

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter elaborates the methodology applied in this study. It covers the research design, data collection, data analysis, and clarification of terms. This study was geared toward answering the research questions. The first research question aimed to investigate the use of hedging devices by Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during the United States of America presidential debate on October 22nd, 2012. The second research question aimed to investigate the functions of hedging devices used by Obama and Romney during the debate in relation to the concept of face.

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a qualitative approach was used. Since this study involved an in-depth focus and understanding on a single phenomenon within the real life context (Yin, 2009, p. 18), a case study was used as its design. It was conducted purposefully in order to gain an in-depth understanding of human behaviors through the process of identification, classification and the description of the findings.

This study focused on the investigation of a single phenomenon, namely the examination of the use of hedging in the third US presidential debate in 2012. Furthermore, the use of a case study in this study played a role as a means to understand, to elaborate and to interpret the single case on a certain context naturally in the absence of external interventions.

This study used the theory of hedging proposed by Martín-Martín (2005, 2008) and Salager-Meyer (1997) as the analytical framework to answer the research questions. The framework was a powerful tool used to investigate the use of hedging devices by Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during the debate. In addition, the study used the dimension of the orientation of face developed by

Ting-Toomey (1988, 1994, 2005) to investigate the functions of hedging devices in relation to the concept of face.

3.2 Data Collection

The data of this study were the transcription of the US presidential debate on October 22nd, 2012. The data served as the primary source in this study and were taken from the official website of the United States of American government, www.whitehouse.gov.

The participants of the debate were the President of United States of America Barack Obama and the former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney. The third presidential debate on foreign policy took place in Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida on October 22nd, 2012. This study used the third one considered as the final debate in which the candidates were declared as draw on 3rd and 16th October 2012 as the matter to investigate. The selected data was investigated to highlight the use of hedging devices as a powerful tool and linguistic strategy which helped the presidential candidates to win the debate and gained the masses. The transcription of the debate consisted of 17.381 words, which were separated into 8.148 words and 64 turn-takings for Mitt Romney, while 7.209 words and 56 turn-takings for Barack Obama.

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed in two stages. The first stage was to identify, classify, and calculate the distributions of hedging devices. This stage aimed to answer the question of the distributions of hedging devices used by each presidential candidate in the third presidential debate between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney on October 22nd, 2012. The second stage was to investigate the function of hedging devices in relation to the concept of face. This stage aimed to answer the second research question. The description and interpretation of the result was elaborated in this stage. Generally, each stage consisted of several steps of analysis. It should be noted that the unit analysis of the study was clausal constructions which represented the forms of hedging devices. The following explanation was the description of each stage.

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In the first stage, the hedging devices were analyzed by using hedging theory proposed by Martín-Martín (2005, 2008) and Salager-Meyer (1997). The stage consisted of five steps. The first step was done by doing close reading toward the transcription. It was followed by the rest four steps; the identifying process, the classifying process, and both calculating process of frequency from the distributions of types and strategies in order to answer the first research question.

As the first step, the transcription of the debate was read closely for several times in order gain a better understanding on every detail of information which was discussed during the debate. The second step in the first stage was the process of identification of hedging devices. It was performed manually by giving the code to the linguistic units which were considered as hedging devices in the form of words and clausal constructions.

The third step was the process of classification of the six types of hedging devices into three different types of hedging strategies. Each hedging device was categorized into which type of hedging and strategies they belonged to. This step intended to seek the general distributions of linguistic devices as word classes as well as clausal constructions into six different types of hedging devices. The following table presents the classification of hedging devices based on the types and strategies. It is also followed by a sample analysis.

Table 3.1 The Classification of Hedging Devices

| No | The Categorization of Hedging Devices | Realization |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Strategy of Indetermination | | |
| 1. | Epistemic Modality | |
| 1.1 | Modal Auxiliary Verb | “And so we can be a partner with China.” (Romney, 140, line 9) |
| 1.2 | Modal Lexical Verb | |
| a. | Semi Auxiliary Verb | “But, Governor, when it comes to our foreign policy, you <i>seem to</i> want to import the foreign policies of the 1980s.” (Obama, 7, line 5) |
| b. | Epistemic Lexical Verb | “And the idea that has been <i>suggested</i> , that I would liquidate the industry -- of course not, of course not.” (Romney, 148, line 4) |

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| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| c. | Verb of Cognition | “But when it’s comes to our military, what we have <i>to think</i> about is not just budgets.” (Obama, 91, 13) |
| 1.3 | Modal Adverb | “This has been <i>probably</i> the biggest whopper that’s been told during the course of this campaign.” (Obama, 108, line 2) |
| 1.4 | Modal Noun | “Governor, your <i>suggestion</i> was that this was mission creep, that this was mission muddle.” (Obama, 40, line 9) |
| 1.5 | Modal Adjective | “We want to end those conflicts to the extent humanly <i>possible</i> .” (Romney, 56, line 6) |
| 2. | Approximators | |
| 2.1 | of quantity | “We didn’t have <i>a lot of</i> chance to talk about this in the last debate.” (Obama, 61, line 7) |
| 2.2 | of degree | “We cannot afford to have a nuclear arms race in the <i>most</i> volatile region in the world.” (Obama, 99, line 10) |
| 2.3 | of frequency and time | “He’s <i>often</i> talked as if we should take premature military action.” (Obama, 99, line 16) |
| | | Strategy of Subjectivisation |
| 3. | Introductory Phrases | “But <i>I think</i> Governor Romney maybe hasn’t spent enough time looking at how our military works.” (Obama, 95, line 3) |
| 4. | Quality-emphasising Adjectival and Adverbial Expressions | “The form-function distinction is <i>particularly important</i> in the case of clause structure, which we shall now discuss in some detail as the most familiar and important illustration of functional classification” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 48) |
| | | Strategy of Depersonalisation |
| 5. | Agentless Passive and Impersonal Constructions | “ <i>It appears</i> that some studies tend to over-estimate the potential of politeness markers.” (Vartalla, 2001, p. 75) |
| 6. | Impersonal Active Constructions | “ <i>The result suggested</i> the important role of context in shaping the text and in deciding on the degree of mitigating language.” (Alavi, 2011, p. 56) |

Here is an example of the analysis. The use of modal auxiliary verb *can* as exemplified in Table 3.1 point 1.1 indicates the possibility of something to happen (Leech & Svartvik, 1975, p. 128; Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 221-222; Biber et al., 1999, p. 485). Through the use of modal auxiliary verb *can*, the speaker shows his

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personal opinion as if there is a chance for China to be associated and make a partnership with the United States of America. Furthermore, Halliday (1994, p. 76) categorizes the modal *can* as “low value modality” in expressing possibility. It means that the use of modal auxiliary verb *can* indicates the high degree of hesitation, uncertainty, or doubt of the speaker’s personal judgment toward the possibility of something (He, 1998, p. 59). Thus, the use of modal auxiliary verb *can* in Table 3.1 point 1.1 shows that Romney as the speaker is not confident on the possibility of the statement. At the same time, he does also not fully hesitate on the chance of the situation to happen.

The process of calculation was conducted to investigate the frequency of hedging occurrences based on the distributions of data; both the frequency and percentage of the general distributions of hedging devices and hedging strategies used by each US 2012 presidential candidate. The following was the relative frequency formula which was used to facilitate the process on fourth and fifth step in stage one.

$$\text{Relative Frequency} = \frac{f_i}{n} \times 100\%$$

f_i = Frequency of an individual item
 n = Total number of frequencies

The second stage aimed to investigate the functions of hedging devices used by each presidential candidate in relation to the concept of face. The function was associated with the dimension of the face’s orientation within the face negotiation theory developed by Ting-Toomey (1988, 1994, 2005). In this stage, the presidential candidates’ face orientation was clearly understood by the elaboration of the use of the most dominant type of hedging devices strategies found in the data. This study highlighted the motivation through the use of hedging in a formal political debate, whether the devices were used in protecting

the speaker's own self-image or the interlocutor's. The data was described and interpreted this stage.

3.4 Clarification of Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding and misconception, the following is the clarification of the terms used in this study:

1. The term “hedges” is defined as the linguistic units which modify the content of the statement with regard to minimize the force of the possible imposition which is carried by the statement (Martín-Martín, 2008, p. 134).
2. Political discourse is defined as the spoken and written form of communication in the area of political activities which is performed by the professional politicians in a formal setting (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 12).
3. Debate, according to Merriam Webster, is the formal discussion toward the particular questions which involved two or more contestants with different sides of belief and point of view under the set of parliamentary procedure (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>).

The comprehensive findings and discussion would be discussed in the subsequent chapter.



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