INSULTS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS: DONALD TRUMP'S TWEETS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SPEECH ACT OF INSULTING

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Abstract: While insulting opponents is not something alien to politicians and political campaigns, Donald Trump has added a new dimension to it by making it almost a part of his daily routine. Moreover, his insults are often blatant and outright, rather than subtle and disguised, which sets a new tone to political discourse. The goal of this paper is to establish whether his insults are random rants meant to vent his anger and frustration with his critics and political adversaries, or rather a part of a calculated strategy aimed at political gain. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpus, which consists of 915 tweets published by Trump over a four-month period, and which was done within the methodological framework of the speech act theory and, in part, cognitive linguistics, show that Trump's insults are not based on impulsivity and randomness. The results also suggest that, based on the way the illocutionary effect of insulting is achieved, his insults are realized in three distinct patterns: derogatory nicknaming, conventional and indirect insults. The recurring framing of political opponents by means of derogatory nickname-calling, by far the most common type of insults identified in this study, reveals a higher-level agenda on the addressor's side. His intention is to methodically discredit the targets of his insults in the eyes of the third party, whose role and reaction in this type of political discourse become even more prominent than that of the insulted party.

Keywords: speech act of insulting, Twitter, Trump, illocutionary effect, framing, derogatory nicknames, conventional insults, indirect insults, political discourse.

1. Introduction

When, against all odds, Donald Trump became the 45th President of the USA, it was met with disbelief around the world. Trump was "his own brand" from the outset, often using a shocking language laced

with “slashing, coarse insults” (Kranish and Fisher 3). He did not care about political correctness, nor conventions of politics¹, which was initially misinterpreted as a weakness by his opponents², but eventually turned out to be his winning card. Although many polls and experts had predicted otherwise, and in spite of the fact that the bulk of public figures and, more importantly, the mainstream media did not have a favorable view of Trump, he won the election. This gave rise to numerous analyses, articles, and speculations as to what exactly led to Trump's unexpected victory. Although it is still an ongoing debate, his unconventional use of language³ is often cited as one of the reasons for his success. In their book published prior to the election, Kranish and Fisher (311) state that “Trump sensed what ailed and angered many Americans, and knew how to speak their language”.

Years before Trump entered politics, Lakoff (2004, 3-4) explained how Republicans successfully used (and continue to use) *framing* as a strategy to win over the voters. By creating and repeating frames that fit them and their worldview, they ensure that their ideas and claims are accepted by the public regardless of whether they are justified or not. Donald Trump has obviously adopted this strategy and used it consistently ever since he entered politics. While his utilization of framing is much wider, in this paper we will only touch upon its use within one specific type of insults - derogatory nicknaming.

Considering the mainstream media antagonistic to him, Trump has generally shunned them, and turned to Twitter instead, where he has over 45 million followers. He explains his extensive use of social media as “the only way to get the truth out” (Trump's tweet, 13 December 2017) and “the only way to fight a VERY dishonest and unfair 'press'” (Trump's tweet, 30 December 2017). His tweets, which abound with harsh language filled with all sorts of face-threatening acts⁴, turned into his deadly political weapon⁵.

¹ “He was the ultimate improviser, supremely confident of his own gut instinct. He would be politically incorrect, hurling insults at people and groups in defiance of the conventions of politics. [...] He was called a political clown.” (Kranish and Fisher 311)

² Therefore, one of the slogans of Hillary Clinton's supporters was *Love Trumps Hate*, since they thought he had been playing into their hands with such use of language.

³ As Sclafani (5) notes, Trump's linguistic style is “markedly distinct from any type of discourse we might think of as a 'presidential' norm.”

⁴ The concept of *face-threatening acts* was introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987) within their theory of politeness, and it denotes those (speech) acts that potentially threaten the *face* (self-image) of either the addressor

The goal of this study is to identify different patterns that Trump uses to perform insulting as a speech act, as well as to explore the reasons that lie behind such massive use of insults in his tweets, and in his speech in general. The main hypothesis is that in the context of a new form of political discourse pioneered by Trump, which increasingly takes place on social media, insults turn into a powerful political weapon associated with a well-thought-out strategy of discrediting opponents, rather than with haphazard venting of negative emotions aimed at hurting, humiliating, or angering the targets of insults. Thereby, the main motivation behind the use of insults significantly shifts from the urge to unleash frustrations with the target towards a more pragmatic goal, namely that of affecting the opinion of the third party (numerous online users who read such insulting tweets).

2. Background

The analysis of Trump's insults undertaken in this research was mostly done within the framework of the speech act theory. When analyzing the realization of the illocutionary act of insulting by means of derogatory nickname-calling, we also made use of the concept of framing, since it offers a better insight into the addresser's intentions in that particular type of insults.

2.1. Speech act theory

Speech act theory was outlined in the Oxford language philosopher J. L. Austin's book *How to Do Things With Words* (1962)⁶, in which, focusing on language use, he noticed that language can have a performative function, which can be used not only to describe the extralinguistic reality, but also to change it. At the center of this approach to language study is not a sentence or word, but speech acts⁷, which, as Marmarido (167) notes, are not conceived as just

(apologizing, thanking, complementing, etc.) or addressee (criticizing, ordering, accusing, etc.).

⁵ For detailed account of Trump's use of Twitter, see Osborne and Roberts (2017).

⁶ The book is actually a posthumously published collection of Austin's lectures from 1955. Ideas for those lectures were developed earlier.

⁷ Searle (1969, 16) labels speech acts as "basic or minimal units of linguistic communication". They can be realized in oral or written form. Recanati (54) provides a simplified definition of a speech act as "[...] an action performed by uttering a sentence in some language [...]". However, a speech act can consist of anything from a single word to a multi-sentence utterance.

“another pragmatic phenomenon”, but rather “fundamental theoretical construct which seeks to provide alternative approach to the study of meaning of sentences”. Austin noted that a speech act typically comprises three acts: locutionary (saying something), illocutionary (attaching illocutionary force⁸ to what is said), and perlocutionary act (producing some effects on actions, thoughts or feelings of the addressees, such as persuading, frightening, or annoying, whether it was intended or not). He also proposed the first classification of speech acts, and introduced the concept of felicity conditions. Namely, speech acts can be felicitous or infelicitous, that is, successfully performed or defective⁹. Detailed overview of conditions that regulate successful realization of speech acts was later provided by Searle (1969), who, focusing on the speech act of promising, grouped them into preparatory, sincerity, essential, and propositional content conditions. Searle is also credited with systematizing other aspects of the speech act theory. Among other things, he explained the concept of indirect speech acts¹⁰, and offered his own taxonomy of speech acts (1979), placing them into five categories: assertives (they commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition - stating, describing, informing, etc.), directives (they urge the addressee to do something - ordering, requesting, advising, etc.), commissives (they commit the speaker to a future activity - promising, vowing, threatening, etc.), expressives (they express psychological states of the speaker - apologizing, congratulating, welcoming, etc.), and declarations (if felicitous, they create the state of the affairs expressed in them - resigning, declaring a war, closing or opening a ceremony, as well as performing any speech act with an explicit performative). In daily communication, we often perform what Searle and Vanderveken (1985) call *complex illocutionary acts*, that is, two or more speech acts within the same utterance.¹¹

⁸ “Force is the pragmatic component that makes an utterance of a sentence an instance of an assertion, or a question, or a command, and so forth.” (Tanesini 63)

⁹ An example of an infelicitous speech act of insulting would be saying offensive things to someone who cannot hear or understand us.

¹⁰ Searle (1979, 31) defines indirect speech acts as “cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another.” So, for instance, we can request by asking a question, or threaten by promising to do something, and those would be indirect speech acts.

¹¹ For instance, “Shut up, you fool, or I’ll kill you!” includes three illocutionary acts (ordering, insulting, and threatening) within a single sentence.

2.2. *Insulting as a speech act*

Insulting is a speech act that is performed by expressing speaker's negative opinion of the addressee in a disrespectful way, with the intention to humiliate and hurt him/her. Although, in terms of Searle's taxonomy, insulting shares certain qualities of assertives (its propositional content can often be assessed as true or false), it best fits into the category of expressives, since it is about expressing the psychological state of the speaker (the animosity towards the addressee) rather than committing to the truth of the expressed proposition.¹² The felicity conditions for the successful realization of this speech act are the following:

- *preparatory condition*: the speaker has a negative view of the addressee, and is ready to express it in a hurtful manner¹³,
- *sincerity condition*: the speaker intends to insult the addressee,
- *essential condition*: the utterance represents the speaker's attempt to insult the addressee (if, instead of tweeting it, Trump wrote a disparaging comment about someone in his diary, the speech act of insulting would not be performed successfully),
- *propositional content condition*: the speaker uses words and expressions with negative connotations.

As for the sincerity condition, it is possible to produce the perlocutionary effect of offending inadvertently, even when there is no intention on the part of the speaker to do so. Conversely, the speaker can hide his intention to insult someone, so that the perlocutionary effect is achieved without compromising the speaker.¹⁴ However, in those instances, the performance of the speech act of insulting cannot be verified. Propositional content condition is not necessary when insulting is performed as an indirect speech act (for instance, saying "Good job!" or "Congratulations!" to someone who did something poorly would constitute an example of the speech act of insulting without using negatively charged words).

¹² For instance, the expression "You are ignorant" may be assessed as true or false, but the primary motivation of the speaker in saying it lies in expressing his/her annoyance with the addressee.

¹³ Neu (4) notes that insulting is about "the assertion or assumption of dominance", since the speaker needs to feel some kind of superiority over the other person in order to insult him/her. However, it is debatable whether this is always the case, so we did not include it as a preparatory condition.

¹⁴ "[...]what sounds like praise [...] may in fact be cleverly packaged insult." (Irvine 10)

Unlike some other speech acts, insulting is not only about the speaker and the addressee. Indeed, insulting a person in front of someone else “adds insult to injury”, and aggravates the effects of it. In the case of Trump's tweets, it is not just a couple of people who happen to witness the interaction, but tens (or maybe hundreds) of millions of online users. What is more, they are not just a disinterested third party, but potential voters who need to be persuaded that those who are against Trump have no credibility, and deserve no respect, nor sympathy. Therefore, the speech act of insulting in this case is simultaneously geared towards producing the perlocutionary effect (that of persuading) on the third party.

2.3. *Framing*

Frames are mental structures in our unconscious mind that affect the way we think and see the world around us (Lakoff 2004, xv). Linguistically speaking, every word belongs to a frame and the mention of one word from the frame activates the entire frame simultaneously. This finding is crucially important for understanding politics and how politicians use language. Entman (52) defines the verb “to frame” as: *to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient*. Lakoff (2006, 22) draws distinction between *surface frames*, which are essentially based on lexical framing associated with a specific issue, idea, or individual, and *deep frames*, which relate to deep-rooted moral, ideological or political values and beliefs. Deep framing is essential, since it presents a necessary precondition for the success of surface framing.

The persuasive power of frames resides in the swirl of associations arising from even the most ordinary words, associations that can directly – and sometimes dramatically – affect our attitudes and behavior, usually without our conscious knowledge (Geary 64). It is important to note that frames take precedence over facts, and that framing also works under negation (Lakoff 2004, 37). Namely, even negating the opponent's words is promoting them because the mere mention is enough for a frame to be activated. In order to defeat the opponent in political discourse, a completely different strategy is needed, the one that does not trigger the opponent's frames.

To argue persuasively, speakers need to connect their target to the desired frame. Framing is about getting language that fits your worldview (Lakoff 2004, 4). Rhetorically speaking, a frame promotes its preferred perception, and thus guides the individual's processing of information (Entman 53). What follows from this is that, for instance, politicians can both present their *own version of the truth* and channel

the audience's understanding to meet the speaker's world view. Two more features that are crucial to mastering framing include background knowledge and repetition. The latter is a persuasive strategy that gets the listener's brain "accustomed" to the message through constant exposure to it. Our brain learns the new structures through repetition. When two phenomena or words are perceived at once on multiple occasions, they become one to the brain. This is true for anything from learning a language or a skill to labeling political opponents. The second feature – background knowledge – is crucial in understanding *on-line*¹⁵ language. Whatever new insights are perceived by any of senses, they are measured by what is already known (frames), hence understanding of even the most common words depends on personal experience. What follows from this is that listeners who identify themselves with the speaker are more likely to be persuaded. This is why politicians have the constant need to address their base. Speaking on a topic is never just the topic, it is the moral world view that is the background of it all and what matters most. Persuasive communication in particular has to do with identification: he who listens adjusts his view to that which is being insinuated; he always identifies himself to some degree with his partner. This again is why persuasion works best among people who speak the same language (Sornig 98).

3. Data and Methodology

The corpus for this research consists of Donald Trump's tweets published over a four-month period, from 1 September through 31 December 2017. Twitter has become an incredibly popular and multi-functional tool for politicians, especially in the west. Citing a number of studies, McGregor et al. (2017) list bypassing media by addressing voters directly, influencing professional journalists, mobilizing supporters, and getting wider attention as some advantages of the Twitter use for politicians. Another convenience is that it offers the possibility to publish anything, at any time. Since Trump generally avoids the mainstream media, his use of Twitter is even more important and extensive, so it offers an interesting insight into his use of insults.

Over the four-month time frame covered in this study, Trump posted 915 tweets¹⁶ (on average, 7.5 tweets a day), addressing all sorts of issues and events. While covering a broader time span would yield

¹⁵ Online refers to language processing in real time, in spoken language.

¹⁶ Retweets were not included into this research.

more reliable results, we are confident that the selected corpus is representative, and sufficient to unveil the key patterns used in performing the speech act of insulting, as well as the addressor's intention and motivation behind using them. The analysis of the data was done both in quantitative and qualitative terms, mainly within the methodological framework of the speech act theory. This theoretical background was selected for the analysis of insults since it offers, through the exploration of illocutionary and perlocutionary effects, a convenient methodological frame for identifying and analyzing the intention behind, and the persuasive power of Donald Trump's insulting rhetoric, as well as the profile of the targets of his insults. The concept of framing was utilized in the analysis of one type of insults frequently used by Trump (derogatory nicknaming) in order to further reveal the addressor's intention, and to demonstrate the agenda behind his massive use of insults.

4. Results and Discussion

Out of 915 tweets from our corpus, 124 (13.5%) contain elements of the speech act of insulting. In most cases, insulting was used in combination with other speech acts, i.e., it was a part of a complex illocutionary act. Based on the way the illocutionary effect of insulting has been achieved, all the examples of insults identified in the corpus can be classified into three categories, which occur alone or in combination with one another:

- *conventional insults*, where the illocutionary act of insulting is performed by describing or verbally attacking the target with words or expressions that are conventionally recognized as offensive,
- *derogatory nicknaming*, where the target is first given an offensive nickname (which does not necessarily have to include conventionally insulting words) and then referred to by it, in an attempt to frame the target as such,
- *indirect insults*, where the illocutionary act of insulting is performed in a more sophisticated way, without the use of words or expressions that represent outright insults.

Table 1 shows the frequency of occurrence of the above categories in the tweets that contain insults:

Tabela 1: Tweets that include the speech act of insulting classified according to the type of insults

Type of insult	Tweets in which it appears	Tweets in which it was used alone
<i>Conventional insults</i>	32 (25.8%)	17 (13.7%)
<i>Derogatory nicknaming</i>	99 (79.8%)	81 (65.3%)
<i>Indirect insults</i>	13 (10.4%)	4 (3.2%)

Regardless of the type of insults he uses, when performing the illocutionary act of insulting Trump mostly focuses on the targets' alleged immorality, incompetence, insignificance, or mental incapacity. By portraying the targets as corrupted, ineffectual, trivial, or stupid / crazy, he is trying to simultaneously produce two kinds of perlocutionary effects: offending them, and, more importantly, persuading the third party (those who read his tweets) that the targets lack credibility. If we consider the fact that Trump mostly insulted those who had criticized him or his actions, it is clear why presenting them as those who should not be trusted is important to him.

4.1. Conventional insults

This category comprises those instances in which the addressor's intention to produce the illocutionary effect of insulting is manifested by the selection of conventionally offensive vocabulary directed at the target. Characterized by unfiltered straightforwardness and pejorative language, this strategy represents the quickest and easiest way to insult someone. While it is normally not expected to be used by presidents or public officials, this type of insults is quite often utilized by Trump, both on Twitter and elsewhere.¹⁷ Conventional insults have been used in 32 tweets from our corpus (25,8% of all the tweets in which the speech act of insulting has been performed), both alone (17 tweets), and in combination with other types of insults (15 tweets). They are typically realized in one of the following ways:

- in the form of an explicit insulting statement about the target, in which case insulting is the main illocution (the target is *something*

¹⁷ During the first Republican debate of presidential candidates in 2015, Trump explained that he uses offensive language because he does not "have time for total political correctness".

offensive): Hillary Clinton *is the worst (and biggest) loser of all time*;

- by using a derogatory attributive adjective to describe the target while performing another illocutionary act, such as criticizing or accusing: *Lightweight Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (...) is now in the ring fighting Trump*;
- By referring to the target using a conventionally offensive noun, again in combination with another illocutionary act: *When will all the haters and fools out there realize that having a good relationship with Russia is a good thing (...)*;
- in the form of a sentence fragment: *Ungrateful fool! / Weak and out of control!*

Conventional insults have been used by Trump to mock his targets on the basis of their immorality in 7 tweets, incompetence and insignificance in 6 tweets each, and their mental incapacity in 5 tweets, while in 7 tweets his insults relate to two of those flaws. By using conventionalized insults to draw attention to the weaknesses (whether real or imaginary) of his opponents in the process of performing this illocutionary act, Trump is creating an image of himself as someone who is just being brutally honest and direct, and who calls things by their name (calling the media that do not report the truth *corrupt* and *fake*, somebody who is not successful *a loser*; or somebody who cannot understand what is good for Americans *a fool*). From this perspective, the insulting tweets, without unnecessary political correctness, help the audience see that the targets should not be trusted. Therefore, he generally avoids offensive words and expressions related to the targets' physical appearance, comparison with animals, sexuality, ethnic, religious or racial background, as well as swearing (such as calling someone an "asshole" or "son of a bitch"), which are all commonly used ways of insulting someone. Although they would express his negative evaluation of the targets and make them feel offended, such insults would do little in discrediting them.

The only tweet in which the target of Trump's insults is mocked for his physical appearance represents a fine example of how negating one's intention to insult someone can actually be used as a successful strategy for performing the speech act of insulting. In that tweet, responding to the insult from the North Korean leader who called Trump "a dotard", Trump wrote that he *WOULD never call him "short and fat"*, and, by mentioning those words, intentionally conjured up that exact image of Kim Jong-un, thereby insulting him.

Table 2 shows offensive words and expressions from the corpus associated with one of the above-mentioned categories:

Tabela 2: Conventionally offensive words and expressions used in Trump's tweets, grouped according to the flaw they are used to mock

Immorality	<i>dishonest and disgusting; very dishonest and unfair; a stain on America; corrupt; fake, a liar; haters, obstructionists; a negative voice, out of control (media), rogue.</i>
Incompetence	<i>bad; weak; ineffective; loser; incompetent; a disaster; doesn't have a clue; poor leadership ability; couldn't get elected dog catcher; a disgrace to good reporting.</i>
Insignificance	<i>a total flunky; dying magazines and newspapers; lightweight; low-level; on its last legs; his political career is "toast"; low ratings Joe Scarborough.</i>
Mental incapacity	<i>the dumbest man on television; dumb; naïve; wacky & totally unhinged; fools; a madman; ungrateful fool; sick and demented.</i>
Other	<i>short and fat</i>

The conventional insults identified in our corpus have been used both to offend individuals (14 tweets), and groups (18 tweets). Those collectively insulted following this pattern include media (11 tweets), terrorists (2 tweets), Democrats (2 tweets), as well as North Koreans, NFL players, and all those who criticize his stance on Russia (1 tweet each).

Since the propositional content condition is fulfilled, when the speech act of insulting is performed in this way, the addresser's intention to insult the target is readily attributable to him.

4.2. Derogatory nicknaming

Nickname-calling, which has become one of the hallmarks of Donald Trump's language, represents a strategy of insulting the target by assigning a disparaging nickname to it, and (in many cases) using it repeatedly afterwards to refer to the target. While such nicknames often do include offensive terminology (*Crazy, Wacky, Fake, Crooked*, etc.), they can also be formed (and be equally effective) without the words that are conventionally recognized as insulting. When it is realized following this pattern, insulting is mostly combined with another illocutionary act. The insult carried by the nickname is presupposed, and the addresser's focus is ostensibly put on performing

another illocution.¹⁸ Since the mere mentioning of the target's nickname produces the illocutionary effect of insulting, it is possible that even the illocutionary acts that are pleasing to the addressee (such as thanking or complimenting) can be combined with insulting.¹⁹ All of this contributes to creating a humorous effect, which makes the label more memorable.

The derogatory nicknames identified in our corpus, which are usually capitalized and may have different variants, are usually formed in the following ways:

- by putting a derogatory adjective (or noun) in front of the target's name: *Crooked Hillary*, *Crazy Bernie*, *(Pelosi / Schumer) Puppet Jones*;
- by adding a suffix to turn the target's name into a word with negative connotations, which is the technique Trump opts for when the target's name is apt for it: *Jeff Flake – Jeff Flake(y)*; *Al Franken – Al Frankenstien*;
- by coining a nickname that has negative undertones associated with the target, although it does not include a word that is conventionally offensive: *Pocahontas*, *(Little) Rocket Man*.²⁰

Derogatory nickname-calling is by far the most common way to perform the illocutionary act of insulting among the examples identified in our corpus. It appears in 99 tweets (79,8% of all the insulting tweets), and in 81 tweets (65,3%) the illocutionary act of insulting has been performed solely by means of nickname-calling. Such massive use of this type of insults cannot be incidental, particularly if we consider that the addresser's intention here is to make the offensive moniker stick with the target, rather than just to serve as a one-time insult. Therefore, derogatory nicknaming represents a classic example of framing designed by Trump (or his strategists), and aimed at methodically discrediting anybody who

¹⁸ For instance, in one tweet Trump accuses Hillary Clinton of stealing the election from her Democratic colleague Bernie Sanders, and, by using their derogatory nicknames, simultaneously insults both of them (*Crooked Hillary bought the DNC & then stole the Democratic Primary from Crazy Bernie!*).

¹⁹ A good example of this sort is Trump's tweet published in January 2018, in which he thanked a CNN journalist for admitting that Trump won in a standoff against Democrats (*Even Crazy Jim Acosta of Fake News CNN agrees... Thank you for your honesty Jim!*)

²⁰ Such derogatory nicknames without conventionally offensive words that were used in the past by Trump include *Sleepy Eyes Chuck Todd*, *Cryin' Chuck*, *1 for 38 Kasich*, *Little Marco*, etc.

opposes him, or who may pose a threat to him or his agenda in any way.

Names matter because they prime us to respond in specific ways (Geary 68).²¹ They are labels and as such are representative of individuals and groups. Therefore, while inventing nicknames that attribute certain negative features to his targets, Trump's intention is to make sure it is something they will be remembered for. The key to successful framing is repetition, which makes a denigrating label stick with the target. Eventually, it becomes a part of its identity, as people unknowingly start to see the target as such. Since every tweet containing a derogatory nickname coined by Trump is retweeted many times and reported by countless media outlets, the framing process is set in motion even if he uses a particular nickname only once. Paradoxically, even those media and individuals who criticize or oppose Trump help him do the framing by merely mentioning the nickname.²² Once it has been created, Trump can keep using the derisive moniker to strengthen the framing, or leave it for a later time (if any), depending on how serious or current threat the target poses to him. Having framed an individual or media as *Wacky*, *Crazy*, *Fake*, etc., he opens the door for belittling any future idea that might come from them since the background knowledge already exists (meaning "we already know they are wacky / crazy / fake").

Out of the 16 derogatory nicknames²³ used in the tweets from our corpus, the two that stand out are *Fake News (Media)* and *Crooked Hillary (Clinton)*, which essentially indicates that those are Trump's biggest opponents. As anybody who criticizes his work is proclaimed as fake, *Fake News (Media)* is a collective derogatory nickname for every media that has so far in any sense opposed Trump and that will do so in the future. With many spinoff variants (*Fake News*, *Fake News*

²¹ Some argue that the term "global warming", for example, is far too mild, suggesting a relaxed and possibly pleasant condition rather than one that is urgent and potentially catastrophic (Geary 68).

²² In an article published in the Guardian (13 June 2018), George Lakoff warns that, by repeating his claims, media help Trump promote his ideas, noting that they inadvertently "operate like his marketing agency". (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/13/how-to-report-trump-media-manipulation-language>, retrieved on 9 September, 2018).

²³ *Fake News (Media)*, *Crooked Hillary (Clinton)*, *Failing@nytimes*, *(Pelosi / Schumer) Puppet Jones*, *(Little) Rocket Man*, *Wacky Congresswoman Willson*, *Jeff Flake(y)*; *Al Frankenstien*; *Liddle Bob Corker*; *Crazy Bernie*; *Pocahontas*; *Degenerate Animal*; *Obstructionist Democrats*; *Crooked Dems*; *Number One State of Sponsored Terror*; *Clinton Puppet*.

Media, Fake News Networks, or, when Trump wants to specify which particular media he is referring to, *Fake News CNN*, *Fake News WaPo*, *Fake News NBC News*), this nickname appears in 51 tweets (41,1% of all the insulting tweets).

While it is pretty obvious why Trump's intention is to discredit the media that criticize him, it may seem surprising that Hillary Clinton is the second most common target of his nickname-calling (the nickname *Crooked Hillary Clinton* with its variants appears in 26 tweets, or 20.9% of all the insulting tweets from the corpus) even a year after he defeated her in the presidential election. Based on some of his insulting tweets²⁴, we can conclude that he uses Hillary as a symbol of the Democrats, and his intention is to extend the image of her that he has so successfully created (*Crooked*) to encompass all of them, which is further indicated by the use of the nickname *Crooked Dems* in one of his tweets. In the case of Hillary Clinton, the framing has been so effective that shorter variants of the nickname can be used without any doubt who Trump is referring to (*Crooked Hillary* - 11 tweets, *Crooked H.* - 4 tweets, *CH*, or just *Crooked* - 1 tweet each), or that even adjectives with positive connotation can be put in front of the nickname (*legendary Crooked Hillary Clinton*).

The third most commonly used derogatory nickname from the tweets covered in this research, *Failing@nytimes*, appears in 7 tweets, while other nicknames were used less often, as shown in Table 3. However, it should be noted that this analysis deals only with a limited number of Trump's tweets, and that some of these nicknames were used before or after the time span covered in this study.

²⁴ *If the Dems (Crooked Hillary) got elected [...]; Everybody is asking why the Justice Department (and FBI) isn't looking into all of the dishonesty going on with Crooked Hillary & the Dems; But why aren't Crooked Hillary & the Dems the focus?*

Tabela 3: Derogatory nicknames from the corpus that were used in three or more tweets

Derogatory nickname	Tweets in which it was used
<i>Fake News (Media)</i>	51 (41.1%)
<i>Crooked Hillary (Clinton)</i>	26 (20.9%)
<i>Failing@nytimes</i>	7 (5.6%)
<i>(Pelosi/Schumer) Puppet Jones</i>	5 (4%)
<i>(Little) Rocket Man</i>	5 (4%)
<i>Wacky Congresswoman Wilson</i>	3 (2.4%)

In the case of the nicknames that do not contain offensive words, the illocutionary effect of insulting is achieved through the background knowledge associated with a particular nickname. For instance, the nickname *Pocahontas* (originally, without any negative connotations, the name of an Indian chief's daughter who married a colonist), which Trump gave to Senator Elizabeth Warren, is associated with her claim that she had Native American origin, as well as with Trump's accusations that she lied about it in order to get some personal benefits. Therefore, in this particular case, the moniker *Pocahontas* brings up the image of her as a liar, which creates the illocutionary effect of insulting.

4.3. Indirect insults

This category includes those examples in which the speech act of insulting has been performed in a more subtle way, without the use of conventionally offensive words and expressions, or derisive monikers. Since in such examples insulting is realized as an indirect speech act, the addresser's intention to insult the target can be recognized from the context. This type of insults is less common than the other two, and it appears in 13 tweets (10.4% of all the insulting tweets from the corpus), mostly in combination with conventional insults or derogatory nickname-calling (9 tweets). In the case of indirect insults identified in our corpus, the illocutionary effect of insulting was achieved in one of the following ways:

- by describing the target with words that have negative connotations in that particular context (*fiction writers; a joke; the pipe organ for the Democrat Party*),

- by making a denigrating statement about the target (*correct reporting means nothing to them*),
- by using quotation marks when referring to the target, thereby indicating that they are not what they claim to be (*"press"; "papers"*),
- by making an insulting presupposition about the target, and presenting the insulting element as a well-known fact (the mainstream media want *to please their Democrat bosses; follow the lead of their friends, the defeated Dems*),
- by implying something that is offensive to the target, while avoiding to explicitly state it (*With Jemele Hill at the mike, it is no wonder ESPN ratings have "tanked"...*; Senator Kirsten Gillibrand *would do anything* to get money from Trump - sexual implications).

When the offensive content is only implied, the addresser's intention to perform the illocutionary act of insulting is sometimes not readily attributable to him, such as in the case of the Trump's remark about Senator Gillibrand. In such instances, the addresser makes his intention vague enough to leave some room for denying it. His comment that she was *begging* him to give her money for her campaign, and that she *would do anything* to get it (which essentially implies that she is a slut), produced the perlocutionary effect of offending her²⁵ and received wide criticism. However, the White House press secretary said that interpreting Trump's intention in that way is possible "only if your mind is in the gutter". Yet, Trump's inclination towards insulting his opponents, as well as other insults that he leveled at this woman help us in interpreting this particular comment as an indirect insult.

Although, following this pattern, the illocutionary act of insulting is performed in a more subtle way, without using harsh words, the effect of it sometimes seems even more substantial than with outright insults.²⁶ The above example also proves this point, since the indirect insult caused more outcry than conventional insults that he used in that same tweet (calling her *lightweight* and *a total flunky*). On a related note, claiming that increasing taxes is *all they* (Democrats) *are good at*, seems more effective than calling them incompetent, since it produces humorous effects that make the message more

²⁵ She called it "clearly a sexist smear" (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gillibrand-trump-attack-clearly-a-sexist-smear/> retrieved on 18 September 2018).

²⁶ The power of indirect insults is also stressed by Irvine (41), who notes that they "can be more potent than their direct counterparts".

memorable. The fact that indirect insults from our corpus were mostly used in combination with other types of insults indicates that Trump's intention was not to be less provocative, or to avoid using too offensive language, but rather to leave a more lasting impression by choosing creative ways to offend his opponents, thereby making the perlocutionary effect even more powerful.

The indirect insults from the corpus focus on the targets' immorality (9 tweets), incompetence (3 tweets), and physical appearance (1 tweet). The most common targets of Trump's indirect insults were media and journalists (in 10 out of 13 tweets).

4.4. Targets of Trump's insults

According to the results of this research, Trump's insults are directed towards a wide scope of "enemies", including both individuals and groups. What they all have in common is that they stand against him in the domain of politics and power, or that they criticize him or his actions. How often a particular target will be insulted depends on how much of a threat it poses to Trump. While many individuals and groups were insulted in the tweets covered in this study, most of the insults focus on a few notable targets.

It is not a surprise that media and journalists are his arch-enemy, since they affect the public opinion by publishing things that are upsetting to Trump, or by criticizing him. Therefore, calling their credibility into question is one of the goals of Trump's insulting campaign. Any journalist who might write something against Trump is automatically marked according to the image of the media they belong to, and that image, according to Trump, is *fake news*. His second biggest enemy is Hillary Clinton, who essentially is not only a target herself, but rather a representative of those who are his biggest political opponents. The fact that she lost the presidential election helps Trump in mapping her image on all other Democrats, presenting all of them as dishonest losers.

While he is constantly focused on the above-mentioned targets (as they present a constant concern to him), most of the other targets are in focus only temporarily (individual senators, public figures, etc.) and, as a passing threat, left alone, or even praised afterwards (such as the North Korean leader) if their attitude towards Trump changes.

In many cases, individuals are insulted both on a personal level, and as representatives of the groups they are associated with. However, Trump also insults members of his own party (such as

Republican senators Bob Corker and Jeff Flake) if they go against him, and, in that case, his intention is to discredit them as individuals.

Table 4 shows the most common targets of Trump's insults in the tweets published over the time frame covered in this study:

Tabela 4: Individuals and groups insulted by Trump in three or more tweets

Target	Tweets in which it was insulted
<i>Media and journalists</i>	62 (50%)
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	26 (20.9%)
<i>Democrats</i>	6 (4.8%)
<i>Republican Senator Bob Corker</i>	6 (4.8%)
<i>North Korean leader Kim Jong-un</i>	6 (4.8%)
<i>Democratic Senate candidate Dough Jones</i>	5 (4%)
<i>Democratic Congresswoman Frederica Wilson</i>	3 (2.4%)
<i>Terrorists</i>	3 (2.4%)

5. Conclusion

Donald Trump's tweets seem to be a new form of political communication in today's digital era and a global world. In a bid to discredit and silence his critics and opponents, Trump heavily relies on an effective tool for his political battles – insults. This study, which covered Trump's tweets published over a four-month period, deals with the analysis of his insulting tweets within the framework of the speech act theory, and, in the case of nickname-calling, partly within cognitive semantics.

Out of 915 tweets published during the time frame covered by this study, 124 (13.5%) contain elements of the speech act of insulting. Though limited, the corpus analyzed in this research proves the existence of at least three types of insults utilized by Trump, based on the way the illocutionary effect of insulting was produced: *conventional insults*, *derogatory nicknaming*, and *indirect insults*. By far the most common type, derogatory nickname-calling appears in almost 80% of the insulting tweets from our corpus, and in more than 65% of such tweets the illocutionary act of insulting was realized solely by means of this insulting strategy. Such extensive use of derogatory

nicknaming, in which the addresser's intention is to make the insulting label stick with the target, represents an example of framing. It is a strategy Trump uses to change the image of his political opponents by changing their names into derisive monikers that are repeated over and over again. Conventional insults, which are used less often (in 25.8% of the insulting tweets), include examples in which the illocutionary effect is achieved by selecting conventionally offensive words and expressions, which are mostly used to mock the targets' alleged incompetence, dishonesty, insignificance, or lack of intelligence. The least common category (appearing in 10.4% of the insulting tweets), indirect insults are characterized by the use of a more subtle language, so that the addresser's intention is recognized from the context. Nevertheless, when performing the speech act of insulting in this way, Trump sometimes manages to make his insult even more memorable. Although the list of those insulted by Trump is long, the most common target of his insulting tweets is the mainstream media, which indicates that he sees them as his biggest threat. Another frequent target is Hillary Clinton, who represents a symbol of Trump's major political opponents - Democrats. Other targets are insulted less often as they present only a temporary threat or annoyance to Trump.

The obtained results support the hypothesis set at the beginning of this study. The use of insults in Trump's political discourse is, by and large, systematic and methodical, governed by reason rather than emotions. His consistent and repetitive use of derogatory nicknames, constant focus on media, as well as the selection of offensive words that draw attention to specific flaws of the targets (dishonesty, incompetence, insignificance) all indicate that those insults are not based on impulsivity and randomness. A typical Trump's insult is not intended only, or even primarily, for the target, but geared towards affecting the opinion of millions of Twitter users, and among them specifically potential voters. In this regard, as the results of this research show, insulting the target becomes a means rather than an end. The main focus shifts towards the third party, who, along with the addressor and his targets, assumes the role of a major stakeholder in the insulting campaigns which characterize this new form of political discourse introduced by Donald Trump.

Trump's unconventional political rhetoric triggered an increased usage of insults in public, especially in the USA, as some of his opponents responded by hurling insults at him. It will be interesting to see if the analysis of their insults, in some future research, will yield

similar results, or show that those are primarily emotional reactions less concerned with the third party.

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UVREDE GOVORE VIŠE OD RIJEČI: TVITVI DONALDA TRAMPA KROZ PRIZMU GOVORNOG ČINA VRIJEĐANJA

Iako vrijeđanje protivnika nije nepoznanica u politici i političkim kampanjama, Donald Tramp je dao novu dimenziju upotrebi uvreda u političkom kontekstu. Trampove uvrede, koje su često otvorene i izravne prije nego li indirektne i suptilne, daju novi ton političkom diskursu. Cilj ovog rada je utvrditi da li su uvrede koje koristi Tramp nasumično odabrani verbalni napadi koji su rezultat ljutnje koju izazivaju njegovi kritičari i protivnici, ili prije dio smišljene strategije čiji je cilj ostvarivanje političkih ciljeva. Istraživanje je provedeno unutar metodološkog okvira teorije govornog čina, te, dijelom, kognitivne semantike. Rezultati kvantitativne i kvalitativne analize korpusa sastavljenog od 915 tvitova, objavljenih tokom četiri mjeseca, pokazuju da Trampove uvrede nisu zasnovane na impulsivnosti i nasumičnosti. Uzimajući kao kriterij klasifikacije način na koji je postignut ilokutorni učinak vrijeđanja, autori su utvrdili postojanje tri ustaljena obrasca po kojima Tramp realizuje svoje uvrede: *upotreba pogrđnih nadimaka*, *konvencionalne* i *indirektne uvrede*. Dosljedna upotreba pogrđnih nadimaka, daleko najčešćeg načina realizacije govornog čina vrijeđanja u obrađenom korpusu, ukazuje na postojanje intencije da se mete uvreda planski diskredituju u očima javnosti kreiranjem i upotrebom frejmova (*frames*). Na taj način, uloga i reakcija "treće strane" u ovakvoj vrsti političkog diskursa postaje značajnija od reakcije same mete uvreda.

Ključne riječi: govorni čin vrijeđanja, tviter, Tramp, ilokutorni učinak, frejming, pogrđni nadimci, konvencionalne uvrede, indirektne uvrede, politički diskurs.