LYING AS A SPEECH ACT. A SOCIODISCURSIVE AND INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

LILIANA HOINĂRESCU[1]

Abstract. The paper explores the dialogical representation of lying in the political discourse. It aims to analyse the instances of lying as a speech act in spontaneous, face-to-face communication and to evaluate its offensive and self-prejudicial potential. The examples are taken from three recorded presidential election debates, from three cultural spaces: 1) Ségolène Royal – Nicolas Sarkozy (2007); 2) Traian Băsescu – Crin Antonescu – Mircea Geoană (2009); 3) Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (2016). Through this comparative analysis, the study intends to grasp the cognitive and sociodiscursive function of lying as well as its cross-cultural variations and constants.

Keywords: the speech act of lying, the accusation of lying, representation, misrepresentation, metarepresentation, ethos.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a previous article (see Hoinărescu 2015), we analyzed lying in relation to the construction of (social) identity in the Romanian political discourse, on the basis of authentic political statements reproduced in the on-line press. Direct speech representation in media discourse is conditioned by several factors: rhetorical, intertextual and semiotic (see Fetzer and Weizman 2006; Hoinărescu 2015: 29). The goal of the present paper is to extend the analysis, by examining lying as a speech act in spontaneous, face-to-face interaction and by observing its cultural variation. The data are provided by three recorded presidential debates: 1) Ségolène Royal – Nicolas Sarkozy (2007); 2) Traian Băsescu – Crin Antonescu – Mircea Geoană (2009); 3) Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (2016). The discussion about lying as a speech act aims at integrating speech act theory into discourse

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analysis, following Moeschler's assumption according to which "speech acts are not isolated moves in communication: they appear in more global units of communication, defined as conversations or discourses" (see Moeschler 2002: 240). After some brief theoretical considerations, we shall analyse each example, trying to grasp the dialogic representation of lying, in its cognitive, sociolinguistic and interactional dimension. The pragmatic and rhetorical features of lying, as well as the sociocultural similarities and differences, will be summed up in the section of final remarks and conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS. THE SPEECH ACT OF LYING

The issue of lying is not a simple one. In spite of the fact that lying is a very common discursive phenomenon, at every level of social life, there is no consensus regarding either its common understanding or its scholarly definition. By lying one understands a spectrum of discursive attitudes, such as deception, duplicity, manipulation, insincerity, falsehood; therefore it is difficult to provide a definition of the concept which captures each specific meaning and individual features.

The most widely accepted definition of lying, namely "a false statement made with the intention to deceive" (see, among others, Carson 2006, 2010, Mahon 2008, Fallis 2009, 2010, Lenclud 2011, Meibauer 2005, 2011, 2014), which has been attested since St. Augustine treatises[2], reveals two main emergent directions of analysis, both of them very salient as anthropological issues:

1. *Lying is a form of falsehood/falsity, a perversion of truth*. In order to recognize lying, it is necessary to define and recognize truth. The relation between truth and falsehood is both cognitive, philosophical (ontological, epistemological, ethical) and theological. The crucial problem is whether truth is independent of human mind, immutable and eternal, or it is related to human mind capacity of meta/representing reality, of creating proper, verified representations, validated by socially authorised versions. The first outlook associates truth with superior knowledge (particularly clear in Plato and neo-Platonic schools, in *Gospels* and Christian theology). The ultimate scope of the (sacred) science or religion, of every philosophical school, is the veritable knowledge, which is opposed to *doxa*, false knowledge based on human opinion. Truth can also be defined in a more realistic way as a correspondence between thought and words, discourse and facts. However, if human mind could create and trust false representations, and reality is a cultural and ideological construction, with variable norms and beliefs, truth and falsehood become by their very nature ambiguous and relative concepts and therefore mutually non-exclusive. Besides, within this conception, each individual, theoretically, has the right to assert his/her own version of reality and to oppose others' or the authorised version[3].

2. *Lying is a form of deception*. Since Antiquity, lying has been essentially associated with duplicity and deception, while the untrue statements have been rather qualified as mistakes (see also Fallis 2010). The study of lying has been centred on (social,

[2] St. Augustin's conception on mendacity was developed in two treaties: *On Lying* [*De mendacio*], written in 395 DC, and *Against lying* [*Contra mendacium*], 420 DC. For a theoretical presentation, see, among others, Sarr (2010); Gramigna (2013).

[3] For the relationship between lying and truth, see, among others, Lenclud (2009). For the social and cultural expressions of lying, see Mecke (ed.) (2007).

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political) ethics and nowadays also on (social) psychology, since deception is qualified as an antisocial behaviour, which is negatively defined and banned in every culture. Nevertheless, there are situations in which lying is morally admitted and even recommended. Across centuries, such cases that depict the ambiguous ethical profile of lying were analysed by philosophers and thinkers who tried to give a theoretical but also a practical answer: the existence of socially accepted lies, the right to lie in political discourses, lying for State reasons (see especially *The Republic* of Plato or *The Prince* of Machiavelli), and legitimate and authorized lies, characterized by their inherently altruistic purpose (see for example the essay of Kant, *On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy*)[4].

Linguistics as a discipline has no tradition in analysing lying, since the sincerity condition cannot be captured by linguistic markers. Pragmatics is far more adequate for this purpose, with its interest in intentionality and reception, cognitivism, and contextual meaning. However, even the pragmatic description is problematic because lying lacks an explicit performative to indicate the illocutionary force and thus cannot be included in the classic taxonomy of speech acts (see also Meibauer 2005: 1374–1375).

In fact, Austin's theoretical model does not cover "unserious" speech acts as fiction and lying, which are considered to be "parasite" speech acts (cf. Reboul, Moeschler 1998). This hypothesis was highly criticized, given the universality of the act of lying[5]. Conversely, Searle has considered lies and fictional utterances as assertions pretending to be true (Searle 1989/1969: 42–49). Nevertheless, the description of lying within the general framework of Searle's theory of speech acts, both from the illocutionary and perlocutionary point of view, cannot satisfy the felicity conditions stipulated by its normative model and consequently leads to paradoxical metadiscursive judgments (see Reboul 1992/1994, 2002: 60–63)[6]. Only Gricean and cognitive pragmatics have allowed the description of a series of

[4] For more critical observations regarding the history of political philosophy and its relations with lying, see Strauss and Cropsey eds. (1987); Markland (2012), Sarr (2010).

[5] See Lenclud (2011: 1): «Parmi les questions suscitées par le mensonge, il en est une qui fait figure d'énigme: comment se fait-il qu'étant impossible en toute logique à universaliser, le mensonge soit de fait universel? Loin d'être un parasite du langage, comme se voyait contraint de l'estimer John L. Austin en vertu des présupposés d'une approche pragmatique purement linguistique, il est un acte tristement quotidien. Le mensonge paraît, en effet, inhérent à l'usage du langage; or l'usage du langage en proscrit la généralisation».

[6] "If a speaker produces an utterance which is a lie, it is necessary for the success of the lie that the illocutionary act of assertion should be successful. But if the perlocutionary act of lying is successful, then the illocutionary act of assertion is not successful" (Reboul 1994: 297). See also Reboul (2002: 60-63): "It seems impossible to describe lies in terms of speech acts and yet it seems rather weird to deny that lying is accomplishing a speech act. Let us suppose that lies are indeed a type of speech act. It seems clear, given that deception is involved, that lies cannot be illocutionary acts. This, however, does not mean that they cannot be another type of speech act and that they cannot have felicity conditions. Let us suppose that this is the case. Lies are perlocutionary acts and their felicity condition is that the intention of the liar should be satisfied, i.e. the hearer believes that the propositional content of the lie is true. Under speech acts theory, any utterance must correspond to the accomplishment of an illocutionary act. I will here adopt the simplifying assumption that all lies correspond to the performance of an illocutionary act of assertion. However, this cannot be the case, given that a defining condition of assertion is the sincerity condition, which is obviously not satisfied in lies. However, it does seem that if a lie is to be successful, the corresponding assertion also should be successful. But this cannot be the case if the sincerity condition is not satisfied. Thus, it does not seem to be the case that lies can be given a satisfying description in Searlian speech acts theory."

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speech acts which could not satisfy the sincerity condition, among which lying or irony, by emphasizing the inferential nature of verbal communication to the detriment of its presumed normative character. Grice's theory (1975) has opened the way for cognitive approaches, which point out that communicative processes involve several cognitive levels: representation, misrepresentation, metarepresentation (for a discussion, see Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995, Sperber 1994, Wilson 1999, Reboul 2002). In fact, decoding and understanding lying activate a metarepresentational process (cf. Reboul 2002: 60). Accordingly, these studies allow the description of lying as a metacommunicative act too. Empirical studies particularly underlined that lying is a multi-layered metapragmatic act related to the strategic manipulation of the "metalinguistics of truth, i.e. using language to comment on language" (Wilson 2004: 152; see also Wortham and Locher 1999). The theorists situated in the post-Gricean tradition consider lying as a speech act of insincere assertion and point out its relationship with other discursive aspects like implicature, reference and deixis, presupposition, information structure and discourse structure (cf. Meibauer 2011: 277–279).

If lying is a speech act of insincere assertion, the recognition and evaluation of an utterance as a lie in interaction implies a metacommunicative and reactive act, associated with disagreement, refusal and negation. By creating a cognitive distortion, lying naturally implies a reactive response, although not always verbalised because of social constraints. An interactional analysis as we intend to undertake is interested in showing the response to what speakers consider and assess to be a lie.

From the politeness theories perspective, (accusation of) lying could also be defined as an offensive act (FTA)[7], which involves the construction of the speakers' public identity or public image through interaction (see Meibauer 2014, Hoinărescu 2015: 26–28). As described by social psychological theories, the concept of identity has a triadic representation, which corresponds to three social levels, namely the *individual*, *the interpersonal* and *the group level*. Another terminology distinguishes between *personal, relational* and *collective level* of identity (for a detailed discussion, see Spencer-Oatey 2007: 641). Therefore, the notion of face, which is defined by Goffman as "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (Goffman 1967: 5, quoted in Spencer-Oatey 2007: 643), overlaps with the relational and collective levels of the concept of identity. Attacking the "face" of a political actor means attacking his public/social identity, which is mandatory to be perceived in positive terms. Moreover, in rhetoric, theory of argumentation and (critical) discourse analysis, the notion of identity is equivalent to the concept of *ethos*[8], defined as the discursive image the orator constructs for an audience, which can be very different from the real self-representation of the speaker (cf. Amossy 2010, Maingueneau 1999, 2000, Charaudeau 2005: 89, Walton Macagno 2011)[9]. In political discourse, which is the object of our investigation, the concept of identity is especially concerned with *ethos*, i.e. the discursive image of the speaker. As it is well known, in the political arena, the public image of a certain politician is constructed by a professional team, to reflect positive social attributes and to respond to public expectations,

[7] See the seminal theoretical model of politeness elaborated by Brown and Levinson (1987).

[8] As it is well known, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle described the three modes of persuasion: the appeal to *ethos* (based on the character, reputation, credibility of the speaker), to *logos* (based on logic or reason) and to *pathos* (based on the emotion activated in the audience).

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collective projections and mental representations (cf. Amossy, Herschberg Pierrot 1997: 43-47). The politician's ethos is shaped through the social imaginary (Charaudeau 2005: 90). Moreover, the political image is associated with political branding, defined as the new form of political marketing (see Scammell 2007: 176). Constructing a liar's public image (a discursive image) to somebody in the political arena, where the communicative context requires qualities like credibility, sincerity and good faith, is a powerful strategy of contesting his/her status, his/her right to act in the public sphere.

3. THE CASE STUDY

Presidential debates are forms of political discourse with some transcultural features, despite their national variation (see especially McKinney and Spialek 2017, who summarized these traits). The first televised face-to-face presidential debate took place in 1960 between candidates John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon and "inaugurated what has now become an institution in Presidential campaign communication" (McKinney and Spialek 2017: 2). As a formal, institutional discursive genre, debates require strict rules, a very precise format (or "script"). Participants agree on a communicative contract, which journalists have the obligation to maintain in their pre-established frameworks. Presidential debates reach the largest viewing audience, creating a special type of media show. During these confrontations, each competitor tries to win by exploiting his/her rhetorical and argumentative skills. Research has shown that presidential debates have a major influence on viewers' perceptions of the candidate image and on voting preferences, in many cases the winner of the debate being also the winner of the presidential elections. Furthermore, debate viewing enhances citizens' sense of political efficiency and may activate their latent civic engagement and normative democratic attitudes (see McKinney and Spialek 2017: 3; McKinney and Rill 2009: 393). In what follows, we try to analyze the rhetoric of lying, its strategies and efficiency on the basis of three presidential debates from three different cultural spaces.

3.1. Debate Ségolène Royal – Nicolas Sarkozy, 2 May 2007[10]

(1) **Ségolène Royal**: Là, on atteint le summum de l'immoralité politique. Je suis scandalisée par ce que je viens d'entendre, parce que jouer avec le handicap comme vous venez de le faire est proprement scandaleux. [...] Laissez de côté les tribunaux, les démarches pour les parents qui en ont assez de leurs souffrances, d'avoir vu leur enfant ne pas pouvoir être inscrit lors des rentrées scolaires lorsque vous étiez au Gouvernement. Laissez cela de côté. La façon dont vous venez de faire de l'immoralité politique par rapport à une politique qui a été détruite, à laquelle je tenais particulièrement, parce que je savais à quel point cela soulageait les parents de voir leurs enfants accueillis à l'école. Vous avez cassé cette politique! Et aujourd'hui, vous promettez en disant aux parents qu'ils iront devant

[10] In some cases, we have completed and corrected the French transcription from *Liberation* following the recorded TV debate. Brackets [ ] in the English version transcript are introduced by us and indicate overlaps.

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les tribunaux?! **Tout n'est pas possible dans la vie politique, ce discours, cet écart entre le discours et les actes, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit d'enfant handicapé, ce n'est pas acceptable.** Et je suis très en colère. Et les parents et les familles…
Nicolas Sarkozy: Calmez-vous et ne me montrez pas du doigt avec cet index pointé, parce que franchement…
Ségolène Royal: Non, je ne me calmerai pas! Je ne me calmerai pas!
Nicolas Sarkozy : Pour être Président de la République, il faut être calme.
Ségolène Royal: Non, pas quand il y a des injustices! Il y a des colères qui sont parfaitement saines, parce qu'elles correspondent à la souffrance des gens. Il y a des colères que j'aurai même quand je serai Présidente de la république…
Nicolas Sarkozy: Ce sera gai! Ce sera gai!
Ségolène Royal: Parce que je sais les efforts qu'ont fait les familles, qu'ont fait les écoles pour accueillir les enfants qui aujourd'hui ne le sont plus. **Je ne laisserai pas l'immoralité du discours politique reprendre le dessus.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: Je ne sais pas pourquoi Mme Royale, d'habitude calme, a perdu ses nerfs…
Ségolène Royal: Non, je n'ai pas perdu mes nerfs. Je suis en colère. Ça n'est pas pareil. Pas de mépris, M. Sarkozy, pas de mépris. Je n'ai pas perdu mes nerfs, je suis en colère. Vous permettez? Il y a des colères très saines et très utiles.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Je ne sais pas pourquoi Mme Royal, s'énerve...
Ségolène Royal: Je ne m'énerve pas. Je suis en colère.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Qu'est-ce que cela doit être quand vous êtes énervée!
Ségolène Royal: Je ne suis jamais énervée… J'ai beaucoup de sang-froid.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Très bien, écoutez, vous venez de le perdre…
Ségolène Royal: Non, justement pas. **Je suis en colère face à l'injustice et face au mensonge.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Madame Mme Royal ose employer le mot "immoral". C'est un mot fort.*
Ségolène Royal: Oui.
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Madame Royal se permet d'employer ce mot parce que j'ai dit que je souhaitais que tous les enfants ayant un handicap soient scolarisés en milieu scolaire "normal". Madame Royal a qualifié mon propos de larmes à l'œil, sous entendant par là que la sincérité n'était que de son côté et que, de mon côté, il ne devait y avoir que du mensonge – c'est le même terme qu'elle a employé. Ce n'est pas une façon de respecter son concurrent. Je ne me serai jamais permis de parler de vous comme cela, madame.*
Ségolène Royal: **Parce que moi, je ne mens pas et je ne prétends pas faire ce que j'ai détruit avant.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Madame, je ne pense pas que vous élevez la dignité du débat politique, en m'acuzant d' être menteur*.
Ségolène Royal: Si, c'est très digne la question du handicap.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Si je n'avais pas moi-même, par conviction, parlé de la scolarisation des enfants handicapés, cela faisait une heure et demie que nous débattions, on n'en avait pas parlé. J'ai le droit de parler du handicap. Ce n'est pas votre monopole. *J'ai le droit d'être sincère dans mon engagement et d'être bouleversé par la situation d'enfants qui aimeraient être scolarisés. Je ne mets pas en cause votre sincérité, madame, ne mettez pas en cause ma moralité.*

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Ségolène Royal: C'est votre action que je mets en cause.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Ainsi, la dignité du débat politique sera préservée. Mais au moins on aura vu que vous vous mettez en colère bien facilement, vous sortez de vos gonds. Le Président de la République a des responsabilités lourdes, très lourdes.
http://www.liberation.fr/france/2007/05/02/la-transcription-exhaustive-du-debat_9771 // http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xqid78

Ségolène Royal: Here we reached the pinnacle of political immorality. I am shocked by what I've just heard, because playing with disability as you have just done is scandalous. [...] So let's not hear about putting parents through Courts, they've suffered enough at not being able to register their children when you were in the Government. Let's not hear about it. It's politically immoral for you to use an issue like that after destroying a policy that I cared very much about. Because I know what a comfort it was for those parents to see their children in school. And you broke that policy! And today you come with promises like this by telling parents that they will go to Court?! In politics, it is not possible anything, **this gap between what you say and what you've done** [discourse and acts] **is unacceptable, especially when it comes to disabled children.** And I am very angry. And those parents...
Nicolas Sarkozy: Please, calm down. Stop pointing your finger at me, [because sincerely...
Ségolène Royal: [No, I will not calm down. I will not calm down…
Nicolas Sarkozy: [To be president of the Republic, you have to be calm.
Ségolène Royal: No, not when there is injustice! There is anger and that is perfectly healthy because it mirrors the sufferings of the people. There is the anger that I'll feel even when I become President of the Republic...
Nicolas Sarkozy: [It will be funny! It will be funny!
Ségolène Royal: [Because I know the efforts that families have made, what schools have done to accommodate children who today are no longer so. **I will not let the immorality of political discourse take over it.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: I don't know why Ms. Royale, usually calm, lost her temper…
Ségolène Royal: [No, I didn't lose my temper. I'm angry. It's not the same. No disdain, Mr. Sarkozy, no disdain. I didn't lose my temper, I am angry. Is that allowed? Anger is healthy and useful.
Nicolas Sarkozy: I do not know why Mrs. Royal is getting upset...
Ségolène Royal: I'm not getting upset. [I'm angry.
Nicolas Sarkozy: [Must be really something when you do, then!
Ségolène Royal: I never lose my temper! I know how to keep my temper.
Nicolas Sarkozy: Well, listen, you just lost it...
Ségolène Royal: No, definitely not. **I am angry at injustice and lies.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Ms. Royal dares to use the word "immoral". That's a strong word.*
Ségolène Royal: Yes.
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Ms Royal allows herself to used that word because I said that I wanted all disabled children to go to "normal" schools. Ms. Royal called my*

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statement "tear-jerking", suggesting that she has a monopoly on sincerity and that everything I say is lies. That is the term she used. This is not a way to show respect for your competitor. I'll never allow myself to talk about you like this, Madam.
Ségolène Royal: **Because I do not lie and I do not pretend to do that I destroyed before.**
Nicolas Sarkozy: *Madam, I do not think you raise the dignity of the political debate by accusing me to be a liar.*
Ségolène Royal: Yes, the disability issues are very worthy.
Nicolas Sarkozy: [...] I have the right to speak of disability. This is not your monopoly. *I have the right to be sincere in my commitment to be upset by the situation of children who would be enrolled. I do not question your sincerity, Madame, do not put into question my morality.*
Ségolène Royal: It is your actions that I put into question.
Nicolas Sarkozy: So, the dignity of the political debate will be preserved. But at least we have seen that you get angry very easily, you leave your hinges. The President of the Republic has heavy responsibilities, very heavy.
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xqid78

The debate between Ségolène Royal (SR) and Nicolas Sarkozy (NS) points out very clearly the sociodiscursive functions of lying and also its ethical implications. The debate illustrates as well how the accusation of lying acts as a double edged weapon and becomes a risky argumentative tool. At a certain point in the debate, Ségolène Royal directly accuses her political opponent of lying in the question of the access of disabled children to special or public schools. Ségolène Royal motivates her firm reaction by the contemptuous, deceptive component of lying, which she defines: "a gap between discourse and acts". The policy of Sarkozy's government indicates such an intolerable gap and she does not hesitate to denounce it publicly. She also evaluates her competitor's statements as being mendacious ("lies"), therefore ascribing him the image of an immoral politician. In her opinion, the unethical component of lying, viewed as "the pinnacle of political immorality", legitimates the negative assessment as well as her strong and firm emotional reaction. Lying is equivalent almost to an insult all the more since the issue regards public policies. The accusation of lying is directly expressed, without any mitigating device. As mentioned in the theoretical presentation, from the politeness theory perspective, accusing someone of lying is a very aggressive act of denigration, which can affect not only the interlocutor's face, but also the face of the speaker himself/herself, who could be qualified as a blunt, rude and impolite person. Nicolas Sarkozy sought to exploit exactly this component of the metacommunicative act of lying. In his turn, he accuses Ségolène Royal of being impulsive and impolite, disrespecting her competitor and degrading the dignity of the political debate. Bringing into question the morality of her competitor is interpreted as a personal attack (*ad hominem* fallacy), an unfair discursive strategy used to discredit his public face. Sarkozy counter-argues by invoking the inappropriate use of an offensive word in a matter of misrepresentation of facts. What Ségolène Royal calls "lie" is just a different approach with different solutions to a sensitive public issue on which he was entitled to express a point view. *NS: Ms Royal used that word because I said that I wanted all disabled children to go to "normal" schools. Ms. Royal called my statement "tear-jerking", suggesting that she has a monopoly on sincerity and that everything I say is lies. That is the term she used. It*

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shows disrespect. The exchange is very passionate and evolves to a metacommunicative and metapragmatic dispute, in which each competitor defends his/her stance. Both competitors use the emotional spectrum of lying to construct their public image and to attack the opponent's public image.

In opposition to Sarkozy's ethos, Ségolène Royal tries to construct for herself a humanitarian and ethical ethos of a politician who does not tolerate lying and injustice, especially directed towards disabled children, the most vulnerable social category. Sarkozy exploits this point of debate to construct himself the ethos of a rational and balanced politician, who is able to reject unjust attacks, keeping calm and polite, a politician with a flexible thinking and attitude. At the same time, he depicts Ségolène Royale's public image as a nervous, impulsive, ideologically rigid politician, who is inadequate for the difficult responsibility of the presidential function. It is also important to notice that he addresses his critical observation at the 3rd person, by placing himself in the position of a commentator: *NS: Ms. Royal dares to use the word "immoral". That's a strong word.* The switch from the elocutive or allocutive modality (namely personalised utterances performed in the first and second person, attesting speaker's discursive engagement or interlocutors' co-participation and solidarity) to the delocutive (or impersonal, objective) modality has two effects: firstly, it mitigates the negative remark through the indirect form of address and protects speaker's face; secondly, it increases the critical force of the observation, since the relational or emotional involvement is apparently suspended (see Charaudeau 2005: 134-138; de Chanay 2009: 29). The example reveals how a politician can use lying as an argumentative strategy to construct and destroy his/her opponent's ethos. Both competitors have the right to defend their position, from two different and opposed perspectives: lying as a communicative and social violation, on the one hand, and the accusation of lying as a face threatening act, a very aggressive act of denigration, on the other hand.

3.2. Debate Traian Băsescu – Crin Antonescu – Mircea Geoană (2009)[11]

(2) **Traian Băsescu**: Domnule Crin Antonescu...
Crin Antonescu: Să fie ăla dosarul meu?
Traian Băsescu: Nu, este al meu. **Şi dacă sunteţi cinstit**, am rugămintea să citiţi finalul acestei expertize...
Crin Antonescu: *Sunt, sunt. Sunt foarte cinstit*.
Traian Băsescu: **Daca sunteţi, cumva, cinstit**, am rugămintea să citiţi finalul acestei expetize care se află la Instanţe (referitor la dosarul Flota). Dacă vreţi şi cu cifre, iat-o aici! Doar dacă sunteţi cinstit.
Crin Antonescu: Domnu Băsescu, v-am zis. Eu sunt cinstit, cu idei şi cu caracter. Să lăsăm cifrele. Eu nu mi le doresc.
Traian Băsescu: Rugămintea mea este să citiţi concluzia expertizei de 500 de pagini în cazul Flota.
Crin Antonescu: Toată?
Traian Băsescu: Nu, nu, numai partea cu roşu, că am vrut să vă ajut să înţelegeţi. ((aplauze)) [...]

[11] The recorded TV debate was transcribed by us. Brackets [ ] indicate overlaps.

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Crin Antonescu: Nu, staţi puţin. Păi, domnu' Boc nu-i aici? Are un om domnu' Preşedinte să-i citească aceste lucruri ((aplauze)) [...]. Eu nu ştiu despre ce e vorba. Sunt dispus. E vorba de vreun dosar al meu, sau de un dosar al dvs.?
Traian Băsescu: De-al dumneavoastră. Citiţi!
Crin Antonescu: Ia să vedem: „În urma studierii documentelor de la dosarul cauzei, concluzia experţilor este că: a.) rezultatul derulării contractului de management cu grupul de firme KLEVNES"... Ăsta e acela care v-aţi numit ca ministru reprezentant...
Traian Băsescu: Da, citiţi, am rugămintea să citiţi.
Crin Antonescu: [...] În relaţia BAHAMA profitabil…Întrucât CNM PETROMIN SA a înregistrat un profit…
Traian Băsescu: Un profit, da. Da.
Crin Antonescu: Deci este privitor la dumneavoastră.
Traian Băsescu: Da. **Nu, era privitor la minciuna dumneavoastră.**
Crin Antonescu: *Domnule Băsescu, eu nu am spus nicio minciună, eu v-am spus doar, domnu' ... am spus la Cluj că nu mai aveţi cu ce naviga. Nu-i nicio minciună, n-aveţi cu ce. Doar dacă emigraţi.*
Traian Băsescu: Domnu' Crin Antonescu...
[...]
Traian Băsescu: **Aş vrea să-i spun domnului Crin Antonescu că nu se câştigă alegerile minţind.** Şi aici este expertiza în celebrul caz Flota care arată că cei 108 inculpaţi n-au produs niciun prejudiciu, iar Domnia Sa nu face decât să susţină înscenarea pregătită de Adrian Năstase în 2004. Acesta este documentul care a dus la închiderea dosarului legat de Flotă. O dată. În al doilea rând, domnul Antonescu spunea la Cluj, în discuţia pe care am avut-o, că dânsul a fost pentru menţinerea trupelor în Irak şi a avut o poziţie contrară primului ministru. Aşa este, domnu'?
Crin Antonescu: Am criticat acţiunea politică din acel moment a primului ministru şi a ministrului apărării [...]
Traian Băsescu: **Domnu' Antonescu, pentru că [nu putem câştiga alegeri cu minciuni...**
Crin Antonescu: [*Sper că nu mai puteţi…*
Traian Băsescu: …Da, iată scrisoarea dvs. către Emil Boc, în calitate de şef al grupului PNL.
Crin Antonescu: Ia să auzim!
Traian Băsescu: „Partidul Naţional Liberal vă solicită public să vă raliaţi deciziei de retragere a trupelor româneşti din Irak, anunţată de primul ministru al României, dl Călin Popescu Tăriceanu". **Încă o dată vă spun, domnu' Crin Antonescu, că nu se câştigă alegerile minţind**. Flota – aveţi documente oficiale că susţineţi în continuare ce a susţinut Adrian Năstase, Irakul – este o minciună pe care aţi spus-o. [...]
Crin Antonescu: [...] *Nu e niciun fel de incoerenţă, niciun fel de minciună! Eu nu am spus decât că m-am opus la momentul de atunci, aprilie 2006, acţiunii primului ministru şi al ministrului apărării. Ce e minciună, şi ce e neclar ?*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usTgdFilvNk

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Traian Băsescu: Mister Crin Antonescu...
Crin Antonescu: Could that be my file?
Traian Băsescu: No, it's mine. **And if you're honest**, I would kindly ask you to read the end of this expertise…
Crin Antonescu: *I am. I am very honest*.
Traian Băsescu: **If you are somehow honest**, I request that you read the end of this expertise which is in Court (concerning the Fleet file). If you want it with numbers, here it is! **Only if you are honest**.
Crin Antonescu: *Mr. Băsescu, I told you. I am honest*, with ideas and character. Leave figures aside. I do not want them.
Traian Băsescu: My request is to read the conclusions of the 500 page expertise in the Fleet case.
Crin Antonescu: All of it?
Traian Băsescu: No, no, only the one highlighted in red, because I wanted to help you understand ((Clapping)) [...]
Crin Antonescu: No, wait a minute. Mr. Boc is not here? Mr. President has a man to read these things [...]. ((Clapping)) I have no clue what is all about. I'm willing. Is this related to a file of mine, or one of yours?
Traian Băsescu: One of yours. Read!
Crin Antonescu: Let's see: "Having studied the documents in the case file, the experts' conclusion is that: a.) The outcome of the management contract with KLEVNES group"… It is the one in which you appointed yourself the representative of the Minister…
Traian Băsescu: Yes, read, I request that you read.
Crin Antonescu: [...] The BAHAMA profitable relationship... As CNM PETROMIN SA had registered a profit...
Traian Băsescu: A profit, yes. Yes.
Crin Antonescu: So, it concerns you.
Traian Băsescu: Yes. No, **it concerns your lie.**
Crin Antonescu: Mr. Băsescu, *I haven't tell any lie, I've just said*, Sir... *I said in Cluj that you have nothing to sail with. There is no lie, you simply do not have what to navigate with. Unless you emigrate*.
Traian Băsescu: Mr. Crin Antonescu...
[...]
Traian Băsescu: I would like to tell Mr. Crin Antonescu that **lying will not help him win the elections.** And here's the expertise in the famous Fleet Case showing that the 108 defendants did not cause any injury, and he [Mr. Antonescu] does nothing else than support the staging prepared by Adrian Năstase in 2004. This is the document that led to the closure of the file in the Starfleet case. This is the first point. Secondly, during the conversation I had with Mr. Antonescu at Cluj, he was in favor of keeping the Iraq troops and found himself in opposition with the Prime Minister. That's right, Sir?
Crin Antonescu: I have criticized the political action taken that time by the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister [...]
Traian Băsescu: Mr. Antonescu, **because [we cannot win the elections by telling lies...**

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Crin Antonescu: [I hope *you can no more ...*
Traian Băsescu: Yes, here's your letter to Emil Boc, as head of the Liberal group.
Crin Antonescu: Let's hear it!
Traian Băsescu: "The National Liberal Party asks you to rally public decision to withdraw the Romanian troops from Iraq, announced by the Romanian Prime Minister, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu". **Once again I am telling you, Mr. Crin Antonescu, no one wins the elections by lying**. The Fleet – you have the official documents that you continue to support exactly what Adrian Năstase claimed, Iraq – **a lie that you told**. [...]
Crin Antonescu: […] *There's no inconsistency, no lie! I only said I opposed the action of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense at the time, in April 2006. Where is the lie, and what is it unclear?*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usTgdFilvNk

The second example is taken from the presidential debate between Traian Băsescu – Crin Antonescu – Mircea Geoană (2009). The president in office, Traian Băsescu (TB), is obliged to have a defensive, but also a very balanced attitude, since he represents not only his person, but also the presidential institution. Thus, he is expected to maintain his composure during the debate, in spite of his competitors' provocations and challenges. In example (2), he denounces one of his opponents, Crin Antonescu (CA), as a liar, as a politician whose credibility is affected by his repeated untrue statements and lies. Traian Băsescu constructs his competitor's negative image through a very cautious speech, designed to suspend his responsibility for the offensive act of the accusation of lying. First of all, he brings textual evidence, official documents to prove that his competitor lied at least twice. Secondly, he does not express the accusation of lying directly, but implies it. He speaks in positive terms about his opponent's honesty to imply his dishonesty: *if you're honest* or *If you are somehow honest.* Furthermore, he formulates the accusation of lying in very general and impersonal terms, repeating the generic statement three times with small changes. The statement thus becomes a kind of leitmotiv of his intervention*: lying will not help winning the elections.* This generic repeated statement has the function to persuade the public as a formulaic expression and allows Traian Băsescu to place himself in an objective and neutral position. One can notice the same strategy used by Nicolas Sarkozy, i.e. the transition from the elocutive/allocutive modality to the delocutive modality, which corresponds to the negative politeness strategy of impersonalisation. Another strategy is to request Crin Antonescu to read himself the documents that prove his presumed lies: in this way, the competitor is faced with denouncing himself, in his own words. Hence the paraverbal and corporal rhetoric could betray Crin Antonescu's embarrassment and hesitations and have a psychological effect on the audience. Using these strategies, beside his institutional power, the president in office gains discourse power and moral domination over his competitor (a sort of teacher – student relationship). Forced to be in a defending position, because he doesn't know exactly what the evidence contain, Crin Antonescu tries to conceal, to hide his embarrassment, especially by joking and mild bantering his opponent's actions. In the Fleet Case, his denigrating statements were ironically entailed and that fact allows him to negotiate the meaning: *I haven't said any lie, I've just said*, *Sir ... I said in Cluj that you have nothing to sail with. There is no lie, you simply do not have what to navigate with. Unless you emigrate*. He sustains that he performed the literal

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meaning and not the implicit one that could be interpreted as a personal attack or even a calumny. Obviously, it is a frivolous, unserious justification, which in the very formal context of the debate can be regarded as a negative impoliteness strategy (see Culpeper 2016). In the second case, he simply accuses a misunderstanding, a lack of synchronization between his statements. In this example, the politician accused of lying defends his image, but the impression of frivolity and insubstantiality still remains. Crin Antonescu adopts a casual attitude, corresponding to an ethos of intelligence and non-conformism, which is not very common for a political actor, in contrast to the Traian Băsescu's ethos of seriousness and competence.

3.3. Debate Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (2016)

(3a) ***The first presidential debate Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (Sept. 26 2016)***

Lester Holt: Mr. Trump, this year Secretary Clinton became the first woman nominated for president by a major party. Earlier this month, you said she doesn't have, quote, "a presidential look." She's standing here right now. What did you mean by that?
Donald Trump: She doesn't have the look. She doesn't have the stamina. I said she doesn't have the stamina. And I don't believe she does have the stamina. To be president of this country, you need tremendous stamina.
Lester Holt: The quote was, "I just don't think she has the presidential look."
Donald Trump: You have … wait a minute. Wait a minute, Lester. You asked me a question. Did you ask me a question? You have to be able to negotiate our trade deals. You have to be able to negotiate, that's right, with Japan, with Saudi Arabia. I mean, can you imagine, we're defending Saudi Arabia? And with all of the money they have, we're defending them, and they're not paying? All you have to do is speak to them. Wait. You have so many different things you have to be able to do, and I don't believe that Hillary has the stamina.
Lester Holt: Let's let her respond.
Hillary Clinton: Well, as soon as he travels to 112 countries and negotiates a peace deal, a cease-fire, a release of dissidents, an opening of new opportunities in nations around the world, or even spends 11 hours testifying in front of a congressional committee, he can talk to me about stamina. (APPLAUSE)
Donald Trump: The world … let me tell you. Let me tell you. Hillary has experience, but it's bad experience. We have made so many bad deals during the last … so she's got experience, that I agree. (APPLAUSE)
But it's bad, bad experience. Whether it's the Iran deal that you're so in love with, where we gave them $150 billion back, whether it's the Iran deal, whether it's anything you can -- name -- you almost can't name a good deal. I agree. She's got experience, but it's bad experience. And this country can't afford to have another four years of that kind of experience.
Lester Holt: We are at... we are at the final question. (APPLAUSE)
Hillary Clinton: Well, one thing. One thing, Lester.
Lester Holt: Very quickly, because we're at the final question now.
Hillary Clinton: *You know, he tried to switch from looks to stamina. But this is a man who has called women pigs, slobs and dogs, and someone who has said pregnancy is an inconvenience to employers, who has said...*

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Donald Trump: **I never said that.**
Hillary Clinton: *.... women don't deserve equal pay unless they do as good a job as men.*
Donald Trump: **I didn't say that.**
Hillary Clinton: *And one of the worst things he said was about a woman in a beauty contest. He loves beauty contests, supporting them and hanging around them. And he called this woman "Miss Piggy". Then he called her "Miss Housekeeping", because she was Latina. Donald, she has a name.*
Donald Trump: **Where did you find this? Where did you find this?**
Hillary Clinton: *Her name is Alicia Machado.*
Donald Trump: **Where did you find this?**
Hillary Clinton: *And she has become a U.S. citizen, and you can bet...*
Donald Trump: **Oh, really?**
Hillary Clinton: ... she's going to vote this November.
Donald Trump: OK, good. Let me just tell you...
(APPLAUSE)
Lester Holt: Mr. Trump, could we just take 10 seconds and then we ask the final question...
Donald Trump: You know, Hillary is hitting me with tremendous commercials. Some of it's said in entertainment. **Some of it's said -- somebody who's been very vicious to me, Rosie O'Donnell, I said very tough things to her, and I think everybody would agree that she deserves it and nobody feels sorry for her.**
But you want to know the truth? I was going to say something...
Lester Holt: Please very quickly.
Donald Trump: ... **extremely rough to Hillary, to her family, and I said to myself, "I can't do it. I just can't do it. It's inappropriate. It's not nice". But she spent hundreds of millions of dollars on negative ads on me, many of which are absolutely untrue. They're untrue. And they're misrepresentations.** And I will tell you this, Lester**: It's not nice. And I don't deserve that. But it's certainly not a nice thing that she's done.** It's hundreds of millions of ads. And the only gratifying thing is, I saw the polls come in today, and with all of that money...
Lester Holt: We have to move on to the final question.
Donald Trump: ... $200 million is spent, and I'm either winning or tied, and I've spent practically nothing.
(APPLAUSE)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/watch-the-first-presidential-debate-in-full/2016/09/27/bce8c7c4-8493-11e6-b57d-dd49277af02f_video.html

(3b) ***The third presidential debate Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (Oct. 19 2016)***
Chris Wallace: I would like to ask you this direct question. The top national security officials of this country do believe that Russia is behind these hacks. Even if you don't know for sure whether they are, do you condemn any interference by Russia in the American election?
Donald Trump: By Russia or anybody else.

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Chris Wallace: You condemn their interference?
Donald Trump: Of course I condemn. Of course. I don't know Putin. I have no idea –
Chris Wallace: I'm not asking you that.
Donald Trump: This is not my best friend. But if the United States got along with Russia, wouldn't be so bad. Let me tell you, Putin has outsmarted her and Obama at every single step of the way. Whether it's Syria. You name it. Missiles. Take a look at the start-up that they signed. The Russians have said, according to many, many reports, I can't believe they allowed us to do this. They create warheads and we can't. The Russians can't believe it. She's been outsmarted by Putin. All you have to do is look at the Middle East. They've taken over. We've spent $6 trillion. They've taken over the Middle East. She has been outsmarted and outplayed worse than anybody I've ever seen in any government whatsoever.
Chris Wallace: We're a long way away from immigration, but I'm going to let you finish this topic. You have about 45 seconds.
Donald Trump: And she always will be.
Hillary Clinton: I find it ironic that he's raising nuclear weapons. This is a person who has been very cavalier, *even casual about the use of nuclear weapons.*
Donald Trump: **Wrong**.
Hillary Clinton: Japan, Korea, even Saudi Arabia. *He said if we have them, why don't we use them*, which I think is terrifying. The bottom line on nuclear weapons is that when the president gives the order, it must be followed. There's about four minutes between the order being given and the people responsible for launching nuclear weapons to do so. And that's why 10 people who have had that awesome responsibility have come out and in an unprecedented way said they would not trust Donald Trump with the nuclear codes or to have his finger on the nuclear button.
Donald Trump: I have 200 generals and admirals, 21 endorsing me, 21 Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. As far as Japan and other countries, we are being ripped off by everybody – we're defending other country. We're spending a fortune doing it. They have the bargain of the century. All I said is we have to renegotiate these agreements because our country cannot afford to defend Saudi Arabia, Japan, Germany, South Korea and many other places. We cannot continue to afford. She took that as saying nuclear weapons. **Look, she's been proven to be a liar on so many different ways. This is just another lie.**
Hillary Clinton: *Well, I'm just quoting you – a ... when ...*
Donald Trump: **There's no quote. You're not going to find a quote from me.**
Hillary Clinton: *Nuclear... Nuclear competition in Asia, you said, you know, go ahead, enjoy yourselves, folks. That kind of...*
Donald Trump: **And defend yourselves. And defend yourselves. I didn't say nuclear. And defend yourselves.**
Hillary Clinton: United States has kept the peace through our alliances. Donald wants to tear up our alliances. I think it makes the world safer and, frankly, it makes the United States safer. I would work with our allies in Asia, in Europe, in the Middle East and elsewhere. That's the only way we're going to...

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> **Chris Wallace**: We're going to move on to the next topic, which is the economy. And I hope we handle that as well as we did immigration. You also have very different ideas about how to get the economy growing faster. [...]
> http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/10/19/13336894/third-presidential-debate-live-transcript-clinton-trump

The third case contains two excerpts from the first and the third debate between Hillary Clinton (HC) and Donald Trump (DT). This confrontation is very interesting for the constant use of the quotation argument as a fallacy. The quotational strategy renders a statement susceptible of being interpreted as a personal attack an objective and neutral character, apparently absolving the locutor of the suspicion of impoliteness; it was emphasized that the manipulation of a quotation is a common argumentative tactic, often associated with fallacies, in our case with *ad hominem* or *ad personam* fallacy[12]. This type of invalid argument is considered as relating with the discursive position and the *ethos* of the interlocutor (Walton and Macagno (2011: 32). The speaker's credibility directly depends on his positive or negative public image, despite the validity of his arguments in a certain dispute[13].

As it can be seen, in example 3a, Hillary Clinton constructs Trump's image of a misogynist man, image that certainly cannot correspond to the presidential profile, on the basis of the pretended statements that she ascribes to him. (**HC**: *You know, he tried to switch from looks to stamina. But this is a man who has called women pigs, slobs and dogs, and someone who has said pregnancy is an inconvenience to employers, who has said...* **DT**: *I never said that.* **HC**: *... women don't deserve equal pay unless they do as good a job as men.* **DT**: *I didn't say that*.)

In the example 3b, she adopts the same strategy of quotation for constructing her competitor an image of an irresponsible and untrustworthy politician, "who has been very cavalier, even casual about the use of nuclear weapons." In all these contexts, Hillary Clinton quotes approximately, from memory. (**HC**: [...]. *He said if we have them, why don't we use them, which I think is terrifying*.)

In turn, Trump accuses a misquotation or even a false quotation, an unfair strategy of his opponent repeatedly used to discredit him. The lack of textual evidence of the quoted statement allows Donald Trump to refute them categorically. The linguistic expression of the refutation combines negative statements: *I never said that/ I didn't say that* with quasi-rhetorical questions: *Where did you find this?* or affirmative utterances with negative contextual meaning, such as *Wrong*. In example 3a, Donald Trump indirectly maintains that

[12] See Walton and Macagno (2011: 28): "Manipulation of quotation is a common tactic in argumentation […]. From an argumentative point of view, quotations are not only reported propositions, but acts in a discourse aimed at pursuing a specific communicative goal. […]. Quotation and misquotation are strictly connected with other dialogical tactics, and in particular with straw man […] and explicit or implicit personal attack."

[13] See Walton and Macagno (2011: 32): "Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* called this kind of argument ethotic argument (Walton 1998: 200). The good or bad character of the respondent respectively enhances his credibility or detracts from it. This scheme is in principle a reasonable form of argumentation, based on a basic presupposition of successful communication. If the speaker is not trustworthy, and it is shown that he is likely to lie, it is reasonable to deny his words as an argument that should call for assent. The presupposition of assent is the hearer's trust in the speaker's *ethos*".

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Hilary Clinton's statements are untrue and he excuses himself for telling something extremely rough to Hillary, namely that she spent large sums of money to discredit him and to disseminate false ads and misrepresentations about him. It should be noticed the mitigation of the accusation of lying against Clinton: the excuse as a negative politeness strategy, the metacommunicative comment about his own accusation which he qualifies as extremely rough, inappropriate and not nice: *I was going to say something... extremely rough to Hillary, to her family, and I said to myself, "I can't do it. I just can't do it. It's inappropriate. It's not nice".* Another mitigation strategy is the avoidance of the word "lie" (and those related to it) and the use of euphemisms such as: "untrue ads, misrepresentations".

Finally, in example 3b, Trump directly accuses Hillary Clinton of lying: *Look, she's been proven to be a liar on so many different ways. This is just another lie.* The reference to the recent history apparently well known by the public made *via* the implicit strategy of presupposing information (the verb *to prove* from the utterance *she's been proven to be a liar* triggers the factual presupposition: *she is a proved liar*) helps Trump to transfer his personal evaluation into the sphere of social imaginary. The request of factual evidence and Clinton's hesitant attitude when she was asked for the original form of the quotation apparently absolve Trump of any responsibility for his blunt expression. Certainly, the genuine and rational reaction of any politician accused of lying is to firmly refute it, proving the false interpretation of facts, the misunderstanding or the biased, tendentious position of his/her opponent. However, Hillary Clinton seems to ignore this very serious accusation either because she does not want to depart from the script (not being a very spontaneous person) and to engage in controversy with Trump or because she has not actually counter-arguments and proofs which could absolve her of the accusation of lying. Consequently, the accusations remain and probably have affected her credibility and public image.

4. FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study extends our previous research on the pragmatics of lying by examining the dialogic representation of lying and its interactional status in three presidential debates. Some of the conclusions of the cross-cultural analysis confirm our prior assumptions and others bring new insights of the matter under scrutiny from the perspective of spontaneous, face-to-face communication.

In presidential debates, (the accusation of) lying is a powerful argumentative tool, related to the construction of the competitors' ethos. It is also a double edged argumentative weapon, due the relativistic status of lying, in the sense that the representation of facts and reality depends on individuals and therefore is subjective and discursively negotiable. Given this metarepresentational status, what one understands as a lie can be interpreted by another as a simple cognitive error or misunderstanding (ex. 1 and 2). In all the examples above, the word "lie" and those related to it have a negative emotional projection; consequently, their dialogical occurrences involve the negotiation of the speaker's identity, metacommunicative/metapragmatic loops necessary to clarify speaker's attitude and argumentative choices (example 1, 3). Moreover, the word itself and direct accusation of

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lying may be avoided according to the politeness strategies, speakers entailing it by means of implicit/indirect utterances and expressions (ex. 2) or substitute them with euphemisms such as: "untrue statement, misrepresentation, error" (ex. 3).

The definition of lying, directly or implicitly expressed by speakers, indicates a sensible variation of the perception of lying in authentic data. However, despite the cultural variation and nuances of meaning, all competitors associate lying with an immoral and contemptuous behaviour. They define lying as:

1. "A gap between discourse and acts" (SR)
2. "The pinnacle of political immorality" (SR)
3. An unfair strategy to win, a form of dishonesty (TB)
4. Lying is a not nice behavior, which should be denounced (DT)
5. Lying is a repeatedly proved intention to discredit someone, by reformulating his words (DT).

Conversely, the politicians accused of lying defend their public image by adopting various strategies:

1. The accused interprets the pretended lie as being a different approach of a political and practical issue. The accuser's "truth" is viewed as a form of political dogmatism and intellectual rigidity (NS);
2. The accusation of lying is commented upon as an *ad hominem* fallacy (NS)
3. The accused negotiates the double meaning of an ironic statement (CA) and denies being deliberately malicious (CA)
4. The accused denies the existence of any inconsistency or lie (CA): *There's no inconsistency, no lie!*
5. The accused gives no answer to defend himself/herself (HC)

It should be noted a decreasing degree of formalism in these three presidential debates corresponding to a chronologic scale, which is not correlated with the degree of aggressiveness of the metapragmatic (expression designating the) act of lying. The French debate is the most formalist, but it surprisingly includes the more categorical, unchallenged accusation of lying. In the Romanian and American debates, the accusation of lying is a reactive act, a part of a counter-argumentative movement through which both TB and DT defend their ethos and reject some untrue, even calumnious statements made by their competitors. Being challenged, their radical act of denegation becomes genuine and mandatory. In the Romanian debate, president TB keeps a formal attitude, while CA adopts a casual and nonconformist one, by joking and teasing his competitor. The lack of formalism in an institutional interaction can be regarded as a negative impoliteness strategy. The American debate is apparently the less formal, the participants addressing each other by their first names. Nevertheless, this practice is related to the variation of politeness strategies in American versus European cultures. Conversely, the mitigation strategies used by DT, who is obliged to defend his own image by accusing his competitor of lying, are various and efficient.

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