinguistic study of style, metadiscourse, and political identity* (chapter 5). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315276885>
37. Shigapova, F. F., Titova, E. A., Morozova, T. V., & Sabirova, A. N. (2021). Manipulative speech techniques in political discourse. [Técnicas manipuladoras del habla en el discurso político] *Propósitos y Representaciones*, 9, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nSPE2.1020>
38. Stortenbeker, I., et al. Coding linguistic elements in clinical interactions: A step-by-step guide for analyzing communication form. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 22(1), 191. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-022-01647-0>
39. Tapia, A. & Varona, D. (2020). Neuropoliting: Un análisis sobre discursos preelectorales televisivos en Ciudad de México. *Revista Multidisciplinar*, 2(1), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.23882/MJ2025>
40. Trump, D. (November, 16, 2022). *Full Speech: Donald Trump announces he will run for president in 2024*. [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KQHqkJa2Kw>
41. Uña, O., Fernández, M. & Fernández, C. (2014). “De tutti e di nessuno. Struttura dei processi nella creazione dell’opinione pubblica”. In J. Timoteo Álvarez (Ed.), *Neurocomunicazione* (pp. 113-142). ARACNE.
42. Van Dijk, T. A., (1997). What is political discourse analysis? *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, 11(1), 11-52.
43. Varón, A., & Zapata, L. (2021). Análisis del discurso político desde la neurocomunicación: Un caso práctico. *Revista Venezolana de Gerencia*, 26(93), 264-278.
44. Westen, D. (2007). *The political brain. The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation*. Public Affairs.

Contact information

prof. Rafael Barberá González, Ph.D.

ESIC University

Faculty: Social Sciences

Department: Communication

Country Spain

E-mail: Rafael.barbera@esic.university

ORCID: 0000-0002-4389-9576

Rhona Patricia Lohan, Ph.D. Candidate

ESIC University

Faculty Social Sciences

Department (Institute) Communication

Country Spain

E-mail: Rhona.lohan@esic.university

ORCID: 0000-0002-7590-9548