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(00956)

### Subscription Information

1992: Volume 2 (4 issues)

Annual subscription (1992)

£90.00

US\$165.00

Two-year rate (1992/93)

£171.00

US\$313.50

ISSN: 0959-4752

Subscribers to the *International Journal of Educational Research* receive *Learning and Instruction* as part of their subscription.



**PERGAMON PRESS**

Pergamon Press Ltd, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford OX3 0BW, UK

Pergamon Press, Inc., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, NY 10591-5153, USA

Advertising rate card available on request. Back issues and current subscriptions are also available in microform. Sterling prices quoted are definitive. US dollar prices are quoted for convenience only and are subject to exchange rate fluctuation. Prices include postage and insurance and apply worldwide except in Japan.

Volume 11, Number 2, 1992

ISSN 0889-4906

Special Issue

Second Latin American ESP Conference, Santiago, Chile, November 1990

# ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

An International Journal

(Formerly *The ESP Journal*)



**PERGAMON PRESS**

New York • Oxford • Seoul • Tokyo

ISSN 0889-4906  
(682)

## The Analysis of Political Discourse, With Particular Reference to the Venezuelan Political Dialogue

Adriana Bolivar

*Abstract* — This paper reports partial results of a major project concerned with the analysis of interaction through written text, the aim of which is the study of the various manifestations of evaluation in discourse. Previous research on newspaper editorials has shown that evaluation plays a fundamental role in shaping discourse patterns (Bolivar, 1986). Political discourse is chosen for its fundamentally evaluative function. The major aim is to describe similarities between spoken and written discourse, with attention to the internal structure of texts and to the dialogue created between texts in the intertextual relation system. This paper describes aspects of the interaction between Venezuelan political parties as seen through texts published in the national press. The objective at this stage is to identify the participants in the dialogue, and to describe (a) how they see each other and their voters and (b) what they do with language and what they say. The structure of the dialogue is the aim of the next stage. Some of the most revealing results are: (a) Two parties, out of 22, keep the floor consistently; (b) topics change in time from a wide range to a restricted set, mainly the campaign itself; and (c) there is an apparent dominance of the interactive over the semantic plane of the discourse.

Research into written text analysis is often concerned with the processes of understanding the information in the text, but less attention is given to the effects of evaluation on the discourse itself. We seem to forget that in the process of communication we do not simply transmit information, but also our evaluations of the world. Evaluation is a primary human activity, and we cannot underestimate its role in the creation of discourse.

The study of evaluation has gained its own place in discourse analysis because linguists have realized that different parts of the discourse contain different types of information. Evaluation is seen as the kind of information that expresses the feelings and attitudes of the speaker. As Grimes says (Grimes, 1975):

Not only do speakers report the state of the world; they tell how they feel about it. The addition of internal feelings to other kinds of information (which is not the same as a simple reporting of what one's internal feelings are) involves specific modes of linguistic expression. (p. 61)

Grimes' statement implies that there are in fact two types of evaluation: one that concerns our feelings—our views of the world—and the way we use language to report about them, and another which has to do with a specific type

of information within a discourse. The distinction is, in fact, very important because it has implications for linguistic analysis. I call the first type *evaluation in language*, and the second *evaluation in text* (Bolivar, 1986, p. 32). The first type comprises the things we say and do with language in order to report our experience, to express feelings, and to control others. The second type has a structural role in creating discourse patterns because it allows us to see discourse beginnings and ends. Both types are realized by similar linguistic expressions, but they reflect different types of analyses.

In this article I examine the political dialogue seen in the texts published by Venezuelan political parties in the press as an instance of evaluation in language. In order to study evaluation in text we have to examine the internal structure of each individual text and see in what way evaluation gives each a distinctive shape. We have to examine the intertextual dialogue created by sequences of texts of the same type.

At this stage I am interested in describing the characteristics of the dialogue in terms of the following aspects: (a) the chronological development of the interaction between the participants in the dialogue; (b) the interaction between the participants in terms of who they are, what they say, and what they do; (c) the speech acts and the topics in the dialogue; and (d) the general persuasion strategies used by Venezuelan political parties.

I present an analysis mainly derived from Bolivar (1986, 1988), and I report on the results obtained after the study of a corpus of 906 texts collected during the 1988 presidential campaign in Venezuela.

### The Necessary Theoretical Outline

The analysis of political discourse has always been of interest to those studying the processes involved in human communication, typically sociologists, psychologists, historians, politicians, social communicators, and others. However, the interest in this type of discourse is not always linguistic, as can be seen in the proliferation of methods proposed for its analysis (see Seidel 1985, p. 43). The main problem the linguist has to face concerns the definition of terms: What is discourse? What is political discourse? The definition of discourse will obviously determine the definition of *text* and, therefore, the methodological approach. The definition of *political* will also give the research its own characteristics. A very rapid review of the literature makes us realize that for some *political discourse* means a genre capable of being subclassified into subgenres (see Seidel, 1985), while others go as far as considering practically all types of discourse to be political, in the sense that language carries the ideology of the dominant classes and serves as a tool for controlling the lives of minority groups (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979; Hodge & Kress, 1988). In general, we find a tendency to include under political discourse any studies concerned with the struggle between oppressors and oppressed and between majorities and minorities, covering not only class but also problems of inequality between the sexes and races. The result is that we cannot rely on a precise definition of political discourse, at least not until the theoretical problems about text typologies can be solved (see for example Isenberg, 1987).

In this research I define political discourse as that related to political activity of a human group, and in consequence, linked with the actions of a government and the power relations that arise between the parties or groups, or between those representing the official power and other social groups with less power within the same society. Thus, analyzing political discourse means describing a type of interaction that takes place between persons who actually have or assign themselves greater authority. The interaction can be conceived as a conflictive dialogue because in it confrontation seems to be the rule. As Raiter puts it (Raiter, 1987):

La lucha por la palabra, por el poder decir, es la lucha discursiva por el poder mismo (1) cada interlocutor de discursos políticos intenta imponer sus propios signos ideológicos al adversario (2), al mismo tiempo que lo refuta, le responde, y continúa o completa sus propias palabras.

MT: The struggle for saying, for being able to say, is the discourse struggle for power itself, (1) each one of the participants in political discourse tries to impose on the opponent his/her own ideological symbols; (2) as he/she refutes he/she also replies, and goes on or completes his/her own words. (p. 99)

Along with the theoretical problems related to the definition of political discourse, we find methodological problems of importance. Which text types should be chosen? What is the right size for the corpus? What specific aspects should be taken into account? How to begin?

Because political discourse lends itself to dialogue it is easier for the researcher to observe the effects produced by the speaker. For this reason, speeches and letters exchanged between politicians are often chosen as the object of study by analysts (see Lavandera, 1987). Others prefer to observe the media, so newspapers and television are given special attention (Fowler et al., 1979). The phenomena observed involve lexicalization processes, syntactic variation, modality changes, the effects of transitivity, the turn-taking system, implicit and explicit information, and speech acts (Fowler, 1985). The corpora chosen often vary in size, from a few texts of the same type to a large number of texts of different types. This decision depends on the type of phenomena to be studied and on the general theoretical approach.

The theoretical bases for this research can be summarized as follows:

1. In order to study any type of discourse it is first necessary to define the initial categories of discourse.
2. Written discourse can be described following models similar to those used in the description of spoken discourse.
3. The analysis of conversation provides theoretical as well as methodological guidelines for the description of any type of discourse.

### The Initial Categories of Discourse

I define the initial categories of discourse as (a) social interaction, (b) two participants, and (c) a text (Bolivar, 1986). These three categories are chosen

because they provide the conceptual framework for the description. Social interaction is part of the definition because human beings interact in society, and this is what makes us understand meaning. The requirement of two participants is included in the definition because this is the minimum number that is needed to create text and because, whether in spoken or written interactions, only two participants contribute to create text at a time. Text is in the definition because it is the verbal result of the interaction. The text is independent of the participants that create it and can be described on two planes, the interactive, which relates the text to the participants, and the autonomous, which has to do with autonomous processes of the text. In other words, the two planes relate the text to the extratextual and intratextual worlds.

The application of these notions to the analysis of political discourse gives the following picture:

*The Interaction.* As the aim is to analyze the texts produced in an electoral campaign, we can easily identify the purpose of the interaction. This is to persuade Venezuelans to vote for the candidate assumed to be the best in terms of personal qualities and of a proposed plan for government.

*The Participants.* Given the above, we can say that the participants in the interaction in general are, on the one hand, the political parties and their representatives in the electoral race and, on the other, the Venezuelans who have the right to vote. In more specific terms, we should be able to observe a dialogue between at least (a) each one of the candidates and their voters, (b) the government candidate and the candidate of the strongest opposition party, and (c) other candidates from opposition parties and the government candidate.

*The Text.* The description of the two planes allows us to observe on the interactive plane (a) how the participants voice their views in the dialogue, (b) what opportunities they have for turn-taking and how they hold the floor, (c) what roles they assign themselves and others, and (d) what speech acts they perform and in what sequences.

On the autonomous plane we can identify and follow the topics of the dialogue and the main themes the participants talk about.

## Methodology

### The Corpus

Nine hundred and six texts were collected from *El Nacional*, a newspaper with one of the widest circulations in Venezuela. Before this sample was gathered, an exploratory survey was carried out on the ads published by the political parties during a whole month, six months before the end of the campaign. The purpose of this exploratory sample was to obtain information that could help us pin down some preliminary patterns of interaction in order to test the representativeness of the definite sample. In this month, May 24 to June 24, 1988, the texts amounted to 706, from 22 political groups. As the total

number of presidential candidates was 24, this indicated that most of the candidates were represented.

Three subperiods of one week each were chosen for the collection of the corpus:

Sample	Subperiod	Number of texts (Total $N = 906$ )
1	24 to 30 May	140
2	14 to 20 September	160
3	25 November to 1 December	606

In this way attention was given to three different stages during a period that ended on December 1, the last day of the campaign. The elections took place on December 4.

### Criteria for Collecting the Texts

All the texts that met one or more of the following conditions were collected:

1. The text had linguistic signals that referred to the candidate (his/her name and/or symbol).
2. The text had the party's name or symbol.
3. The text had the slogan of the candidate.
4. The text had a photograph or picture of the candidate, with or without any of the above.
5. The text had none of the above, but its semantic content was related to one of the candidates.
6. The text had no indicators that could be related to any political party, but it was implicitly related to the campaign.

The texts paid for by TV channels to announce programs that involved one or more candidate were not taken into account because, in this case, it was advertising from the media and not from the candidates themselves. For similar reasons the news reports or opinion articles about the campaign written by journalists or others were not included.

### The Procedures

During each week, the texts published each day were counted for each party or group. The aim was to obtain information about the number of participants and their opportunities to present their case.

The linguistic signals used by the candidates to refer to their addressees were collected. Special attention was given to the major parties, AD (Social Democrats) and COPEI (Christian Democrats), in order to study their interaction in greater detail.

All the signals used by the candidates or parties, to refer to themselves were also collected in order to perceive the kind of image they wanted to project.

The macro-acts of each text in the subcorpora 1 and 2 were identified, and also the sequences of acts. The analysis of macro-acts in subcorpus 3 was left for a later stage since this subcorpus, on account of its size and complexity, deserved a study of its own. For the same reason, the description of the discourse structure had to be left to another stage.

The semantic content of all the texts of the corpus was analyzed. Three categories were defined in order to get information about the topics: (a) *The topic is explicit or can be inferred easily*, (b) *No topic is mentioned or implied*, and (c) *The topic is a slogan*. The topics of the major parties were studied in greater detail. The slogans of AD and COPEI during the last week of the campaign were submitted to closer examination, and compared for content and style.

## The Results

### The Voices of the Participants

The first thing observed was that not all of the participants in the interaction had the same opportunities to contribute to the dialogue. In fact, the dialogue was held mainly between the two major parties, just as had occurred in the exploratory survey. At the beginning of the campaign only 22 voices, out of 31 officially registered in the national registry, could be heard (68.2%), and 80.57% of these texts belonged to AD and COPEI. Table 1 shows that in Sample 1 only 14 participants appeared (43.4%), but out of these AD and COPEI alone had 80.7% of the total number of texts, which once again indicates that they acted as leaders in the campaign.

In Table 2 the number of participants appearing increases to 62%, but still 65% of the texts relate to AD and COPEI.

TABLE 1  
Sample 1: Number of Texts Published During One Week (24 to 30 May 1988)

Party	Texts per day							Total	%
	Tuesday 24 May	Wednesday 25 May	Thursday 26 May	Friday 27 May	Saturday 28 May	Sunday 29 May	Monday 30 May		
AD	9	9	4	6	15	9	8	60	42.99
CI	1							1	
FP							7	7	5.0
COPEI	3	9	12	7	7	4	3	45	32.5
MAS/MIR	2	4	2			2	3	13	9.3
MEP	1	1	1					1	2.1
PCV			1					1	
Cr. C.	1							1	
NRep.	1							1	
Liga S.	1							1	
Ismeria	1		1			1		2	
OPINA				1	1	1	1	4	2.9
Búfalo		1						1	
Total	20	24	21	14	23	17	22	141	100%

A dramatic increase in texts was observed from Sample 1 to 3:

Sample	Texts	%
1	140	15.85%
2	160	17.75%
3	606	66.88%

The number of participants also increased in Sample 3, which indicates more interaction in the sense that more parties had the opportunity to say something. However, this again relates to groups that supported either AD or COPEI. There was, however, a third party, MAS (Movement towards Socialism), which had a low proportion: 9.3% in Sample 1, 13.75% in Sample 2, and 5.4% in Sample 3. The main parties led the dialogue, with AD in first place, COPEI second, and MAS third. Table 3 allows us to observe the increase in the number of texts in the last week of the campaign, when the texts filled most of the pages of the newspaper.

### How the Candidates See Their Voters

All the parties address the Venezuelans in general, from different regions and states, and also identify specific groups. AD and COPEI classify their voters according to several criteria as can be seen in the examples below:

TABLE 2  
Sample 2: Number of Texts Published During One Week (14 to 20 September 1988)

Party	Texts per day							Total	%
	Wednesday 14 Sept.	Thursday 15 Sept.	Friday 16 Sept.	Saturday 17 Sept.	Sunday 18 Sept.	Monday 19 Sept.	Tuesday 20 Sept.		
AD	8	10	11	8	7	6	4	54	33.75
FP(CAP)	2	3	2	2				9	5.62
CI(CAP)	1		1	1			1	4	2.50
CEC(CAP)			1	1	1	1		4	1.87
COPEI	4	5	11	3	1	4	3	31	20.00
MIN(EF)	2							2	1.25
MAS/MIR	2	3	4	4	2	4	3	22	13.75
NRP	2		1	1	2	1	1	8	5.00
Liga S.					1		1	2	1.25
Nueva A. (Búfalo)		1	1	1				3	1.87
Ismeria				1				1	
PCV					1			1	
MEP								7	4.37
FREPAN(E,CH)	2	2	3					7	4.37
OPINA	1	1				1	1	4	2.50
FUN		1						1	
Mov. Nac.						1		1	
Comité Pro. Def. Ven.						1		1	
Sin indicadores					2	1	1	4	2.50
Total	24	26	35	22	17	21	15	160	100%

TABLE 3  
Sample 3: Number of Texts Published During One Week  
(25 November to 1 December 1988)

Party	Texts per day							Total	%
	Friday 25 Nov.	Saturday 26 Nov.	Sunday 27 Nov.	Monday 28 Nov.	Tuesday 29 Nov.	Wednesday 30 Nov.	Thursday 1 Dec.		
AD	25	46	40	35	37	52	40	275	45.37
COPEI	21	17	22	26	34	23	32	175	28.87
MAS	1	1	4	7	7	7	6	33	5.44
Ismenia	2	2	4	2	4	3	1	18	2.97
Nueva República	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	4	0.66
MEP	3	0	3	2	5	6	10	29	4.78
PCV	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	6	0.99
OPINA	2	1	4	3	3	3	1	17	2.80
Liga Socialista	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0.66
ORA	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	6	0.99
FORMULA 1 (Rhona)	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	11	1.81
CAUSA R	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0.33
Nueva Generacion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
Cruzada Civica	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0.49
Particip. Indep.	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
El Pueblo	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
MIDE	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
NO VOTAREMOS	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
ALIANZA por todos	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.16
INDEP con Ch.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.16
Nueva Alternativa	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0.49
NOR	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.16
MOMO	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0.49
RENOVACION (CH.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.16
VOTO CONCIENTE (CAP)	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	6	0.99
Sin identificar	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0.33
Total	65	73	84	82	96	106	104	606	100%
	(10.73%)	(12.05%)	(13.86%)	(13.53%)	(15.84%)	(17.49%)	(17.16%)	(100%)	

1. Sex: "*mujeres dirigentes de AD*" (women leaders of the AD), "*mujeres*" (women).
2. Occupation and profession: "*agrotécnicos con CAP*" (agroculturists supporting CAP), "*médicos*" (doctors), "*economistas*" (economists).
3. social class: "*la clase media*" (the middle class), "*los trabajadores*" (the workers), "*el pueblo*" (the people).
4. age: "*jóvenes*" (the young), "*los nuevos votantes*" (the new voters).

Table 4 summarizes the addressees of AD and COPEI in Sample 1 as referred to in the texts.

As can be observed, the addressees of the main parties are quite varied: They include professional and economic sectors of society, with special attention paid to workers, young people, and women. Notice that in this first sample COPEI speaks to the middle class, while AD interacts mainly with the working class.

The smaller parties use a more restricted number of signals defined in more general terms: "the youth," "all the country," "the national opinion," "the presidential candidates," "AD," "COPEI," and "AD and COPEI." Table 5 summarizes the addressees of these parties.

TABLE 4  
Addressees of AD and COPEI in Sample 1

---

AD
Ingenieros de Venezuela (engineers of Venezuela)
Mujeres dirigentes de AD (women leaders of AD)
Educadores de Venezuela (educators of Venezuela)
Veterinarios con CAP (veterinarians for CAP)
Los economistas con CAP (economists for CAP)
Integrantes de la Estructura (party members)
Organizativa electoral (electoral organisation)
Coordinadores de Sección (section coordinators)
Trabajadores educacionales (educational workers)
Militantes y amigos (militants and friends)
La radiofusión (radio and television)
Federación Campesina (the peasant federation)
Comunidades (communities)
COPEI
CIVENE
Filiales (members)
Profesionales con CAP (professionals for CAP)
Jóvenes campesinos con CAP (young farmers/peasants for CAP)
Agrotécnicos con CAP (agriculturists for CAP)
Los nuevos votantes (the new voters)
Sector Turismo (the tourist sector)
Relaciones Institucionales (institutional relations)
Sector cafetalero (the coffee section)
Mujeres trabajadores con CAP (women workers for CAP)
El Congreso (the Congress)
Tú (you—explicit)
Usted (you—implicit)
COPEI
Profesionales y técnicos (professionals and technicians)
Social Cristianos (Christian Democrats)
Médicos independientes (independent doctors)
Mujeres (women)
La clase media (the middle class)
AD
Fracción de abogados (lawyers' group)
Activistas por el cambio (activists for change)
Hogares (homes)
Congreso de la República (Congress of the republic)
Diputados (deputies)
Artistas de Radio, Cine TV y afines (artists in radio, cinema, television, and related areas)
Comando de trabajadores (workers' command)
Jóvenes (young people)
CORALUM/VENELUM
El pueblo (the people)
CAP
El Fiscal General (the tax office)
Los Venezolanos (Venezuelans)
Usted (you—implicit)

---

Some interesting changes are observed in relation to the number of addressees during the development of the electoral campaign. While in Sample 1 more than 30 different linguistic signals are used to refer to the addressees, only 8 are left in Sample 3. The signals are reduced on account of the interest in obtaining the votes of well-identified groups. Table 6 presents a picture of the

TABLE 5  
Addressees of Smaller Parties in Sample 1

---

<b>MAS/MIR</b>
Círculos Femeninos Populares (Feminine Popular Circles)
El Congreso (The Congress)
<b>AD/COPEI</b>
La juventud (youth)
Todo el país (the whole country)
Tú (you—explicit)
<b>MEP</b>
La opinión pública nacional (National public opinion)
<b>COPEI/AD</b>
Los cogollos (the inner group)
Joven (young)
Tú (a tí) (you—to you)
<b>Nueva República</b>
El Congreso (The Congress)
La Prensa (The Press)
Los candidatos presidenciales (the presidential candidates)
El país (the country)
<b>Cruzada Cívica</b>
La ciudadanía (the citizens)
<b>Liga Socialista</b>
<b>Búfalo</b>
<b>Ismenia</b>
<b>OPINA</b>
Venezolanos en general (Venezuelans in general)

---

addressees of AD and COPEI in Sample 3. AD appeals to the working class, the middle class, “the people,” and “the Venezuelan family,” and refers to the COPEI candidate as a man already beaten. COPEI, on the other hand, appeals to women, to “the slums,” “the brave people” (alluding to words in the national anthem); and “fellow citizens,” and calls the AD candidate a coward and an antipatriotic man.

It is worth noticing that, not only do the number of addressees change during the campaign, but also the addressees themselves. AD speaks mainly to the working class in Sample 1 but appeals to the middle class in Sample 3, while the reverse occurs with COPEI, which starts addressing the middle class and ends up appealing to the workers. This seems to reflect the dynamics of the interaction between the parties and the need to obtain the highest electoral support.

AD and COPEI address each other during the campaign, not always explic-

TABLE 6  
Addressees of AD and COPEI in Sample 3

---

COPEI	AD
La clase media (the middle class)	Las mujeres (the women)
El país (the country)	Los barrios (the neighborhoods or slums)
Eduardo Fernández	Los venezolanos (the Venezuelans)
Los desesperados (the desperate)	Todos (everyone)
La clase obrera (the working class)	El bravo pueblo (the brave people)
El pueblo (the people)	El señor Pérez
Su pueblo (your people)	Tú (you)
La familia (the family)	Compatriota (fellow citizens)

---

itly at first but openly at the end. In Sample 1 for example, AD uses no explicit signals to address COPEI, while COPEI talks to CAP (Carlos Andrés Pérez). In Sample 2, AD speaks to Eduardo Fernández, “*el candidato copeyano*” and “*el candidato de COPEI*” (the candidate of COPEI), and COPEI replies to “*señor Carlos Andrés Pérez*,” “*partido de AD*” (the AD party), “*adecos*” (supporters of AD), and “*el Gocho*” (a nickname). In Sample 3, the last week, the addressees’ names are accompanied with evaluations of different types, mainly to disqualify the opponent. AD calls COPEI “*los desesperados*” (the desperate), and COPEI refers to the AD candidate as “*el señor Pérez*” in an ironic manner.

### How the Candidates See Themselves

The analysis of the signals that indicate the candidates’ self-reference reveals that, although some signals are constantly repeated, they vary to adjust to the dialogue as this progresses in time. Table 7 displays the signals that the candidates use to introduce themselves to the public in the three samples.

The use of these signals allows Carlos Andrés Pérez to project features of his personality. He is assertive in “*El Presidente*,” he shows his self-esteem in “*El Estadista*” (the statistician), and stresses that he is able and efficient in “*la fuerza de la esperanza*” (the force of hope) and in “*cumple, no falla*” (he succeeds—he does not fail). Also, in the middle and end of the campaign he projects the image of a friendly candidate, and assumes the role of “*el amigo*” (the friend). In general, he assigns himself the role of initiator, while Eduardo Fernández, the COPEI candidate, assumes the role of follower. He is “*El Presidente Honesto*,” calling himself “honest” and presupposing that others do not possess this quality. He is “*El Presidente Nuevo*” (the new president) and “*El Tigre*” (the tiger), alluding to his strength and youth, which calls attention to the age of the other candidate. He also looks into the future offering “*cam-bio*” (change).

The smaller parties refer to themselves as the defenders of the people, and they all unite against AD and COPEI. So we have that MAS “*te defiende más*” (defends you more), Chirinos “*abre caminos*” (opens the way), Ismenia says “*Pónle corazón a Venezuela*” (Puts heart into Venezuela), Olavarría argues that he means “*Democracia en serio*” (Serious democracy), and Guisandes displays “*la escoba*” (the broom) as a symbol of his campaign.

### What the Candidates Do With Language

The macro-acts identified in the three samples were labelled as follows:

*Inform*: when the text gave new information about events related to the campaign;

*Invite*: when the text acted as an invitation to an event;

*Accuse*: when the text expressed or implied an accusation against the opponent;

*Respond Accusation*: when the text served as a reply to an accusation;

*Announce*: when the text announced radio or T.V. programmes in which supporters of a candidate or the candidate himself would be speaking;

TABLE 7  
The Candidates' Self-Reference

Candidate	Sample 1
Carlos Andrés Pérez (CAP)	Carlos Andrés Pérez El Presidente (The President) El Estadista (The statistician) CAP El Candidato Presidencial (The presidential candidate) "la fuerza de la esperanza" (the force of hope) "CAP no hay otra alternativa" (there is no alternative to CAP) "lo que CAP promete CAP cumple" (what CAP promises he delivers) "porque CAP no falla" (because CAP does not fail)
Eduardo Fernández (COPEI)	El Tigre (The tiger) Democracia Nueva (New democracy) Fuerza Nueva para el cambio (New force for change) "El Presidente Honesto" [25 May 1988] (The honest president) "El Tigre es el cambio" (The tiger is change) Eduardo Fernández—"su candidato" (your candidate) Eduardo El candidato presidencial de COPEI (COPEI's presidential candidate) Eduardo Fernández—Presidente (Eduardo Fernández—President) El Tigre—un presidente nuevo (The tiger—a new president) COPEI en marcha—COPEI going forward
	Sample 2
Carlos Andres Perez	Carlos Andres El Presidente (The President) El candidato del pueblo (The candidate of the people) (16 Sept. 1988) "el proximo presidente" (the next president) "el amigo" (20 Sept. 1988) (the friend)
Eduardo Fernandez	El Tigre—El Presidente Nuevo (The tiger—the new president) Eduardo Fernandez Eduardo Fernandez—El Presidente Nuevo (The new president)
	Sample 3
Carlos Andres Pérez	Carlos Andres El Presidente (The President) "el amigo" (the friend) "el estadista" (the statistician)
Eduardo Fernandez	El Tigre (the tiger) El Presidente Nuevo (the new president) Cambio (change)
Others	
Teodoro Petkoff	TEODORO La mano solamente para defenderte (the hand just to defend you) El MAS te defiende MAS (Mas defends you more)
Edmundo Chirinos	"Chirinos abre caminos" (Chirinos opens the way) Candidato de Renovación (the candidate of reform) Pueblo en movimiento (the people on the move)
Leopoldo Diaz Bruzual	El Bufalo (the buffalo)
Ismenia de Villalba	Ismenia—pone corazon en Venezuela (Ismenia puts heart in Venezuela)
David Nieves (LS)	Si hay izquierda (yes, there is a left)
Alberto Martini Urdaneta	El presidente diferente (29 Sept. 1988) (the different president)
Jorge Olavarria	Democracia en serio (Serious democracy)
Gaston Guisandes	la escoba (the broom)

*Assert*: when the text was a slogan that made an assertion;

*Reassert*: when the text stressed or emphasized the assertion of a previous text;

*Exhort*: when the text had explicit signals inviting people to vote for a candidate;

*Greet*: when the text acted as a greeting;

*Challenge*: when the text expressed or implied a rebuttal of another text.

It was found that the macro functions of the texts indicated some interesting features of the interaction between the political parties in that several dialogues could be detected through different types of texts. For example, letters were exchanged, invitations were answered, greetings were answered, and so on. However, except for texts such as slogans, no text was found to consist of just one act. What is more, all the texts were found to consist of highly complex sequences, such as the following: Inform + Respond + Accuse or Challenge + Accuse + Assert + Accuse + Exhort. In fact, some of the sequences reached such degrees of complexity that it became difficult to quantify them.

It is also worth noticing that, although we gave special attention to the explicit signals inviting people to vote for candidates, all the texts in the three samples were found to perform a hortatory function. It was even found that obituaries were being used to stress the qualities of a party member rather than the qualities of the deceased. This was particularly the case with AD and COPEI.

### What the Candidates Say

The semantic content of all the texts was analyzed. It was found that in Sample 1, for all the parties, the category *The topic is explicit or can be inferred easily* accounted for 32.1%, *No topic is mentioned or implied* reached 58.57%, and *The topic is a slogan* was 9.28%, which means that the sum of the percentages of the last two categories accounts for 67.85% of texts devoid of semantic content. This can be explained in part because a good number of texts focused mainly on the act of inviting or announcing, without any explicit signal that indicated the topic or theme to be dealt with.

The analysis of Sample 2 for AD and COPEI presented the following results:

	AD	COPEI
The topic is explicit or can be inferred easily	22.25%	30.3%
No topic mentioned or implied	50%	66.7%
Slogan	28.5%	3.0%

As can be observed, the highest percentages for both parties are found in the category *No topic mentioned or implied*, although COPEI has the highest percentage.

The picture for Sample 3 (the last week before the elections) is as follows:

	AD	COPEI
Topic is explicit or can be inferred easily	50.54%	53.71%
No topic mentioned or implied	26.90%	25.14%
Slogan	22.54%	21.14%

This seems to indicate that COPEI became more explicit as it identified the topics more frequently (from 30.3% to 53.71%), as did AD (from 22.3% to

50.54%). However, while AD decreased the number of slogans (from 28.5% to 22.54%), COPEI increased the number dramatically (from 3% to 21.14%).

The topics in the texts in the three samples were counted. These were numerous and varied at the beginning of the campaign, with special reference to "corruption" (AD and COPEI), "economic needs" (AD), and "moral values" (COPEI in Sample 1). Although in Sample 3 more attention is given to "women" (AD) and to "border problems with Colombia" (COPEI), there is special reference to the candidates themselves. Sample 3 revolves mainly around a few topics, "victory" and "defeat," the qualities of the candidates, and forecasts of the results.

It would be wrong to infer that because the semantic content increased in terms of figures, the campaign improved in terms of the number of issues being tackled. As Sample 3 shows, the texts and topics of the last week covered even fewer issues. In fact, these results give support to the opinion of many Venezuelans who had the impression that, in the campaign in general, there was a lack of attention to the real problems of the country.

What is most revealing in this analysis is that, apparently, in political discourse there is a dominance of the interactive plane over the semantic. We have evidence to believe that politicians seem to care more for what they *do* with language than for what they *say*.

## The Slogans

A detailed examination of the slogans used by AD and COPEI during the last week showed that these were basically a few (AD: 9, and COPEI: 13) repeated over and over again.

AD's slogans were far more imperative, as seen in the explicit use of imperative forms:

*"Por Carlos Andrés vota blanco"* (For Carlos Andrés vote white [the colour of the party]),

*"Tu debes elegir"* (You must elect),

*"No cambies tu caballo en el medio del río"* ([literally] Don't change horses in the middle of the river).

Others acted as warnings not to make a mistake, and discussed the opponent's inadequacies:

*"Ojo pelao el tigre es el caos"* (Beware, the tiger means chaos).

Some gave instructions related to the act of voting, and served as an attempt to bring left-wing voters to AD's side:

*"Arriba y a la izquierda, vota blanco"* (On and to the left, vote white).

There were also implicit directives such as "*Por Venezuela CAP*," and reminders such as "*Ya tu decidiste* (You have already decided).

COPEI had more indirect directives such as "*El Tigre*," "*El Presidente Nuevo*," "*Cambio*," "*Venezuela Ruge*" (alluding to the need for change), and "*El pueblo nunca se equivoca*" (the people never make a mistake). But this party had more slogans that appealed to feelings of national identity and patriotism.

### Conclusions

The analysis of the corpus at this stage has allowed us to identify linguistic signals that express the evaluation in language of different political groups in Venezuela. Each party or group makes decisions about who to address and what language to use. All the parties have the same aim: to persuade people to vote for the "right" candidate. The discourse in general is affected by the purpose of the interaction and by the nature of the dialogue through written texts.

The dialogue through written texts resembles everyday conversation in that each text can be taken as a turn in a turn-taking system. We find participants who compete for the floor. In fact, one of the most striking things to emerge from this research is that, in a dialogue which supposedly gives room to any party, only two big parties have a chance to speak and do something with language. The main difference with normal everyday dialogue is that, in this case the turn-taking system is ruled by financial conditions, which constrain the number of texts that a political party can pay for during a campaign. But still the similarities remain in that, as in natural conversation, the interaction is governed by rules that depend on power relations in society.

One of the most interesting findings of the analysis concerns the use of persuasion strategies, since these seem to have little to do with the use of arguments or ideas. What apparently matters most in convincing the voters is who looks or sounds most powerful. The persuasion strategies identified in the three samples can be reduced to appeals to emotions and feelings. In fact, the analysis indicates that the following strategies seem to be favoured by the leading candidates:

- Quantity:* Publishing more texts means more power.
- Size:* More space in the newspaper means there is more financial support for the candidate.
- Personalities:* Showing pictures or photographs of important people means support from influential sectors of society.
- Manipulation of speech acts:* The artful combination of sequences of acts indicates a greater ability to keep control of the situation.

The above indicates that in political discourse verbal as well as nonverbal strategies seem to be equally important.

The analysis presented here, although related to Spanish and the particular situation of Venezuela, constitutes a rich area for research because it may have wider implications that touch upon the analysis of communication and interaction in general. Political discourse offers an interesting field for the study of questions such as the relation between spoken and written discourse, the understanding of how types of meanings are conveyed and interpreted, and above all, how people express their evaluations in social interaction.

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