Critical Discourse Analysis of Pre-Electoral Interviews between Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado in the 2024 Venezuelan Elections

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Resumen

Este estudio busca comparar los discursos de Nicolás Maduro y María Corina Machado en el contexto de las elecciones de 2024, enfocándose específicamente en una entrevista preelectoral de cada candidato. La selección de este período es particularmente relevante dada su importancia global, debido al apoyo sustancial y aparentemente creciente a la oposición al régimen actual. El objetivo del estudio es analizar los temas de economía y empleo, así como la inmigración, examinando cómo cada candidato se dirigió a sus respectivos públicos con el fin de persuadirlos y/o influenciarlos. La metodología empleada en este estudio es cualitativa, siguiendo el enfoque socio-cognitivo de van Dijk (1998, 2000, 2001). Este enfoque se centra en el nivel de significado, específicamente en lo que respecta a la semántica y la interpretación de las palabras, para descubrir los discursos subyacentes. Los hallazgos preliminares indican que Maduro se apoya predominantemente en falacias en un esfuerzo por establecer una práctica discursiva persuasiva, intentando convencer a la audiencia con aparentes verdades universales. En contraste, Corina Machado parece adherirse a realidades concretas y verdades verificables, con el objetivo de asegurar que su audiencia esté completamente informada sobre los temas que aborda en sus prácticas discursivas.

Palabras clave: Análisis Crítico del Discurso, Nicolás Maduro, María Corina Machado, semántica.

Abstract

This study aims to compare the discourses of Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado during the 2024 elections, focusing on one pre-electoral interview from each candidate. The selected period is particularly significant because of its global importance, driven by substantial and seemingly growing support for the opposition against the current regime. The study's goal is to analyze the topics of economy, employment, and immigration, examining how each candidate addressed their respective audiences to persuade or influence them. The methodology employed is qualitative, following van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive approach. This method emphasizes the level of meaning, particularly in terms of semantics and word interpretation, to uncover underlying discourses. Preliminary results suggest that Maduro primarily relies on fallacies to craft persuasive discursive practices, attempting to sway the audience with seemingly universal truths. Conversely, Corina Machado appears to focus on concrete realities and verifiable truths, ensuring her audience is fully informed about the issues she discusses in her speeches.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Nicolás Maduro, María Corina Machado, semantics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as used in Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) (see van Dijk, 1997), investigates how social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are created and maintained within social and political settings. This analytical approach mainly aims to understand how speakers use language to exercise power, establish dominance, promote discrimination, and control others (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2001). This paper focuses on analyzing pre-electoral interviews, especially the rhetorical strategies used by Nicolás Maduro Moros, who is widely seen as a dictator with an established regime in Venezuela, and María Corina Machado, the opposition candidate, often regarded as a heroic figure and potential savior of the nation. The goal is to examine how these candidates build their discourse and present their policies to address Venezuelans' concerns. Since many people seek stability, the analysis will focus on topics like economic issues, employment, and immigration— which has become urgent as many Venezuelans are forced to migrate due to the country's severe conditions. This study will analyze the interviews of these two candidates from the 2024 election, using van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach as a framework to understand how they engage with the Venezuelan people.

It is important to note that van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive approach is divided into two levels: the level of meaning, which primarily involves semantics and word interpretation, and the level of form, which relates to syntax and pragmatics. This study focuses on the level of meaning, specifically analyzing how these candidates use their communicative strategies to connect with their audience. The level of meaning is also divided into local and global levels, both of which will be examined in this research paper and explained in Section 2. As a result, the research question that arises is as follows:

(1) Which types of stance-taking expressions does Nicolás Maduro use more frequently compared to María Corina Machado in their 2024 Venezuelan pre-electoral interviews? Additionally, what function do these discursive practices serve when addressing the various topics examined in this investigation (i.e., economy and employment, as well as immigration)?

Several studies have examined the Venezuelan context (e.g., Aulia & Kurniati, 2024; Granell, 2017; Idborg, 2022; Mubdi, 2020; Peterssen, 2022). For instance, Idborg (2022) conducted a linguistic analysis of how Iván Duque, a former Colombian president, and Nicolás Maduro addressed the migration issue in Venezuela. This study highlights Maduro's verbal attacks to discredit critics and Duque's efforts to justify his own stance. Peterssen (2022) analyzed the political speeches and interviews of the 2019 Venezuelan presidential candidates Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó, both claiming legitimacy over the presidency. Peterssen's analysis, grounded in van Dijk's (2018) theory of ideological polarization, focused on the social and ideological representations of ingroups and outgroups.

In contrast, Aulia & Kurniati (2024) investigated the reasons behind Russia's support for Nicolás Maduro during the Venezuelan crisis. Although this study does not directly analyze Maduro's discourse, it provides valuable insights into the geopolitical factors that reinforce Maduro's position, mainly through Russia's backing under Putin's leadership. This perspective is crucial for understanding the sources of Maduro's lasting power and influence in Venezuela, which is the main focus of this study. Granell (2017) analyzed Nicolás Maduro's speeches during his first four years in office. The research proposed here could complement Granell's work by examining Maduro's discourse in a different

chronological context, specifically in 2024. This approach might offer deeper insight into possible changes in Maduro's communication strategies over time, leading to a more thorough understanding of how he constructs his discourse. Mubdi (2020) adopts a more psychological approach to Nicolás Maduro's rhetoric, aiming to explore the underlying causes of the crisis through a peace psychology framework, particularly by analyzing the concept of moral disengagement.

Regarding studies on María Corina Machado, the body of research is relatively limited, likely due to her recent rise in prominence following the 2024 Venezuelan elections. However, some existing studies (e.g., Querales, 2014) have examined her role from a sociological perspective, focusing on actions taken by Unasur (The Union of South American Nations) and the organization's involvement in resolving the political conflict between the opposition— which included Corina Machado, who at that time had less public support— and the national government. Evidence shows that there is limited research comparing Nicolás Maduro and Corina Machado in the context of the recent 2024 election. Previous studies have concentrated on other electoral periods, such as Maduro's speeches during his first four years in office and the 2019 election. Although Maduro has been compared with other political figures, such as former Colombian President Iván Duque, this highlights the novelty of the candidates examined in the present research. To my knowledge, comparative studies of Maduro and Corina Machado in the most recent election are still in their early stages, given how recent these events are. Additionally, Corina Machado's discourse— notably her rise in popularity due to her determination to challenge Maduro and the considerable support she has gained from the Venezuelan population— is an emerging area of interest.

This study aims to fill a significant gap in research, especially regarding a situation that has attracted considerable global attention. Additionally, it is important to note that Peterssen's (2022) analysis relies on van Dijk's concept of ideological polarization, particularly the us-versus-them dichotomy. In contrast, the current study uses van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, focusing on the level of meaning associated with semantics. Therefore, these different applications of van Dijk's model can be viewed as complementary, providing deeper insights into Nicolás Maduro's rhetorical strategies in his communication practices.

After the introductory section, this study is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the theoretical framework, focusing specifically on the level of meaning in van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive approach. Section 3 describes the methodology, providing detailed information about the corpora selected for this research and the procedures used. Section 4 presents the results and interpretations, while Section 5 offers concluding remarks and suggests potential directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of the interviews of the candidates examined in this study (i.e., Nicolás Maduro and Corina Machado) is conducted at the level of meaning. As previously mentioned, this includes two distinct levels: local meaning and global meaning, which relate to the semantics and/or the meaning of words, as described in van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive approach.

2.1. Local Meaning

Van Dijk (1980) defines local coherence as the meanings assigned to individual words— a concept that can be seen as lexis, depending on one's perspective. In a later work, van Dijk (2008) argued that "a series of propositions is considered locally coherent when it pertains to a sequence of actions, events, or circumstances that are interconnected" (p. 178). For example, lexical expressions can portray others as a potential outgroup (e.g., *criminals*). At the same time, they can also be used to depict others as a potential ingroup and/or affected group (e.g., *innocent people*). Additionally, it is important to note that including lexical expressions such as "*That is too much*" may introduce a more subjective viewpoint, implying a personal opinion about the event in question rather than maintaining the objectivity and factual nature of the communicative event.

The way someone expresses something can greatly alter the meaning of a statement. How speakers present their propositions depends on their personal knowledge and opinions— their mental models. According to van Dijk (2006), these representations may be biased, reflecting the speaker's personal experiences and judgments of events or situations (i.e., *their opinions*). To create these representations, speakers or writers can use different discursive strategies, such as lexis, implicatures, presuppositions, disclaimers, and other linguistic tools. These strategies can significantly influence the opinions and attitudes of their audience.

Lexicalization refers to the semantic value of words, specifically the lexical connotations expressed in speakers' discourse. According to van Dijk (1995, 2000, 2008, 2015), the meaning of these lexical items is shaped by the speakers' position, role, goals, perspective, or opinions. Essentially, lexis involves intentionally choosing certain words to highlight specific attributes, either positively or negatively, based on the speaker's communicative objectives. For example, the term *tremendous* might be used to emphasize favorable aspects of one's own group (e.g., *it will generate a tremendous number of new jobs*) or to highlight negative features (e.g., *immigrants are a tremendous problem*).

Implicatures. Implicit information isn't explicitly stated but must be inferred from what the speaker says. According to van Dijk (1995, 2000, 2008, 2015), this linguistic strategy serves various contextual purposes, including ideological goals like reducing one's own faults and highlighting others' perceived flaws. For instance, negative aspects of immigration might be openly discussed, portraying immigrants unfavorably. Alternatively, speakers may also imply negative statements about immigrants, making underlying prejudices less obvious and easier to defend. The presentation of these implicit meanings can be influenced by many factors, including the situation, the audience, and the timing of the communication.

Presuppositions. This category includes propositions that the speaker assumes to be true and that the audience is likely to accept. When distinguishing between implicatures and presuppositions, one could argue that implicatures are not dependent on context and are not explicitly stated within the discourse. In contrast, presuppositions are context-dependent because they are asserted expressly during communicative events. For example, the use of the term "again" in a statement presupposes that the event in question has occurred at least once before the current instance.

Examples and Illustrations. This category includes instances of metaphorical expressions, as noted by van Dijk (2015), who observes that both politics and the media are filled with metaphors that emphasize either the positive aspects of one side or the negative aspects of the opposing side.

Clarity and Vagueness. This strategy is used in political speech when speakers aim to be ambiguous and unclear. According to van Dijk (1995, 2000, 2008, 2015), vagueness can serve various purposes, including mitigation, euphemism, and, indirectly, denial. This can manifest as both relative incompleteness and excessive detail. Incompleteness occurs when speakers provide partial descriptions, such as a news report of a riot that only emphasizes the violence of *a black mob* without mentioning the actions of the police or the causes of the riot. Conversely, over-completeness involves providing more information than necessary, which can lead to irrelevant or redundant details that obstruct clear understanding of the event.

Disclaimers. This strategy is also common in political discourse when speakers try to reduce the negative impact of their statements. Using this approach, speakers first give an apparently positive description of others—usually those who are part of an outgroup—only to later reveal negative aspects of that group. Typical forms of disclaimers used in discourse include: apparent negation (e.g., *I have nothing against X, but...*), apparent concession (e.g., *They may be very smart, but...*), apparent empathy (e.g., *They may have had problems, but...*), apparent apology (e.g., *Excuse me, but...*), apparent effort (e.g., *We do everything we can, but...*), transfer (e.g., *I have no problems with them, but my clients...*), reversal, and victim-blaming (e.g., *THEY are not discriminated against, but WE are!*).

Propositional Structures. This discursive strategy involves analyzing actors, pronouns, modality, and evidentiality. Regarding actors and pronouns, these elements help depict social actors and their positions. According to van Dijk (1995, 2000, 2008, 2015), actors can be portrayed in various ways within discourse, either as individuals or as members of groups, categorized as ingroup (we) or outgroup (they). They can be identified by their names, group affiliations, professions, or roles. Additionally, actors may be represented in personal or impersonal ways, among other distinctions.

Regarding modality, van Dijk (1995, 2000, 2008, 2015) describes it as a way of modifying propositions through expressions such as "*It is necessary that,*" "*It is possible that,*" "*It is known that,*" or "*It is well-known that.*" Modality affects how the world and its events are represented, often involving some level of legitimization, as seen in media reports on race riots.

Evidentiality, another type of propositional structure, relates to how speakers take responsibility for their statements. It involves providing evidence for beliefs and discourse with those who may challenge their assertions. The standards for what counts as acceptable evidence vary based on factors such as genre, context, and culture. For example, personal observation (which *I have seen with my own eyes*) is viewed as more reliable than hearsay. In modern society, media sources serve as a major criterion of evidentiality, with statements like "*I have seen it on TV*" or "*I read it in the newspaper*" carrying significant weight in everyday discourse.

2.2. Global (Topics)

Van Dijk (1980, 2000, 2013) argues that the meaning of discourse goes beyond the simple semantics of individual words and sentences. It includes broader structures called topics or themes. These topics capture the core or most important information of a discourse, providing an overall view of its subject. Van Dijk (2000) distinguishes between topics based on whether they are complete propositions or single words. For example, a complete proposition is shown by Van Dijk (2000), "Neighbors attacked Moroccans" (p. 45), where Moroccans are shown as victims of an attack by neighbors, emphasizing

concern and interest for the Moroccans involved. On the other hand, individual words can express abstract themes; some topics for this study include the economy, employment, and immigration.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive framework, focusing specifically on the local level of meaning as outlined in the relevant categories. The global level of meaning, related to the chosen topics, is not included in this analysis. Although it pertains to the levels of meaning, the topics of economy and employment, along with immigration, were determined at the start of the research. As a result, these topics were implicitly established before the study began, making further investigation unnecessary in this case.

Each linguistic strategy, rooted in the socio-cognitive approach, is used to analyze the discourses of the two candidates, Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado. Notable differences in these strategies are identified within their pre-election interviews and then examined to understand the underlying reasons for their use. These strategies are analyzed concerning specific topics outlined in the study. Therefore, the results section will be organized around these topics (such as economy and employment, and immigration), with each section focusing on a comparative analysis of the discourses related to each topic. Nicolás Maduro's pre-election interview contains 1,619 words from an interview conducted on July 20, 2024. In comparison, María Corina Machado's interview has 2,258 words and was conducted on July 22, 2024. These pre-election interviews were selected based on their timing and relevance to the studied topics.

It is important to note that all pre-electoral interviews were transcribed by the author of this paper for later analysis, following van Dijk's (1998, 2000, 2001) socio-cognitive approach. This analysis employs a qualitative method to examine how each speaker constructs their discourse to promote their own policies, including those related to the economy, employment, and immigration. A quantitative approach was deemed unsuitable for this study because numeric data would not provide meaningful insights. For example, measuring the frequency of different linguistic strategies—such as lexical items, implicatures, and disclaimers—would be less informative than understanding how these strategies are implemented. This qualitative analysis focuses on the specific use of lexical items and other linguistic features, rather than simply counting their occurrences. The main concern is not just how often these elements are used but how they are employed within each communicative event.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section offers a detailed overview of the qualitative findings from analyzing pre-electoral interviews given by Nicolás Maduro and his opponent, María Corina Machado, during the 2024 presidential elections. The section is divided into several subsections: one focused on the economy and employment, and another dedicated to immigration. Additionally, it is essential to note that the socio-cognitive approach proposed by van Dijk will be thoroughly discussed and applied in each section. This study examines how these mechanisms interact and collectively influence the construction of discourse rather than analyzing each category separately.

Subsection 4.3, titled "Discussion of Results," addresses the research question and aims to provide a comprehensive answer by analyzing the collected data. It compares and highlights key findings to improve understanding of how each candidate, Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado, constructs their discourse. This section explores how their rhetorical strategies are tailored to appeal to their respective audiences, aiming to persuade and secure votes in their pursuit of electoral support.

4.1. The Topic of Economy and Employment

In discussing the economy and employment, Nicolás Maduro carefully chooses his words to shape his message. In Example 1 below, Maduro blames the opposition for the economic crisis, using specific terms and structuring his statements to emphasize their supposed responsibility. He points to two major events to support his claims. First, he states that the opposition blocked a proposed constitutional reform in 2007, which he claims was detrimental to the country's progress. Second, he accuses the opposition of initiating an economic war in 2015, which he asserts caused severe shortages affecting 80% of the country.

Nicolás Maduro's claim that an alleged economic war initiated by the opposition is responsible for the economic crisis can be seen as a fallacy. Nelson (2018) points out that the roots of Venezuela's economic mismanagement go back to President Hugo Chávez's administration, which left the country unprepared to handle the sharp decline in oil prices in 2014. The economic situation worsened under President Maduro's leadership, reaching a severe fiscal crisis by November 2017, when the government announced its plan to restructure its debt. It's likely that Maduro's strategy of blaming these economic problems on the opposition aims to create a narrative that paints the opposition as the outgroup. This approach shifts focus away from his administration's responsibilities, thus reducing direct accountability for the economic crisis, which essentially falls within his scope as president and the decisions made during his tenure.

Maduro's statement, which blames the opposition for the damaging economic crisis, displays a mix of scapegoating, ad hominem, and straw man fallacies. This scapegoating shifts blame onto a specific group, diverting attention from criticism of his administration (Lewandowsky *et al*., 2022). Simultaneously, by attacking the opposition's character and actions, Maduro commits an ad hominem fallacy, undermining their credibility instead of addressing the real economic issues (Barth & Marten, 1977; Woods & Walton, 1977). According to Walton (1987), if an argument is challenged on the basis of circumstantial inconsistency, the supporter can usually provide a reasonable rebuttal. Therefore, if a response remains always theoretically possible, an ad hominem argument can be considered defeasible by the person targeted, since they might have the means to counter the attack. Maduro also uses a straw man fallacy (see Saussure, 2018) by oversimplifying the complex economic problems, blaming them solely on opposition actions while ignoring key factors like global oil prices and past economic mismanagement during Chávez's presidency. Through these rhetorical strategies, Maduro tries to portray the opposition as the outgroup responsible for the country's economic struggles, thus avoiding direct accountability for his own role in the crisis.

Maduro uses the word *"brutal"* to emphasize how serious the situation is. Repeating *"brutal"* makes his point seem even more intense, suggesting that the economic crisis was not just bad but extremely harsh and damaging. This choice of words aims to evoke strong emotions in the audience, serving as a way to appeal to sentiment (Padilla-Herrada, 2015). Additionally, Maduro's statement includes other language features that reinforce his message. He alludes to the opposition's actions in 2007 and 2015, subtly implying a

cause-and-effect relationship between those actions and the current economic crisis. By not stating this outright, he expects the audience to make the connection themselves and view the opposition as responsible for the economic struggles. He also uses specific figures, such as *80% of the country*, to illustrate how widespread the impact is. This use of statistics makes his claims seem more credible and urgent, heightening the crisis's severity and reinforcing his accusations against the opposition.

(1) La oposición, cuando estuvo toda unida, ganó dos veces: una en el dos mil siete, con una reforma constitucional que no fue posible, y otra en dos mil quince, que nos metió en una guerra económica *brutal, brutal*, *que desabasteció el 80% del país* (The opposition, when it was fully united, won twice: once in 2007, with a constitutional reform that was not successful, and again in 2015, which plunged us into a *brutal, brutal economic war that led to an 80% shortage across the country*). (Maduro's Pre-Electoral Interview)

This potential negative portrayal of the opposition as an outgroup is further reinforced by Maduro's strategic presentation of his political party in a positive light. As shown in example 2 below, Maduro uses various rhetorical and linguistic techniques to highlight the favorable aspects of his group. By stating, *first, "I have a deeper understanding of the country*," he uses an epistemic marker that indicates experiential evidentiality, a concept found in van Dijk's propositional structures. This statement suggests that Maduro has a profound and firsthand understanding of the country, which seemingly validates his claims and decisions about its situation. Experiential evidentiality implies direct accountability, making his assertions seem more credible and convincing. This approach is especially persuasive because it indicates that Maduro's insights come from personal experience rather than abstract theory or secondary sources.

Maduro portrays himself as a victim of external forces by describing the sanctions as criminal acts. This word choice emphasizes both the severity and the perceived injustice of the sanctions, positioning Maduro and his government as unfairly targeted and appealing for sympathy and support from his audience. By calling the sanctions criminal, Maduro aims to claim moral superiority, implying that the opposition and outside groups are acting unethically against Venezuela.

Furthermore, Maduro's statement, *as I have been saying, Venezuela is going to surprise the world*, and it includes a communicative evidential marker, aligning with van Dijk's propositional structures. By claiming that he has consistently predicted this positive outcome, Maduro presents himself as a trustworthy source of foresight and insight. This use of communicative evidentiality, along with the repeated positive phrase *to amaze the world*, reinforces his message and emphasizes the expected success.

Notably, Maduro commits a fallacy by citing Chávez as the authoritative figure who established a legacy of social welfare that his administration supposedly restored. This appeal to authority fallacy uses Chávez's respected status to boost the credibility and legitimacy of Maduro's current policies and vision. In doing so, Maduro aims to persuade his audience that his actions continue Chávez's revered legacy, avoiding direct scrutiny of his leadership and decisions.

Maduro's claims lack credibility, as his efforts to depict sanctions and related issues as potential solutions are not supported by the actual economic data. Saboin (2021, p. 4) states, "The Venezuelan firm has aged. While aging is typically associated with larger economies of scale and thus higher productivity, in this case, aging correlates with reduced labor productivity levels." Venezuela is widely recognized as having one of the most deteriorated economies in the world, marked by hyperinflation (Abdou, 2020).

Maduro's statement, *'we have more experience; we have managed to defeat the economic war, with a country growing at 8% and the lowest inflation in 39 years*,' can be seen as potentially flawed when compared to data from Query & Cruz (2020), which indicates that Venezuela's hyperinflation rate over the past three years has approached or exceeded 100%. This difference hints that Maduro might be committing the fallacy of false attribution or cherry-picking data. This fallacy often happens when information is shared without considering how reliable the data is or providing a full view of the situation (Kopitwoski, 2016). Maduro may also be trying to boost his ethos (Kusumawati *et al.*, 2021), meaning his credibility, by suggesting his leadership is effective and that his policies have revived the economy. Yet, the ongoing evidence of hyperinflation contradicts these claims, showing that Venezuela's economic situation is much more serious than the portrayal implies.

Maduro's portrayal of economic success and stability under his administration, and implicitly under Chávez's policies, can be critically examined through the cherry-picking fallacy (Kopitowski, 2016), which involves selectively presenting either the most favorable or the most unfavorable aspects of a situation to support a specific narrative. Sylvia & Danopulos (2003) highlight a key moment during Chávez's presidency when the government resisted international pressure to devalue the bolívar, despite significant capital flight and economic strain. This resistance aimed to preserve economic stability and lessen the negative effects of devaluation on the population. However, by February 2002, the regime was compelled to float the bolívar, leading to an immediate 30% devaluation of the currency. This major devaluation reveals the economic vulnerabilities and mismanagement during Chávez's administration, thus challenging the positive narrative often promoted by Maduro. As a result, Maduro's seemingly positive portrayal of Chávez's governance falls into the cherry-picking fallacy, since it selectively presents information to support his narrative.

> (2) Primero, tengo un conocimiento más profundo del país. *Hemos pasado por amenazas, sanciones criminales, 930, y a cada una la hemos enfrentado y hemos encontrado soluciones* ante cada sanción [...] Venezuela, *yo lo vengo diciendo, va a asombrar al mundo, va a asombrar al mundo con el desarrollo de este nuevo modelo económico*, recuperando el estado de bienestar social que nos dejó Chávez y profundizando la democracia verdadera (First, I have a deeper understanding of the country. *We have faced threats, criminal sanctions, 930. We have confronted each one and found solutions* to every sanction [...] Venezuela, *as I keep saying, is going to astonish the world, is going to astonish the world with the development of this new economic model*, restoring the social welfare state that Chávez left us and deepening true democracy. (Maduro's Pre-Electoral Interview).

Regarding María Corina Machado's speech, her language showcases how rhetorical strategies can convey certainty and foster in-group unity while using implicatures to subtly suggest a collective determination among citizens (see, for example, example 3 below). Machado's strategic word choices enhance the persuasiveness of her message and subtly hint at broader socio-political dynamics. Specifically, Machado's use of assertive language and boosters (Kusumawati *et al.*, 2021) underscores the seriousness and urgency of her claims. Phrases like *"all institutions have been destroyed"* and *"freedom of expression has ended"* are presented as undeniable facts. *This sense of certainty is further* reinforced by her detailed listing of the affected areas: *the physical, the infrastructure, and the economy*. By clearly addressing these aspects, Machado reduces potential ambiguity, thereby strengthening her argument and convincing her audience of the gravity of the situation.

Evidence and data (as cited in Sylvia & Danopulos, 2003) support earlier critiques of economic mismanagement under Chávez and Maduro, confirming that both administrations have contributed to Venezuela's severe economic crisis. This context bolsters Machado's arguments, which seem deeply rooted in the real experiences of Venezuelans. By aligning her claims with specific linguistic categories and expressions, Machado effectively reinforces her points and shows the strength of her rhetorical strategy.

Machado's choice of words is very revealing. Terms like *destroy*, *end*, *arbitrary actions*, *imprison people*, *damage businesses*, and *close companies* all carry strong negative connotations. These phrases not only create a bleak and troubling picture but also subtly contrast with the values she associates with her in-group, likely those opposing the current regime. By using emotionally charged language, Machado positions herself with those dedicated to restoring and rebuilding these institutions and freedoms. This reinforces her portrayal of her in-group as the morally upright and just alternative.

Regarding van Dijk's categories of local meaning, especially implicatures, Machado suggests that despite the regime's oppressive measures, the people's fear has decreased. She states that *there is no longer fear, and in fact, the opposite is true—far from intimidating*. This implicature operates on multiple levels: it subtly indicates that the regime's actions aim to intimidate, but those actions fail. The phrase '*there is no longer fear*' implies a change in public attitude, reflecting increased resolve and courage among citizens. This implication is important because it suggests that the people may be determined to pursue their goals despite the regime's efforts to suppress them.

According to the U.S. Department of State (n.d.), the Venezuelan regime under Maduro has been implicated in human rights violations, with individuals facing imprisonment for defending their rights. This supports one of Machado's assertions that *all institutions have ended freedom of expression*, a trait often associated with dictatorial regimes. Karvonen (2008) emphasizes the lack of pluralism in such regimes and highlights the erosion of civil rights, noting that civil society in dictatorships is under strict surveillance of citizens' activities. This perspective complements Dahl's (1989) expanded definition of democracy, which emphasizes how the violation of rights and fundamental individual freedoms also characterizes dictatorships.

When Nicolás Maduro claims to be *strengthening true democracy* (see example 2 above) while leading a regime widely recognized as a dictatorship, he engages in a false dilemma or false dichotomy fallacy (see Tomić, 2013). This fallacy involves presenting a situation as if only two mutually exclusive options exist when, in reality, there may be other viable choices, or the situation is misrepresented. This point is further supported by the fact that Corina Machado was not granted the democratic freedom typically expected in such a system, as she was prevented from running as a presidential candidate. Since she was seen as a significant threat by Nicolás Maduro's regime, Machado was blocked from candidacy, forcing her to support an alternative candidate, Edmundo González Urrutia, to represent her in the presidential elections. Furthermore, the economic crisis under Maduro, which is rooted in Chávez's era, is exemplified by Chávez's practice of expropriating companies and private property without proper legal procedures. These actions, along with the shutdown and relocation of non-expropriated businesses, have worsened the economic decline, intensifying Venezuela's severe crisis and ongoing struggles.

Additionally, Machado's rhetoric sets itself apart by intentionally avoiding the excessively negative portrayal of opponents that is common in Maduro's discourse. While

she criticizes the regime, she highlights the wider consequences of its actions rather than attacking individual figures. This approach not only enhances the positive perception of her in-group but also keeps a more balanced tone, which could be more effective in convincing undecided or moderate audiences.

> (3) En todos los planos, no solo lo físico, la infraestructura o la economía, *se han destruido todas las instituciones; se ha acabado con la libertad de expresión* […] Ya no hay miedo que puedan, al contrario*, lejos de intimidar con estas acciones arbitrarias de meter a la gente presa, de dañar a los comercios, de cerrar empresas*. (In every aspect, not just physical, infrastructure, or the economy, *all institutions have been destroyed; freedom of expression has been ended* […] There is no longer fear of what they might do; on the contrary, *far from intimidating with these arbitrary actions of imprisoning people, damaging businesses, and closing companies*) (Corina Machado's Pre-Electoral Interview).

Example 4, discussed below, supports Corina Machado's assessment of Venezuela's economic situation. Machado offers a detailed overview of Venezuela's complex crisis, which she describes as a severe humanitarian disaster worsened by failures in nutrition, education, public services, security, and sovereignty. She uses powerful phrases, such as *"humanitarian disaster"* and *"collapse in nutrition*," to vividly emphasize the seriousness of the crisis. This word choice highlights the urgency of addressing these critical issues and implicitly calls for immediate reform and intervention to prevent further deterioration. Machado's use of the experiential evidential marker (a propositional structure in van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach) *indeed* strengthens her claim about the severity of the crisis, showing that the problems she discusses are undeniable and broadly recognized. This marker enhances the credibility of her arguments, portraying the crisis as an urgent and pressing reality that requires swift action.

In contrast, Nicolás Maduro's discourse employs a different approach to experiential markers. When Maduro claims that *I have a deeper understanding of the country* (as referenced in example 2 above), he emphasizes his personal experience and knowledge of Venezuela's situation. This individual-focused strategy aims to establish his authority and expertise, positioning himself as a leader with profound insight into the nation's issues. By highlighting his knowledge, Maduro works to enhance his credibility and present himself as a capable and well-informed leader able to manage the crisis effectively.

Machado's use of the phrase *indeed* sharply contrasts with Maduro's individualistic approach by emphasizing the collective acknowledgment of the crisis. Her speech highlights that the issues are obvious and widely recognized, rather than arising from her authority. This collective perspective shifts the focus from individual leadership to a broader, shared understanding of the crisis. By framing the situation as a systemic problem that requires widespread action, Machado's rhetoric aims to garner public support for comprehensive solutions.

> (4) *Venezuela tiene una crisis multidimensional* que no es solamente la *catástrofe humanitaria y el colapso en materia de nutrición o educación* de nuestros niños. Tenemos un *problema enorme de servicios públicos, una crisis de seguridad ciudadana, una situación crítica de emergencia en materia de soberanía nacional e integridad de nuestro territorio*, y, *desde luego, un problema de crisis económica* y financiera. (*Venezuela is experiencing a multidimensional crisis* that goes beyond just the *humanitarian catastrophe and the collapse in nutrition or education* for our children. We face *a massive problem with public services, a citizen security crisis, a critical emergency situation*

regarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and, indeed, an economic and financial crisis) (Corina Machado's Pre-Electoral Interview)

After examining the topics of economy and employment in the pre-electoral interviews of Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado, this subsection will focus on immigration. This issue has become increasingly significant and relevant, especially as many Venezuelan citizens have been forced to emigrate in search of better living conditions and opportunities.

4.2. The Topic of Immigration

In discussing immigration, the focus will be on how the two candidates, Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado, represent Venezuelan citizens who have emigrated in search of better opportunities abroad. As highlighted in the previous subsection, the economic crisis in Venezuela has caused many individuals to face significant hardships, prompting them to leave the country. It is expected that, given Maduro's leadership and the economic effects of his administration, he rarely mentions Venezuelans living abroad. This omission may indicate that these expatriates, who sought refuge outside Venezuela because of Maduro's governance, probably do not support the regime.

The idea that Venezuelan citizens living abroad and Nicolás Maduro harbor mutual hostility is apparent. Venezuelans who have mostly emigrated do so because they are unhappy with Maduro's government, which has forced them to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Meanwhile, Maduro might see these expatriates as a potential threat, especially given their ability to voice dissent outside of Venezuela, where such expression is heavily restricted.

As documented by Glatsky (2024), the Maduro administration has enacted strict regulations that effectively prevent Venezuelans living abroad—especially in the United States, Spain, and other Latin American countries—from registering to vote. This restriction highlights Maduro's concern about allowing expatriates to participate in elections. The implication is that many Venezuelans who have moved abroad likely oppose Maduro's regime and would therefore support the opposition. This reluctance to help expatriates vote emphasizes the fallacy of portraying Maduro's regime as democratic when, in reality, his actions reflect a dictatorial and autocratic style of governance.

According to El País (2024), Nicolás Maduro recently announced that he has removed Meta's WhatsApp application from his phone and is now encouraging citizens to switch to Russian Telegram or Chinese WeChat. He has publicly denounced WhatsApp and other social media platforms such as Instagram, X, and TikTok, claiming that they have been used to incite hatred against his supporters and government officials. This move further highlights Maduro's authoritarian tendencies.

The implication of this response suggests that global social media platforms, used by Venezuelan expatriates to share their experiences and highlight conditions within the country, pose a significant threat to Maduro's regime. These platforms increase international awareness of Venezuela's situation, which Maduro tries to counter by isolating domestic news from global attention. This approach is similar to the tactics employed by other authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea, where the government maintains strict control over information and limits external exposure. This behavior further supports the view that Maduro's governance aligns more closely with authoritarian principles than with democratic principles.

After examining Maduro's actions on the topic, example 5 below shows his stance on immigration. In this case, Maduro's speech notably avoids mentioning the large number

of Venezuelans who have left the country due to worsening conditions. This omission reveals the fallacy of "cherry-picking," where only favorable information is shared while inconvenient truths are ignored. The use of the word *"inside"* in his statement—implying that students will find opportunities *within Venezuela*—further indicates a denial of the reality that many Venezuelans are forced to leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad. By focusing only on the supposed successes of his government's educational policies and ignoring widespread emigration, Maduro implicitly downplays or denies the serious challenges faced by many citizens.

This rhetorical strategy could be undermined by increasing public dissatisfaction (see, for instance, BBC, 2024). Repeated promises of entrepreneurship, jobs, and development might be seen as empty guarantees given the country's persistent problems. Considering the history of broken promises, people may doubt Maduro's pledges, which weakens his speech's impact and exposes a significant gap between the government's narrative and the actual experiences of Venezuelans.

> (5) Llevar la educación venezolana a los niveles más altos de los valores humanísticos y del desarrollo tecnológico. Hoy por hoy, le garantizamos el cupo universitario al 100% de los jóvenes que se gradúan de bachiller. *Ahora, hay que garantizarles a esos jóvenes la mejor calidad y las mejores carreras que están eligiendo, así como su desarrollo y su trabajo dentro de Venezuela*. Que se gradúen y tengan opciones de emprendimiento, trabajo y desarrollo. (o elevate Venezuelan education to the highest levels of humanistic values and technological development. Nowadays, we guarantee university admission to 100% of the students who graduate from high school. *Now, we must ensure that these students receive the best quality education and choose the best careers, as well as support their development and employment inside Venezuela*. They should graduate with opportunities for entrepreneurship, work, and personal development). (Maduro's Pre-Electoral Interview)

As shown in example 6 below, María Corina Machado recognizes the difficult conditions many Venezuelans face, noting that a large part of the population—*A quarter of Venezuelans*—has been forced to leave the country due to persecution or a lack of opportunities at home. By highlighting this mass exodus, Machado directly challenges Maduro's narrative, addressing the tough realities that have pushed so many to seek better prospects abroad. She positions herself as a credible and authoritative figure (ethos) by using boosters such as "*today, July 28th,*" *which really marks a milestone for change. This statement conveys a strong* sense of certainty and suggests that her election would lead to major improvements in Venezuela, possibly encouraging expatriates to return. The epistemic marker *indeed*, as explained in van Dijk's propositional structures, boosts her credibility and emphasizes the likelihood of her vision coming true, strengthening her appeal to voters.

The implicature in Machado's discourse suggests that her leadership presents a real chance for change, countering the harmful trends of the current regime (for example, *Today, we have a regime that has caused a massive international migration*). She indicates that her election would create the conditions necessary for Venezuelans to return to their homeland and work together to rebuild it, fostering a sense of national pride and contributing to broader regional goals like stability, peace, freedom, and democracy in Latin America. Machado's rhetoric is carefully crafted to address both the emotional and physical hardships that have driven Venezuelans to emigrate, utilizing pathos (as noted by Amossy, 2000), while offering an optimistic vision of the future. By emphasizing collective action and *working together to build the country*, she shifts the focus from individual suffering to collective recovery and progress. This approach not only increases

her credibility but also contrasts with Maduro's often insular and self-serving discourse, potentially making her message resonate more strongly with an electorate disillusioned by unmet promises and seeking real, meaningful change.

> (6) *Una cuarta parte de los venezolanos ha tenido que huir porque eran perseguidos o simplemente no veían un futuro en su patria*. Hoy, el 28 de julio representa efectivamente el hito donde esto puede cambiar; *donde podamos soñar en que aquellos que se han ido regresen, traer a nuestros hijos de vuelta y construir juntos un país en el que nos sintamos todos muy orgullosos* y del que podamos contribuir al desarrollo, a la estabilidad, a la paz, a la libertad y a la democracia de América Latina. (*A quarter of Venezuelans have had to flee because they were persecuted or simply could not see a future in their homeland*. Today, July 28 effectively represents the milestone where this can change; *where we can dream of those who have left returning, bringing our children back, and building together a country in which we all feel very proud* and to which we can contribute to the development, stability, peace, freedom, and democracy of Latin America) (Corina Machado's Pre-Electoral Interview)

These earlier points are further demonstrated in Example 7 below, where Machado effectively uses rhetorical strategies to boost her credibility and strengthen her connection with Venezuelans, especially those forced to emigrate due to the country's difficult conditions. By directly addressing Venezuelans abroad, including those near the border in Colombia, Machado adopts an empathetic tone that enhances her ethos as a leader who understands and cares about her fellow citizens' struggles. Her use of the phrase *"I know it has been very hard to leave the country"* functions as a cognitive marker, showing her awareness and personal connection to the hardships Venezuelans face. This approach increases her credibility and fosters a sense of closeness and rapport with her audience.

Machado's rhetoric is further strengthened by the hortative tone of her speech, which powerfully urges Venezuelans to return and participate in the election with a renewed sense of urgency and importance. The repeated use of the imperative phrase *empha*sizes the immediacy and necessity of their involvement, implying that their participation in the upcoming election is crucial for the country's future. This call to action is further reinforced by her use of boosters, such as *"in a few days"* and *"Venezuela needs you*," which not only boost the persuasiveness of her message but also affirm her role as a leader capable of mobilizing support and inspiring swift action.

Her compassionate address to the diaspora, recognizing their sacrifices and emotional connections through phrases like your dreams, your loved ones, your properties, your belongings, enhances the emotional power of her speech with pathos. This approach sharply contrasts with Maduro's discourse, which mainly focuses on the domestic situation and may alienate those who have emigrated. By including Venezuelans abroad in her appeal, Machado not only broadens her support base but also subtly criticizes the failures of Maduro's government, which may not fully acknowledge or address the experiences and contributions of the diaspora. The implied message in Machado's speech is that her leadership is inclusive and attentive to the needs of all Venezuelans, no matter where they are. Her call for Venezuelans abroad to return and vote can be seen as a direct challenge to Maduro, suggesting her message could bring about a significant political change, which Maduro might see as threatening. This is especially relevant given the historical context of voter suppression and the potential fear within Maduro's regime that higher voter turnout, especially from those dissatisfied with his administration, could lead to a major electoral defeat.

(7) Dentro de pocos días, los que estamos aquí y los que están afuera, permítanme enviar un mensaje a los venezolanos que están en Colombia, especialmente a aquellos cerca de la frontera. *Miren, yo sé que ha sido muy duro dejar el país; sé que es muy difícil dejar atrás sus sueños, sus familiares queridos, sus propiedades, sus cosas. Pero este es un momento en el que el país los necesita. Vengan a votar; hagan un esfuerzo, crucen la frontera desde ahora.* Dentro de pocos días, crucen la frontera y vengan a votar, porque Venezuela los necesita a cada uno de ustedes. (In a few days, to those of us here and those who are abroad, allow me to send a message to Venezuelans in Colombia, especially to those near the border. *Look, I know it has been very hard to leave the country; I know it is difficult to leave behind your dreams, your loved ones, your properties, your belongings. But this is a moment when the country needs you. Come to vote; make an effort, cross the border now.* In a few days, cross the border and come to vote, because Venezuela needs each and every one of you) (Corina Machado's Pre-Electoral Interview)

After analyzing the rhetorical strategies used by Nicolás Maduro and Corina Machado in their pre-election interviews on the topics of economy, employment, and immigration—aimed at persuading or influencing their audiences to secure votes—this subsection will discuss the findings. The goal is to improve understanding of how their discourses are constructed from a political perspective.

4.3. Discussion of Results

This subsection aims to answer the research question by illustrating the stance-taking expressions used by Maduro compared to those employed by Machado in their 2024 pre-electoral interviews. It examines the functions of these discursive strategies with regard to the topics of economy, employment, and immigration. As demonstrated by earlier examples in Maduro's speech, he employs linguistic strategies such as specific lexical items to assign blame to others for the economic crisis, portraying it as caused by external forces (e.g., *We have faced threats, criminal sanctions,* or *The opposition plunged us into a brutal, brutal economic war that resulted in an 80% shortage across the country*). In this way, Maduro constructs an outgroup, aligning with the ideological polarization described in van Dijk's (2008) socio-cognitive approach. Conversely, when discussing his reforms, Maduro presents them positively, framing them as beneficial to his political party and as signs of progress (e.g., We have more experience; we have managed to *overcome the economic war, with a country growing at a rate of 8% and the lowest inflation in 39 years*). This portrayal contrasts with the economic data, which shows a worsening situation, evidenced by the significant emigration of Venezuelans due to deteriorating economic and social conditions.

Maduro's repeated use of fallacies is further demonstrated by his appeal to authority, such as claiming to carry on Chávez's social welfare legacy and to *deepen true democracy*. However, as noted, data shows that Chávez's time in office saw a decline in economic conditions and increased economic problems, including the expropriation of businesses, which likely contributed to the ongoing downturn.

As Zhou (2018, p.2) articulates, "fallacies are fraudulent tricks people use in their argument to make it sound more credible while what they do is to fool the audience." This description accurately depicts Maduro's rhetorical approach, as his frequent use of fallacies seems to be a strategic effort to influence public perception. By incorporating logical fallacies into his discourse, Maduro may be trying to enhance the perceived strength of his arguments, making them appear more convincing. However, the true goal might be to conceal the truth and divert attention from the flaws or inconsistencies in his reasoning, ultimately misleading the audience into accepting his narrative without proper scrutiny.

Maduro's approach appears to intentionally shape public opinion by distorting reality. Using such fallacies may help him avoid accountability, create false dilemmas, or appeal to emotions instead of presenting factual evidence—strategies that strengthen his position while undermining the opposition. Although these rhetorical tactics might seem convincing at first, they ultimately deceive the audience and promote a narrative that may not stand up to objective analysis. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and analyze these fallacies in Maduro's rhetoric to uncover his true motives and keep the audience alert and resistant to manipulative arguments.

In contrast, Machado's rhetorical approach avoids the fallacies common in Maduro's discourse. Instead, it closely aligns with observable realities and empirical data, making her arguments more persuasive and credible. For example, Machado's statements, such as *"In every aspect, not just physical, infrastructure, or the economy, all institutions have been destroyed; freedom of expression has been ended*," reflect a connection to documented facts. These include Venezuela's high inflation rate, which is among the worst in the world, and the suppression of free speech, demonstrated by the restrictions Maduro's government has placed on Venezuelan expatriates' voting rights and the obstacles Machado faced when she ran for president. These examples highlight Machado's reliance on factual information, strengthening the strength and appeal of her arguments.

Maduro's use of pathos (Amossy, 2000) is notably strong, often aimed at evoking intense emotions like fear, anger, or loyalty without always providing solid evidence to support these appeals. His rhetorical style often involves blaming external forces or opposition groups for the country's problems, which shifts attention away from his own administration's faults. While this rhetoric can stir emotional responses, it may also alienate those who see a disconnect between his claims and the real situation on the ground. On the other hand, Machado uses a balanced approach by blending ethos and pathos (Padilla-Herrada, 2015). By grounding her emotional appeals in factual accuracy, Machado boosts her credibility and makes her arguments more convincing. This combined approach—appealing to both emotions and reason—can make her communication more effective than Maduro's. Her ability to connect with her audience's emotional and rational sides leads to a more engaging and persuasive message. Conversely, Maduro's focus on emotional manipulation and lack of strong evidence might damage his credibility and appeal.

One of Maduro's arguments, notably the claim that he is building on *the social welfare state left by Chávez* and *deepening true democracy*, indicates an alignment with democratic principles. However, this claim itself may be flawed. It warrants further scrutiny, especially considering Maduro's rhetorical strategies. His speeches often take an individualistic tone, as shown by statements like "*I have a deeper understanding of the country*" and "*Venezuela, as I keep saying, is going to amaze the world*." Sondrol (1991) points out that authoritarian leaders typically display a more individualistic approach and prefer to maintain the status quo. Such leaders often try to strengthen their power through fear and loyalty, lacking the legitimacy that an ideological basis provides. Additionally, this authoritarian aspect in Maduro's rhetoric is supported by Thompson (1990), who asserts that domination through language involves dissimulation, where power relationships and inequality—such as those typical of authoritarian regimes—are denied, hidden, or disguised. This idea is further emphasized by Maduro's frequent use of fallacies, which can mask the true nature of his communication and help sustain his authoritarian control.

In contrast, liberal democracies have gradually incorporated aspects of collectivism into their political, economic, and social systems, as discussed in Chapter 2, which explores the ideologies of individualism and collectivism. This collectivist perspective is evident in Machado's rhetoric, such as her emphasis on national sovereignty and collective pride (*national sovereignty and territorial integrity and building together a country in which we all feel very proud and to which we can contribute to the development*).

Therefore, it can be concluded that Maduro's rhetoric tends to be more authoritarian, even though he tries to present it as democratic in a misleading way. In contrast, Machado's rhetoric aligns more with democratic values, demonstrated by her support for freedom of expression and her opposition to the restrictive policies of Maduro's government. When it comes to immigration, Machado and Maduro express very different views that reveal their opposing ideological beliefs. Machado shows deep concern and compassion for Venezuelans who have been forced to leave the country. She views their return as crucial for Venezuela's *development, stability, peace, and freedom*. Her words reflect a democratic and inclusive attitude, stressing the importance of engaging and caring for all citizens, including those living abroad, as part of her vision for the country's future.

Conversely, Maduro's rhetoric subtly discourages emigration by emphasizing the opportunities available within Venezuela. His statement, '*Nowadays, we guarantee university admission to 100% of the students* [...] *the best quality education and choose the best careers, as well as support their development and employment within Venezuela,*' suggests a focus on retaining the country's youth. The emphasis on *'within' or 'inside' Venezuela* indicates a priority on keeping citizens in the country rather than addressing the root causes of emigration or encouraging former residents to return. This stance may be seen as reflecting a more authoritarian or even dictatorial attitude, signaling a preference for controlling citizen movement and an unwillingness to acknowledge their reasons for leaving.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Critical discourse analysis is essential here because it uncovers discourses that may hide or obscure details from the audience, thus acting persuasively or manipulatively. By analyzing political discourse, the true positions and hidden agendas of political figures can be revealed, increasing public awareness of the tactics used to persuade or manipulate. Furthermore, this approach helps identify trends and patterns in discourse, enabling the characterization and classification of speakers' stances. It also aids in recognizing typical positions associated with dictatorial or democratic profiles, as demonstrated by the contrasting discourses of Nicolás Maduro and María Corina Machado.This discourse analysis opens several paths for future research to enhance the findings. For instance, other topics such as education and the healthcare system could be explored, especially given their significance in the Venezuelan context, where many citizens express concerns about the challenges and shortcomings in healthcare. Additionally, including other opposing candidates in the analysis would allow for a more thorough comparison of discourses, helping to evaluate how closely these candidates follow democratic principles or lean toward more authoritarian ideologies.

Since this analysis focuses on the pre-electoral interviews of these candidates and their strategies to persuade or manipulate voters, it is also important to examine their post-electoral speeches. This would provide insight into how their discourse changed after the elections, especially considering Maduro's controversial re-election, which sparked

significant unrest among the opposition and the broader public amid allegations of electoral fraud. Therefore, analyzing post-electoral speeches is crucial for future research because it would reveal how the candidates present themselves and others in response to possible national and international dissatisfaction with the election results. Such an analysis would also allow for a meaningful comparison with their pre-electoral rhetoric.

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