

Tunisian Post-Revolution Political Discourse: Freedom of Speech and Excess of Verbal Violence

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Abstract

One of the major newly acquired freedoms that Tunisians are enjoying in post revolution era is freedom of speech. Freedom of speech has allowed Tunisian people to exteriorize their ideas and their views in relation to politics, economy, arts, society, etc. It is thanks to freedom of speech that Tunisians are nowadays free to criticize the political system, political parties and everything related to their reality. Accordingly, one can easily notice the new spirit created by the revolution among Tunisians wherever you walk in the country. This new spirit is highly shaped by the deep interest in politics. As a matter of fact, politics has become a highly treated topic in formal and in informal settings. This fact may be considered as a healthy indicator of the nation's maturity and positive change. Yet, freedom of speech has brought with it so much violence deeply felt in the language used not only by lay people but also by politicians especially in mediatised political discourse. This paper is intended to show how political debates between 'supposedly' Elite politicians turn to be a violent discourse. In this study, Van Dijk's (2004) framework adopted from *Politics, ideology and discourse* is used to detect discursive structures conveying political verbal violence within the transcripts of two lengthy extracts of two broadcast political talk shows widely viewed by Tunisians and discover the ideologies underlying them. The macro strategies of 'positive self-representation' and 'negative other- representation' (which are inherently associated with 'Polarization' of in group vs. out group ideologies or US-THEM) and also the other 25 more delicate strategies have turned out to be very effective criteria for the evaluation of attitudes, and opinions. The findings of this study may be helpful for readers so as to expand their critical thinking abilities in comprehension and interpretation of political language.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis - Political Discourse

I - Introduction: An attempt to reread the Tunisian Post-Revolution Discourse: The changing role of the Revolution's Slogans

The 14th of January 2011 Tunisian Revolution has been characterized by its peacefulness that is deeply felt in the slogans held by the manifestants. Slogans like the famous poetic verse of the first Tunisian poet Abou Lkassim Chebbi that says "If people wants to live, destiny must respond, Tunisians, yes we do, Game over, Dégage, employment, freedom, and national dignity,etc" and many other newly adopted expressions have shown to the world an image of a civilized people, a Tunisian people who is educated and intelligent, a people who no longer accepts dictatorship and tyranny. More importantly, those slogans have taken an international dimension. For example, the French word "Dégage" did in fact take another connotation which was created by the Tunisian revolution. This word was imported to the world through the different popular uprisings taking place in different parts of the world. Similarly, the Arabic phrase "The people want

to overthrow the regime” was transferred to the people of the world who revolted holding the same phrase. This nice and impressive image has yet soon changed after the first anniversary of the revolution. The new image created in this new era is shaped by an excessive use of freedom of speech. This newly acquired freedom has in fact brought with it so much verbal violence since in the aftermath of the revolution everyone feels free to say whatever he/she wants about politics, politicians, artists, journalists, etc.

1.1 Ramifications of the word “Dégage”

What is strikingly evident in this new era is that the peaceful piece of discourse held in the 14th January 2011 has been replaced by an opposite discourse, namely that of violence. For example, the same French word “Dégage” which was used in the beginning to kick out the symbol of violence and oppression, it has been itself used to cause violence and chaos since in this new era saying “Dégage” to one’s superior at work in all kinds of institutions has become the norm. Accordingly, the word “Dégage” has lost its historical significance as a result of its misuse and abuse. Again, another frightening phenomenon that is worth mentioning here is that the same word “Dégage” is nowadays no longer said out of dissatisfaction with the political practices but it is said for ideological reasons and especially those related to religious convictions. Nowadays, many Tunisians say “Dégage” to each other just because they don’t have the same view about religion. This religion which has gathered Tunisians for centuries and did not cause any problems between them, it has turned to be a reason for division.

. As a matter of fact, the different contradictory uses of the word “Dégage” have revealed so much about Tunisian reality. This reality is shaped by the move from a conflict between the Tunisian people and the political regime to another conflict which takes place between the Tunisians themselves. As has been said above, the word “Dégage” has taken another connotation, it has moved from calling for freedom, dignity, unity, and peace, etc to calling for violence, division and chaos, etc.

1.2. The Strong Link Between Verbal Violence and Physical Violence

If we look back at the history of humanity, one clearly discern that revolutions, wars, and all sorts of physical violence throughout history has usually began with words and speech inciting the masses, not with material weapons, but with mind-altering words and phrases formed with the specific intent to mislead first and then to foment hatred and provoke physical action. To further support this historical general fact, the new dividing, antagonistic discourse has nowadays become the norm which is clearly displayed in social medias especially through facebook. Nowadays, if you scrutinize the political discourse of politicians on television, you clearly see this verbal abuse expressed by everyone regardless of his/her ideological and intellectual backgrounds. Nowadays, it is definitely natural to see Tunisians insulting each other while expressing their views. It is absolutely natural to see Tunisians holding slogans like “We must take revenge of the Shameful Media”, “Dégage, Leftovers of the Ex Regime” “Dégage, Ben Ali’s Dogs”, etc. Instead of constructively criticizing media, some Tunisians tend to radically refuse to communicate with each other pretending to solve all problems using this word. Also, the word “revenge” in the first slogan is in itself an indicator of aggression, and ironically far from being a force of construction. In addition to that, using metaphors of animals to describe some members of the Constitutional Committee is another aspect of verbal violence exercised by the people against the governors in the name of freedom of speech.

Nowadays, we have become talking about political violence whether exercised by the party in power or among political parties. Nowadays, on Tunisian TV channels, whenever you see a

political debate broadcasted you cannot but see harsh arguments between representatives of political parties who do not usually stop at being different ideologically but they, most of the time, turn the debate into a verbal aggressive fake dialogue. Here, one gets the impression that our supposedly political “Elite” are themselves teaching violence to the rest of the Tunisian people since this very aggressive discourse that they produce on social networks and on TV channels is an explicit evidence that Tunisians equate freedom of speech to freedom of abuse, discriminate and to promote violence. This kind of discourse leads us to search for the reasons for which this excessive verbal violence has emerged in the aftermath of the revolution.

I.3. Why this verbal abuse?!

Before answering this very crucial question, another question needs to be answered first, which is whether this verbal violence is a real historical construct already there in the Tunisian personality or it is a new emerging phenomenon which shapes the post-revolution era?

Following my humble understanding of the history of the Tunisian people, this verbal abuse can be hardly explained despite the historical reasons which may justify it. In other words, if we try to understand whether the cultural and intellectual construction of the Tunisian society is receptive of violence or not, we find that the culture of despotism and dictatorship has left behind a mentality that internalizes so much social violence that you can clearly see in family life, in the streets, in the football stadium, and in many other settings. Yet, at the same time, the mainstream culture of the Tunisian people is a moderate and a balanced one. It is a culture that helps Tunisians to go beyond the culture of violence to the culture of tolerance which is basically a democratic cultural aspect. Another possible answer to this question is that the post-revolution violent discourse has a deep relationship with the Tunisian personality itself. Actually, violence which is manifested in language can be attributed to the emotional construction of the Tunisian personality. This personality is characterized by its contradictory reactions to the successively occurring events. Of course, this tendency is explained by the fact that the Tunisian personality is a product of a long history of patriarchal society whose major and natural aspects are violence, savage masculinity, misbalance, suppression, doublespeak, and especially the marginalization of the female voice in all social institutions. Politically, this personality is a product of dictatorship, despotism and absence of all freedoms including freedom of speech. So to speak, violence has become a dominant phenomenon that is deeply felt in the language used by Tunisians in the post-revolution era. Considering Television as a public space where politicians speak out their opinions about reality, this public network has in fact provided this paper with real and very pertinent examples of verbal violence that Tunisian Politicians express through the language they tend to use while communicating their views about current matters. Examples of verbal violence found in televised political debates are numerous. This paper will only analyze 2 lengthy extracts drawn from two different political TV talk shows

II. Theoretical Framework

II.1. Critical Discourse Analysis : Theoretical Overview

According to Van Dijk (1998a) Critical Discourse Analysis is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts.

Fairclough (1993) defines CDA as discourse analysis which aims to explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

CDA was developed in the late 1970s. In fact, Critical Linguistics was developed by a group of linguists and literary theorists at the University of East Anglia. Their approach was based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CL practitioners aimed at "isolating ideology in discourse" and showing "how ideology and ideological processes are manifested as systems of linguistic characteristics and processes.". Following Halliday, these CL practitioners view language in use as simultaneously performing three functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions.

Halliday's view of language as a "social act" is a key concept to many of CDA's analysts. According to Fowler et al. (1979, 185), CL, like sociolinguistics, claims that, "there are strong connections between linguistic structure and social structure" .Another leading assumption of CDA and SFL is that speakers make choices regarding vocabulary and grammar, and that these choices are consciously or unconsciously "principled and systematic"(Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188). Thus choices are ideologically based. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary but form signifies content" .In brief, language is a social act that is ideologically constrained.

Gramsci Gramsci's claim that the maintenance of contemporary power is based not only on coercive force but also on 'hegemony' has been influential in CDA. The emphasis on hegemony implies an emphasis on ideology, and on how the structures and practices of ordinary life legitimize capitalist social relations.

For Foucault , discourses are knowledge systems of the human sciences (medicine, economics, linguistics, etc.) that influence the social and governmental 'technologies' which constitute power in modern society. Pierre Bourdieu is a further influential figure and particularly his (1991) work on the relationship between language, social position and symbolic value in the dynamics of power relations. Furthermore, Volosinov (1973) work is the first linguistic theory of ideology. It claims that linguistic signs are the material of ideology, and that all language use is ideological.

III. A Brief Review of Relevant Studies

Discourse analysts in Tunisia and in the Arab world have been interested in studying the post-revolution phenomenon of political violence. They have studied it from different perspectives and in different political settings. To mention but a few, Zouche (2013) studied manifestations of the social psychological phenomenon of group polarization, emerging from the conflicting comments posted by pro-Conservative and pro-Labour British participants on the Official Facebook Page of the British Conservative party, from a pragmatic perspective. His study is relevant to the present study since its findings revealed that British participants tended to produce violent political language. This was done through the highly offensive strategies of impoliteness, and by making frequent use of some lines of argumentation whose main aim is to criticize out-group participants and damage their collective face .

In the same context, Al-Dilaimy & Khalaf (2015) worked on a conversational sketch of impoliteness strategies as employed by interlocutors in the "Opposite Direction" presented by Al-Jazeera satellite channel. Their study which adopted Model of impoliteness (1996) in the analysis of

impoliteness instances in the selected corpus. revealed that conversational violence is the norm in such a kind of talk shows since their study found out that in the heat of discussion, participants resort to certain aggressive strategies to attack each other's face so as to get the floor and push the other interviewee to react in a more offensive manner. They also show that the interviewer has played a role in instigating the interviewees to resort to impolite interruptions thus violating the turn taking system of communication and violating Grice's cooperative principles.

Furthermore, Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 1983), Massaabi (2012) has conducted a thematic content analysis to study the rhetoric of excess as an aspect of violence in the construction of political identity and relations in 100 articles pertaining to two different ideologically-oriented Tunisian newspapers, namely "Le Maghreb" and "El Dhamir". The study covered the period from 26 December 2011 to 26 December 2012. Findings have revealed a low level of impartiality violating Gricean maxims of quality and quantity. This tendency was presented as an aspect of violence that could undermine the public's confidence in the media. So to speak violence in written or spoken political discourse has been shown to shape politicians' communicative behaviour. This tendency has been driven by the politicians' ambitions to persuade the public and promote their ideologies while attacking their opponents' ideologies and showing them in negative way.

IV. Methodology

IV.1. Data Collection

The materials used in this study are the transcripts of two televised political talk shows broadcast on three TV stations after the Tunisian Revolution . Two lengthy extracts of them will be considered for the analysis of discursive aspects of verbal violence. All the transcripts were taken from the internet (Yu tube). The extracts selected here are parts of debates between politicians who belong to opposite ideologies (Right and Left representatives) . These extracts were translated from Arabic to English

IV.2. Analytical Framework

The framework employed in this study is that of van Dijk's (2004). In the framework, he introduced 27 ideological strategies among which the fundamental dichotomy of 'self positive-representation' and 'other negative representation' stand out. Positive self-representation or in-group favouritism is a semantic macro- strategy used for the purpose of 'face keeping' or 'impression management' (van Dijk 2004). Negative other-representation is another semantic macro-strategy regarding in-groups and out groups, that is, their division between 'good' and 'bad', superior and inferior, US and THEM. Van Dijk (2004) introduces these two major strategies in the form of an 'ideological square':

Emphasize *Our* good things

Emphasize *Their* bad things

De-emphasize *Our* bad things

De-emphasize *Their* good things (p. 18).

In addition to the general strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation, Van Dijk (2004) introduces 25 more detailed ideological discourse strategies the selected most relevant structures are listed below:

Actor description: The way we describe actors or members of a particular society either in a negative or positive way.

Categorization: Assigning people to different groups.

Consensus: Creating agreement and solidarity

Hyperbole: A device for enhancing and exaggerating meaning.

Implication: Deducing or inferring implicit information.

Irony: Saying something and meaning something else.

Lexicalization: an overall ideological strategy for negative other-representation through the semantic features of the words.

National Self Glorification: A device to create positive self representation by glorifying one's country.

Polarization: Categorizing people as belonging to US with good attributes and THEM with bad attributes.

Presupposition: The common shared knowledge between people or the ideas taken for granted in a proposition.

Vagueness: Creating uncertainty and ambiguity.

Victimization: Telling bad stories about people who do not belong to US

In analyzing the extracts, those strategies used in the selected parts of talk shows are presented in **bold**

IV.3. Main Research Question

Using Van Dijk's (2004) framework, this study intends to analyze a selection of extracts of televised political talk shows drawn from three different Tunisian TV stations broadcast after the Tunisian Revolution so as to explore how politicians belonging to opposite political ideologies interact. In other words, this study seeks to study how differences in points of view about current issues leads to a violent political debates. This will be done through ideological discursive strategies each politician utilizes to persuade the audience by while attacking his/her opponents. . In fact, this study is an attempt to show how current issues discussed in the talk shows are viewed and represented differently by different politicians . Particularly, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the underlying ideology of each politician with respect to the issue discussed ?
2. Based on Van Dijk's (2004) framework, which discursive strategies politician use to exercise violence on each other in an attempt to justify themselves and persuade the nation in order to win their consensus?

V. Sample Analysis and Discussion

Talk Show "Yamin Yassar" on Nesma TV presented by "Hssen BenOthmane"

Extract 1: Transcript of a heated part of a political debate between "Abdel Fattah Mourou" (and attorney and political activist in the Islamist party Ennahdha), and "Abdel Aziz Mzoughi", (an attorney and political activist in the left party).

A.A.M:(...) You want to camouflage and lie to the people. We need to agree about everyone's programme and everyone's style.

A.F.M: (...) Finish your sentence please and give me my turn to talk.

A.A.M: No, I'm not going to let you talk

A.F.M: Why not?

A.A.M: Because you are saying wrong things

A.F.M: (...) This talk is going to lead us nowhere.(...)Our people(...) feel worried about their food and the food of their children. They are worried about their wives. They need us to set institutions for them.

A.A.M: (Interrupting A.F.M): They are afraid of you and of your people standing behind you.

A.F.M: That's not true. This is simply wrong.

A.A.M: With this loose discourse you are setting 'a trap' for the Tunisian people.

A.F.M: Let's not listen to this nonsense. This is a trash.

A.A.M: (interrupting A.F.M) No, never

A.F.M: If I have nerves about someone, I should not attack them. This man wants to exclude part of the Tunisian people from political life. He wants to keep it for himself. For him, the Islamists are not humans; they have no rights to live in Tunisia.

A.A.M: It is ok, my 'brother' (...) I know you are used to this type of pompous discourse, I don't care about this discourse. It is him who wants to complicate things so that he can deceive the people.(...) your project is autocratic in nature and based on the sacred.

A.F.M: They have been actually deceived , and now I'm warning them not to be deceived by somebody like you

V.1. CDA of Extract 1

In the first place, the debate title "Yamin Yassar" or "Right vs Left" already indicates that the audience are expected to have a kind of confrontational nature of political interaction between one politician belonging to the Right wing while the other one belonging to the left wing, two political parties widely known for their extremely opposite political ideologies and backgrounds. This very political discourse is expected to be even a violent one not only because of the title of the debate but especially because audience are in front of two attorneys and political activists commonly known for their eloquence ,their strong sense of belonging to their political parties and their fundamental differences in terms of perceiving the future of the country politically, socially and culturally.

Another contextual element that has fueled the heatedness of the debate is the fact that this debate was broadcasted on Nesma TV , a TV station known for its strong opposition to Islamism. Instead, it supports progressivism and liberalism. In the light of all those context-components (who is speaking, when, what is being said, to whom, and where), debaters seem to embark in a violent political interaction whose main aspect is the mutual exchanges of accusations and insults performed in different textual patterns and discursive structures. These linguistic and discursive strategies are all used to '**demonize**' each other. As an illustration, exchanges of A.A.M are all used to imply a **speech act of accusation** towards his interlocutor A.F.M. This speech act is performed mostly through the use of a set of declarative sentences like "**You** want to camouflage and to lie to people, people are afraid of **you** and of your people standing with **you**" and through assertive sentences like " It is him who wants to complicate things so that he can deceive the people". By the same token, successive occurrences of the second person pronoun '**you**' implies those **direct accusations**. As for change of the **deictic choice** from using the second person pronoun '**you**' to address his interlocutor to using the third person pronoun '**he**', indicates that A.A.M moves from directly insulting his interlocutor to indirectly distance himself from him.

Equally important to shed light on so as to highlight the excess of violence in this extract is A.A.M's use of '**lexicalization**' as an ideological discursive strategy so as to **negatively represent** his interlocutor . This is done through the pejorative lexical register that he has chosen to describe his interactant with. He has described him as someone who "camouflages and lies to people", someone to be " afraid" because he sets "trap for the Tunisian people", deceiving, manipulative who uses "pompous discourse", supporting "autocratic "system", etc. This is to show that his interlocutor is not democratic and belongs to ancient oppressive regimes. In addition to that, A.A.M resorts to '**irony**' as another discursive strategy to ridicule his addressee A.F.M when he says "It is ok my **brother...**". The word "brother" is irrelevant to the overall context of the talk because the two debaters are in reality far from being even friends neither at the personal level nor at the dialogical and political levels. This incongruity between the utterance meaning and the implied one creates an ironic effect which in this context aims at showing the addressee in a negative image and someone to mock just because he is ideologically different from his interlocutor.

As for A.F.M's exchange utterances, they are not different from his debater's exchange utterances in terms of heatedness and excess of violence aspects and effects. To begin with, important to realize that the whole debate seems to take the form of a 'verbal battle' in which one

politician attacks and the other counter attacks. In the same context, A.F.M who has been ironically addressed as a brother to A.A.M used the same discursive strategy of **irony** to counter attack his addressee by addressing him as "**my son**" when he says "you are wrong my son". Additionally, using the same discursive ideological structure namely '**lexicalization**' A.F.M describes his interlocutor using very debasing expressions. He attempts to draw the audience attention that his interlocutor is someone who says trivial things that are "nonsense" and compares them even to "trash". He even invites the audience not to listen to him "Let us not listen to this nonsense, this is a trash" and he also stands as an advisor for his interlocutor through the declarative sentence "If I have nerves about someone, I should not attack them" that implies a **speech act of advice** whose deep illocutionary effect is mocking and insulting because the ideological aim of A.F.M cannot be to advise his political opponent but instead he intends to represent him as someone who seeks revenge especially by using "I have nervous about someone" from the Islamist party 'Ennahdha' and looks for pretexts to attack it. This manipulative strategy may also imply warning as A.F.M through advising A.A.M is implicitly warning him not to attack the Islamist party.

Similar to A.A.M' interventions, exchanges of A.F.M are dominated by **speech acts of accusation** performed directly and indirectly. For instance, in the utterance "This man wants to exclude part of the Tunisian people..." A.F.M uses the expression '**this man**' to talk about his interlocutor A.A.M. This expression that includes a demonstrative pronoun '**this**' already implies that he distances himself from his addressee and denies any relationship with him. This reinforces the ironical effect of the expression that he previously employed to address A.A.M "my son". What is more is that this expression is used in a sentence implying a speech act of an overt accusation "this man wants to exclude part of the Tunisian people from the political life". The accusatory tone of these utterances is intensified by another discursive strategy used to amplify the negative image of A.A.M and demonize him. This discursive strategy is '**hyperbole**' expressed when he says "for him Islamist are '**not humans**', they have no rights to live in Tunisia".

Given these points, important to note here is the fact that the format of this debate has played a significant role in intensifying the violent aspect of the interaction between politicians. This is because this debate seems to be designed to have a confrontational and polarized type of political discourse whereby two politicians belonging to two extremely opposite ideological backgrounds are present within a less intervening debate moderator as it is shown in this debate. So to speak, the context where this talk show has taken place has made it an excessively violent political talk show.

Talk Show "Attasia masa'an" on Attounsiya TV presented by "Moez Ben Gharbiya"

Extract 2: Transcript of a heated part of a political debate between "Beji kaid Sibsi" (the founder of Nidaa Tounis, a liberal political party), and "Walid Bannani", (a leading member in the Islamist party "Ennahdha").

B.C.S: Such people like him are mobilizing things. I believe this is a real 'catastrophe' that this man is a leading figure in Ennahdha. First, he has to know (...), could you please cool down professor?

W.B: First, "Ennahdha movement" doesn't ask Mr Bèji for his consent to choose who can be a leader in the movement and who cannot...

B.C.S: I know you well, you can't go back to Gasserine, your home town. For that, do not distort the image of Ennahdha (...) They have beaten you there.

W.B: The one who has reported the story to you is a falsifier like you.

B.C.S: Laughing Scornfully

W.B/ No, no, is this really what this man is?! someone 86 years old? this must be senility and it is a 'catastrophe' for Tunisia (...) he should have chosen to relax and have some rest or to be sent to an old age hospital.(...)

B.C.S: Do not come to vote for me please. Do not vote for me.

W.B: Do you know the career of Walid Banneni to be able to judge him?.Do you know who Walid Banneni is in Gasserine to talk about him?

M.B.G: OK, Mr Walid. Can we talk .Can other people take their turns to talk?

W.B: Let me tell you, if he continues in that way, I won't let him. He has to give up those dull comments. In Gasserine, when you came with the people of Bourguiba during the Yussfi Crisis you ran away with it, but the people in Gasserine haven't forgotten .They will never accept you in Gasserine.

M.B.G: Let's skip this point

W.B: What you did to the Yussfi in Gasserine?

M.B.G: Mr Walid, Mr Walid

W.B: first ask him to respect

M.B.G: I would like to remind you that we are on a TV show watched by high percentages of viewers.

(Violently, the presenter prevents W.Bannani from talking)

V.2. CDA of Extract 2

Again, this debate is like the preceding one in terms of heatedness and contextual elements that come together to produce a violent political debating style whose main characteristics is the exchanges of accusations and insults between the two politicians. In this debate contextual elements include two speakers belonging to two opposite political parties. These are 'Bèji Kaid Sibs' B.C.S the founder of a progressive and secular political party entitled "Nida'a Tounis" or "the Call for Tunisia" while the other is 'Walid Banneni' W.B a leading figure in the Tunisian Islamist party "Ennahdha".

Here before embarking in analyzing cases of excess of verbal violence manifested in the interventions of each politicians, it is interesting to note that B.C.S has been known for strong opposition the ideological background of "Ennahdha" overtly describing it in many of his public speeches that this Islamist party stands for ignorance, regression of the country's cultural and political acquired freedoms, and so on. For him, Islamism is by definition equal to terrorism in the name of religion. Similarly, W.B the representative of the Islamist party "Ennahdha" accuses B.C.S to have been managing the undemocratic elections in the time of the 'toppled' president 'Ben Ali'.

W.B in his turn considers his interlocutor as an undemocratic politician and he even considers him as an oppressor who used to be a high official in the ministry of the domestic affairs and who was managing the torturing operations of Tunisian people in the time of the dictator 'Ben Ali'. Moreover, this political talk show was broadcasted a pro-liberal movements in Tunisia. This TV station political agendas has been long seen through its through the kind of programs it has been presenting.

With all that in mind, the audience are not expected to have an ordinary political debate where debaters exchange ideas in a peaceful and coherent way. Instead, they are contextually prepared to watch a heated and even violent political interaction. Obviously, this conversational aspect of violence dominates almost all interventions of the two politicians. To demonstrate, while speaking debaters tend to use the same linguistic and textual devices namely the third person pronoun "**he**" the proximate demonstrative pronoun "**this**", expressions like "**this man**", "**such people like him**" to address each other. This deictic and lexical choice implies that each speaker wants to distance himself from his interlocutor and to negate any relationship with him.

Another aspect of conversational violence manifested in the utterances of both politicians are the use of many discursive strategies that essentially aim at attacking each other and degrading each other's image by representing each other's in a negative way. These discursive structures are manifested in many utterances like when B.K.S says " I believe this is "**a catastrophe**" that this man is a leading figure in Ennahdha". This utterance was replied by W.B in a similar way as " this must be a senility and it is **a catastrophe** for Tunisia". Here, both speaker chooses '**hyperbole**' as a manipulative discursive strategy to amplify the negative representation of his interlocutor.

Moreover, conversational violence is further displayed in the political discourse of the two debaters employing more discursive resources. In other words, B.K.S use of '**irony**' when he says "could you please cool down professor?" shows that B.K.S does not really want his interlocutor to calm down. Instead, his real intention is to tease him and to make him look nervous and unable to control his nerves in front of the public. This ironic effect is further intensified through the word "professor" especially when we bear in mind the antagonistic relationship between the two politicians. Irony continues in B.K.S utterance "do not distort the image of Ennahdha" .Here, the speaker seems to advice his interlocutor "not to distort the image" of his political party. Ironically enough, B.K.S who does not care about the image of 'Ennahdha in reality advises a leading member in it not to distort its image. This ironic utterance has indeed a double discursive effect one is irony the other one is to manipulate the partisans of 'Ennahdha" letting them negatively perceive their representative W.B and believe that B.K.S is far from being an enemy of them. Instead, he is someone who respects their political party and believe in it. Accordingly, it is in fact this contrast between the real intentions of the speaker and the words used that creates this ironic effect.

The same implications apply to W.B's utterances when says " This must be senility (...) he should have chosen to relax and have some rest or to be sent to an old age hospital". In other words, W.B' utterances seem to be ironic since he in fact does not care about the health of his political opponent B.K.S but he has just said that to mock him so as to influence the audience and persuade them that this candidate will not be able to lead the country .This is because he is an old person who needs medical care thus pushing them not to vote for him. Here, from a personal point of you, W.B' utterances embed so much verbal violence for he seems to mock the old age of his interlocutor as if being old is something to be ashamed of . This linguistic behavior seems to be immoral, violent and very hurting.

Furthermore, excessive verbal violence is also manifested in the use of several other discursive structures by both politicians. For instance, in W.B's declarative sentence " the one who has reported the story to you is a falsifier like you" a number of pragmatic and discursive

implications are intertwined all together to convey verbal violence. That is to say, in the expression "is a falsifier like you" the speaker who implicitly accuses his interlocutor of being a "falsifier" has no proof for that. That is why his utterance seems to be a kind of '**presupposition**' being a discursive strategy whose main aim is to let the audience take for granted the idea that B.K.S is a falsifier. In addition, in this utterance the speaker seems to use '**vagueness**' being another discursive strategy whose aim in this context is to let the audience distrust B.K.S and refrain from supporting him in the coming presidential elections.

Likewise, to counter attack his interlocutor B.K.S uses similar discursive strategies to damage (WB) face and demonize him in front of the public. For example '**vagueness**' '**implications**' and '**presuppositions**' are all conveyed when he says "I know you well, you can't go back to Gasserine, your home town (...) they have beaten you there (...) you will never be accepted in Gasserine". In fact, the recurrent use of the second person pronoun '**you**' intensifies the accusatory tone of B.K.S towards his interlocutor who is for him not welcomed in his home town. As for reasons why he is not welcomed, he does not state any reason. This semantic ambiguity clearly conveyed in the use of passive in the utterance "will never be accepted in Gasserine" serves to dominate the interlocutor and manipulate the audience letting them believe that his interlocutor who is not accepted in his hometown cannot be accepted by Tunisian people for he is untrustworthy.

To summarize, excessive verbal violence in such excerpts of Tunisian political debates is conveyed through a number of pragma-linguistic devices and discursive strategies. One thing to point out here is the fact that context components did play a crucial role in exploring, interpreting and explaining instances of excess of verbal violence in the Tunisian studied political talk shows.

Conclusion

A deep examination of the transcripts through van Dijk's (2004) comprehensive framework revealed that Tunisian politicians tend to be communicatively violent while attending a political talk show with politicians who belong to the opposite ideological background. In fact, in the course of defending their ideas with the aim to influence the audience with their political agendas, politicians of each party utilized different subtle ideological discourse structures all of which could be classified under the two major strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Lexicalization, polarization, vagueness and irony were frequently used as effective devices in persuasion and justification. The politicians, as political figures, seek 'legitimization', which according to Cap (2008) is "a major objective pursued by a political speaker seeking justification of the proclaimed actions". Van Dijk's (2004) framework, as a cognitive approach out of which the 27 ideological discourse structures arise, proved to be an appropriate design which has accounted for many of the techniques by which politicians try to control and penetrate into the mind of their audience to reach their goal. These are discursive structures applied to enhance, mitigate, avoid or exacerbate an issue. The results of this study showed that, particularly in political discourses, CDA provides a great opportunity to discover the realities which according to Fairclough (1995) has been distorted and naturalized as "non-ideological common sense" (p.27). It also helps critical discourse scholars to make a more specific contribution to get more insights into the crucial role of discourse in the reproduction of violence, dominance and inequality.

Concluding Notes

Taking a distance from the Post-Revolution discourse in relation to freedom of speech as a main newly acquired freedom, one can easily discern that Tunisian people really need to learn the real sense of freedom of speech, and democracy. They should understand that freedom of speech goes hand in hand with responsibility. We should be responsible for what we say. We should learn how to criticize, how to express our discontentment in a civilized way. This freedom should not be a source of violence and verbal abuse. In sum, freedom of speech as practiced by Tunisians nowadays not only by lay people but also by the elite represents a new kind of dictatorship, a dictatorship of the extremist people. This kind of dictatorship is not less dangerous than that of the governor. It is dangerous because under such kind of dictatorship the state loses its weight. As a result, people feel insecure. It may lead to more dangerous forms of violence. If people do not respect each other and if people do not feel responsible of what they say, we can no longer talk about a democracy, but chaos will take place.

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