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1. Introduction

This study aims to identify newspaper representations of the 2016 U.S. presidential election debates. To conduct this study, I analyzed newspaper articles on the debates and clarified the perception of these events, and how the two candidates' identities and ideologies were represented.

The 2016 U.S. presidential election debates were widely broadcast, and many articles about these debates were published in newspapers and magazines. Media texts in Japan also reported the debates and the two candidates' behaviors. It is natural that perspectives found in these texts reflect how the writers perceived the debates based on their social and cultural contexts. This study analyzes the articles in three newspapers—two Japanese and one British.

2. Methodology

This study is based on the critical discourse analysis approach proposed by Fairclough. He defines it as “part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process (Fairclough 2010:10). As for these relations, Fairclough (2003:11) states “The social effects of texts depend upon processes of meaning-making,” and he explains these processes by introducing the notion of “order of discourse.” This notion encompasses “the linguistic elements of networks

¹ This paper is based on an oral presentation at the 2017 International Forum on Cross-Cultural Discourse Studies held at Fuzhou University in China, November 25–26, 2017.

of social practice” that mediate between language as a social structure and an event as a social event, and decides the variability of language in society (Fairclough 2003: 24). In other words, the order of discourse is the sum of factors that produces text by making necessary choices in vocabulary, grammar, and contents. This study focuses on “discourse,” the element of an order of discourse that refers to “a way of representing” in social practice. I identified discourses in the texts by analyzing the vocabulary used, social actors and assumptions made as suggested by Fairclough (2003), to clarify how the debates are represented.

The aspect used to analyze the vocabulary is based on the Machin and Mayr’s (2012) concept of “word connotations.”² I also draw on the concept of assumption (Fairclough 2003: 55) and social actors (van Leeuwen 1996 and Fairclough 2003) .

3. Previous studies

I begin by reviewing three media discourse studies that analyze representations of female candidates in elections.

Ross and Rivers (2017) analyzed Ms. Clinton’s and Mr. Trump’s memes on websites, and examined how the two candidates were evaluated, authorized, and (de)legitimized in the discourse. Memes in this study are Internet image macro memes with texts. Utilizing van Leeuwen’s (2007) analytical legitimization strategy framework, this study reveals that the memes conveyed negative representations of the candidates during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign without directly criticizing them. This study demonstrates the effectiveness of a newly developed method for creating and sharing the candidates’ images and the significance of analysis in terms of legitimacy.

² “Word connotations” are interpreted based on the assumption that certain choices have been made by the authors for their own motivated reasons (Machin and Mayr 2012: 32-37).

Anderson, Grace and Patience (2011) examined the media coverage of one female and one male candidates in the 2005 Liberian presidential election campaign, and compared how these candidates were represented in international media articles with how they were represented in African media. How the female and male candidates were represented was also compared. The study identified great gender differences, namely the female candidate's appearance, clothing and the traditional femininity were reported, while the male candidate's comparable characteristics were not. The female candidate's gender identity was emphasized more than her political experience and abilities, though intelligence and bravery were included in the male candidate's reports. It was also found that the international media provided more explicit gender-biased references than the African media. Based on the authors' vocabulary analysis, this study demonstrated that sexism is deeply embedded in media discourse.

Anderson (2002) analyzed media texts on Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole to document the roles played by gender in the 2000 U.S. election campaigns. They found that Clinton succeeded in the U.S. Senate election campaign by establishing herself as an "independent woman" and "credible leader." She also used stereotypical gender strategies—such as "feminine style discourse"—tacitly but effectively, and assigned President Bill Clinton the role of "supportive spouse." Elizabeth Dole also stressed gender in her campaign. She was not only regarded as the "woman candidate for the president" in the media but also viewed as the "women's candidate" by gathering overpoweringly female audience in her electioneering. This study illustrates the representations of challenges women candidates face in running for office in the United States.

The present study also analyzes how electoral candidates are represented in media discourse, as the studies examined above did. This study, however, puts more emphasis on undertaking a linguistic analysis by interpreting the vocabulary and functional meaning of the texts, based on socio-cultural

perspectives.

4. Analysis

The present study examines newspaper articles on the first and third U.S. presidential debates in 2016. The data for analysis of the first debate include a news story in *The Japan Times* (Sept. 27, 2016), an editorial in *The Mainichi* (Sept. 28, 2016), and an editorial in *The Guardian* (Sept. 27, 2016). For the third debate, the data are from a news story in *The Japan Times* (Oct. 20, 2016), a signed column in *The Mainichi* (Oct. 24, 2016), and an editorial in *The Guardian* (Oct. 20, 2016)³

Analyzing texts in *The Mainichi* and *The Japan Times* (both are English articles published in Japan) and those in *The Guardian* reveals many representations of the debates and the candidates that help identify the various discourses. By examining the discourse in various parts of the texts in which the two candidates were represented, I was able to classify them as follows: discourse of the debates' outcomes, discourse of the evaluation of the candidates, discourse of the debate utterances, discourse of the debate strategies, and discourse of the evaluation of the debates. We will investigate these discourses for each respective debate.

4.1 The first debate

4.1.1 The discourse of the debate's outcomes

The three articles' headlines summarize this discourse, and drew the attention of readers who were curious about the first battle between the two famous candidates.⁴ *The Mainichi* reported that Clinton made Trump feel

³ The data have various genres: A news story that reports newsworthy events, an editorial that comments on varied topics (Takekawa 2012) , and a signed column that presents the author's opinions. Considering differences in these genres, I analyzed the data qualitatively. Moreover, an article in *The Japan Times* on the second debate was not written in Japan, but was borrowed from *Reuters*, so we compare three newspaper articles only for the first and third debates.

⁴ We present typical examples from several cases for data analysis.

embarrassed (“Clinton showed up Trump”), which implies that Clinton made self-confident Trump ashamed, and she surpassed him in the debate.⁵

The Japan Times described Clinton as strongly criticizing Trump in terms of U.S. policy about Japan (“Clinton rips Trump over Japan comments”), which shows that she is more knowledgeable about international affairs. Thus, the two Japanese articles connote Clinton’s advantage in the debate’s outcome, and show Clinton as being superior to Trump in debating and political knowledge.

The Guardian uses an examination metaphor, and by writing “Trump fails the test,” it infers that the debate is a measure for qualifying a president. This article assesses the debate’s outcome as indicating that Trump could not earn enough marks to pass the examination. Thus, it implies that Trump’s abilities fall short of the standard expected in a U.S. presidential debate.

4.1.2 The discourse of the evaluation of the candidates

4.1.2.1 *The Mainichi*

In the 3rd paragraph, *The Mainichi* provides positive comments on Clinton’s personality and her abilities as a politician, and makes the propositional assumption that she might well be arrogant in the debate, considering her ample political experience and abilities (“Clinton, on the other hand, didn’t take a high-handed attitude despite her political background”). In fact, she did not “take a high-handed attitude” or react aggressively to Trump’s “provocative remarks,” but responded with a smile, showing her modesty and calmness.

Clinton’s attitude in dealing with Trump’s unexpected utterances and behaviors is praised in the last part of this paragraph (“demonstrating her presidential quality of being equal to any unusual situation”). Here we see a propositional assumption about what matters in the presidential debate, and

⁵ We omit honorifics such as Mr. and Ms. in the analysis of this study.

we have a connotation that Clinton is more qualified to be president than Trump, since she surpassed Trump because her manners and remarks during the debate were more presidential.

4.1.2.2 *The Japan Times*

The Japan Times characterizes the two candidates in terms of their Asian policies. By calling Clinton “the former top U.S. diplomat,” a functionalization of the social actor (Van Leeuwen 1996), the writer emphasizes Clinton’s extensive diplomatic experience. She is also described as being “proactive” in reaching out to key U.S. allies in Asia, which establishes her identity as an advocate for Japan’s security policy.

The paper’s negative evaluation of Trump and its positive evaluation of Clinton as a politician are also found in other paragraphs. An official of a think tank is quoted in the 13th paragraph as describing Trump’s comments on the U.S. alliance as “incendiary.” The official points out that his unusual comments have caused Asian diplomacy to be discussed in a U.S. presidential debate.

Citing the same official, the 16th paragraph evaluates Clinton. Clinton’s utterance, “America’s word is good,” represents her sincerity in both domestic and international politics. The official says that Clinton “promised to ‘stand up to bullies’ in the international landscape—a not-so vague barb aimed at Russia and China.” Here, Clinton’s identity is confirmed as a person who justifiably protects the allied countries from political attacks, and so is comparable to a hero saving powerless children from a bully.

We see the connotation that Clinton is reliable, since she is sincere in promising to maintain the U.S.-Japan alliance, and clearly states that she would protect the allied countries.

4.1.2.3 *The Guardian*

In this article, *The Guardian* reflects deep concern about the influence

of Trump's political abilities on the world. In the 4th paragraph, Trump is represented as being politically inexperienced and a racist. ("[Trump had been] on a wave of predominantly white anger without any experience of government.") The 9th paragraph presupposes that Trump has problematic characteristics and is a racist ("recklessness," "rudeness," "falsehood," and "appeal to racism"), and states that in the debate he could not appeal to the audience on the basis of his qualifications for a president, by dispelling his presupposed personal traits. Here we see that *The Guardian* values a candidate's political abilities and a sincere personality for gaining the audience's support, which Trump failed to do. The connotations here are that Trump's debating abilities were not adequate, and that his presidency would harm the United States and the world, considering that country's influence over international politics.

4.1.3 The discourse of the debate utterances

4.1.3.1 *The Mainichi*

The 5th and the 6th paragraphs of *The Mainichi* article contain discourse on the debate utterances that are critical of Trump. The 5th paragraph describes foreign policies in which Trump is described as having "ended up repeating [a] similar assertion, saying that the United States defends Japan, Germany, South Korea and Saudi Arabia but that 'they are not paying us.'" The 4th paragraph states that during his election campaign, Trump had insisted on Japan and South Korea shouldering the costs of maintaining the U.S. forces, which the writer describes as a "reckless statement." That Trump "ended up repeating [a] similar assertion" in the debate shows he could not make a convincing argument, even if he had tried to do so, and thereby represents himself as a less capable debater.

The 6th paragraph also includes representations of Trump in relation to foreign policies, and specifically with regard to Trump's insistence that China contact North Korea. Trump's quoted argument is accompanied by such

words as “just,” (“Trump just stated China should go into North Korea”), “unrefined,” and “appalling ignorance of international politics,” which shows that his argument is not convincing enough.

4.1.3.2 *The Japan Times*

Representations of the candidate as a businessperson are included in the discourse of debate utterances in *The Japan Times*. In the 4th paragraph, Trump’s assertion that the relationship between the United States and its allies can be represented as a relationship between an enterprise and its clients is introduced. Here, Trump is described as a social actor of “the real estate mogul,” a person with strong power in business negotiations. This functionalization makes Trump appear to be a cool-headed man who considers matters of international relationships mainly in terms of profitability.⁶ Many expressions that represent business—such as a “give-and-take” deal—are found in Trump’s utterances in the 4th paragraph. They include “They do not pay us what they should be paying us because we are providing tremendous service and we’re losing a fortune,” and “We can’t defend Japan . . . they may have to defend themselves or they may have to help us out.” In fact, however, Japan is paying more than before to the United States for its support, which is stated in the 6th paragraph: “Despite Trump’s comments, Japan increased host-nation support for the U.S. military in 2016.” Trump’s ignorance of this fact is made evident here.

Clinton’s reported debate utterances pertain mainly to her policies about U.S. allies, such as Japan and South Korea. In the 8th paragraph, Clinton is depicted as a qualified and experienced politician with the official title of “a former secretary of state.” Based on the propositional assumption that Japan hopes the United States will secure the region (“[Clinton] used her

⁶ Functionalization “reduces people to a role and . . . dehumanizes them” (Machin and Mayer 2012).

time onstage to try to put to rest fears of an American withdrawal from the region”), Clinton has acquired the identity of a reliable hero who removes assumed fears.

In the 9th paragraph, Clinton’s utterances regarding U.S. allies that “I want to reassure our allies in Japan and South Korea and elsewhere that we have mutual defense treaties and we will honor them,” connotes their equal footing with the United States and its respect for them. Therefore, in not only securing the region, but also showing their consideration, Clinton is represented as a person who aims to establish a relationship of mutual trust with Japan and Korea. This is in contrast with Trump’s businesslike stance presented in the 4th paragraph. Moreover, Clinton reiterates the United States’ sincerity in promising to protect its allies as promised in the 10th paragraph (“It is essential that America’s word be good”).

4.1.4 The discourse of the debate strategies

4.1.4.1 *The Mainichi*

The 7th paragraph in *The Mainichi* states that Clinton was well prepared for the debate: “Clinton, meanwhile, showed her meticulous preparation throughout her speech.” This demonstrates her sincerity in fulfilling her obligation as a candidate. Moreover, Clinton responded precisely to Trump’s discriminative utterances toward women. This is also described in the 7th paragraph: “She took no time to slam Trump’s sexism for calling women ‘pigs,’” which shows her strict observance of ethics. On the other hand, Trump’s debate strategies are described in the second paragraph: “Trump dragged his lengthy speech beyond his allotted time and interrupted Clinton’s remarks.” This shows that Trump does not observe the rules and etiquette of debates, and thereby threatens the co-debater’s rights.

4.1.4.2 *The Guardian*

The Guardian details how the candidates “battled” during the debate.

Clinton's carefulness and calmness are described in the 2nd paragraph ("Mrs Clinton stayed careful but grew more relaxed as the 90 minutes evolved"), while Trump is represented as being carried away by his feelings ("[Trump] got angry and repeatedly rose to the bait"), which suggests he had lost his presence of mind in the debate. The differences in the two candidates' representations are highlighted in a contrasting way, and raise questions about Trump's qualifications for becoming a president, who ought to lead the nation logically and calmly.

Some examples of a boxing metaphor are found in this paragraph. The writer connotes that neither candidate succeeded in convincing the audience with a strong assertion, despite the heated exchanges, by saying "neither candidate landed the fabled knockout blow. There were plenty of low punches." However, the writer's final decision favors Clinton, by saying "Mrs. Clinton obviously won on points" (emphasis added by the author). The writer, therefore, evaluates Clinton's debating strategy more highly than Trump's, although the differences in their strategy skills are not very large.

Clinton is not always represented as a skillful debater. In the 8th paragraph, she is depicted as having "missed a lot of opportunities" to immediately rebut Trump, although the rebuttal could have been achieved with relative ease ("Mrs Clinton certainly missed a lot of opportunities to hit back instantly at Mr. Trump's untruths that a better debater would have seized on"). On the other hand, however, it is stated that Clinton "made few gaffes" compared to Trump, which promotes her image as someone who is a well-prepared and cautious candidate.

Moreover, the nominalization of "Mr. Trump's untruths," in "Mrs. Clinton certainly missed a lot of opportunities to hit back instantly at Mr. Trump's untruths," in the 8th paragraph, makes it a propositional assumption that Trump is not sincere in his remarks during this debate. He is also represented as being careless and haphazard in saying many things "that may come back to haunt him on social media and in campaign ads in the days to come."

Being accustomed to using twitter, Trump must be informed of the aggressive power of social media.

4.1.5 The discourse of the evaluation of the debates

Only *The Guardian* provides this discourse. The 3rd paragraph evaluates the debate as an unconventional one. It states that “traditional responses to the debate may not suffice,” meaning we can not judge the debate and its candidates in a traditional way. For one thing, it points out, politics is changing (“Politics is in flux in many democracies, America included”), and for another, the candidates are the persons with great deal of personalities. That is, they are famous people (“the candidates are already very well known”), and they are persons who cause disagreements both inside and outside their political circles (“each is also already a very divisive figure”).

4.2 The third debate

4.2.1 The discourse of the evaluation of the candidates⁷

4.2.1.1 *The Mainichi*

With regard to the third debate, *The Mainichi* in particular, goes into detail about Trump’s characteristics.

Trump is referred to as “the billionaire businessman” in the 2nd paragraph, which describes “a 2005 video of Trump making lewd and sexually aggressive remarks about women,” revealed by *The Washington Post*. Instead of being called Mr. Trump, he is referred to as “the billionaire businessman,” which is the functionalization of a social actor into a very rich businessperson who may be a womanizer.

The writer confirms in the 5th paragraph “This⁸ is not some poor

⁷ “The discourse of the debates’ outcomes” was not found in the data for the third debate.

⁸ “This” means the fact revealed in the 4th paragraph that Trump “refused to give a direct answer, saying, ‘I will tell you at the time. I’ll keep you in suspense. OK?’” when he was asked, “if, should he lose the November 8 election, he would recognize the result.”

dictatorship or the mafia we're talking about here." By using "not," we see a propositional assumption that we might make such a mistake. In other words, Trump's image is compared to a poor dictatorship or the mafia that controls people with power and money. By portraying such an image, the writer represents Trump as a person who is unlikely to retain democratic principles or laws, thereby damaging his image in the debate.

The 10th paragraph states that "Clinton has come to be seen as representing America's rich and powerful," which implies that Clinton does not stand by ordinary people or understand what these people demand of the government, insinuating that she unfairly supports wealthy people. Being a Democratic Party candidate, such a representation may create a disadvantageous image of her.

4.2.1.2 *The Guardian*

The Guardian cites Trump's response to Fox News' moderator Chris Wallace, when he asked whether "Mr. Trump will continue to make unproven allegations of voter fraud once the results are in." In the 6th paragraph, *The Guardian* cites Trump's answer as follows: "'What I'm saying is I will tell you at the time. I will keep you in suspense,' shot back the nominee with all the petulance of a grounded teenager." Here, the writer applies the image of a bad-tempered teenage child to Trump. Thus, he is not described as a sensible adult who can make a reasonable judgment. Moreover, the verb "shot back" implies that he did not consider the question deeply enough, which may lead to a low evaluation of his performance.

4.2.2 The discourse of the debate utterances

4.2.2.1 *The Japan Times*

This discourse is found mostly in text in *The Japan Times*, which reports that the two candidates discussed policies vigorously during this debate. In the 17th paragraph, Clinton is reported as having criticized Trump's

standpoint on nuclear weapons. Here, with the verbs “condemned” (“Clinton also condemned Trump’s stance on nuclear weapons in which he encourages U.S. allies to have them”) and “accused” (“She also accused Trump of being ‘very cavalier, even casual, about the use of nuclear weapons’”), Clinton is depicted as completely disapproving of Trump’s attitude toward nuclear weapons. Moreover, the direct quote of her comment in response to his utterances, “very cavalier, even casual, about the use of nuclear weapons,” shows that Clinton regards Trump as less professional than she herself is in politics, thereby identifying herself as a knowledgeable and experienced politician.

4.2.2.2 *The Guardian*

The Guardian also evaluates the fact that the two candidates debated policies, and the 14th and 15th paragraphs reports the fact that Trump drew attention, not with his “erratic manner of the debate,” but with his utterance about abortion. However, his vulgar expressions such as “rip the baby out of the womb of the mother” and the verb “blasted” (“‘you can rip the baby out of the womb of the mother,’ Trump blasted”), which means “criticized fiercely,” are cited. Here, Trump is represented as unrefined and simple-minded, while Clinton’s representation is that of a feminist and a supporter of human rights.

4.2.3 The discourse of the debate strategies

4.2.3.1 *The Japan Times*

The 7th paragraph introduces experts’ criticisms of Trump’s debate strategy. Experts who study voter behavior warned that his attacks on Clinton might backfire, saying he might instead awaken Democratic voters who had so far been uninspired by their party’s candidate. Here, Trump is represented as a candidate who may not succeed in convincing the public to support him or vote for him.

4.2.3.2 *The Guardian*

The 7th paragraph in *The Guardian* comments on Clinton's response as being an excessive one ("Clinton's response was powerful but largely surplus to requirements"). By citing her words, namely "horrifying" and "denigrating," as examples of "surplus to requirements," the writer insinuates that Clinton is exaggerating the drawbacks to Trump's ideas when describing them to the public.

4.2.4 The discourse of the evaluation of the debates

In the first paragraph of *The Mainichi*, the debate is compared to a work of entertainment using the metaphor "rated adults only," and Clinton and Trump are represented as the characters in a TV drama, not as politicians ("The nastiest U.S. presidential election in history is rated adults only"). Thus, the writer connotes that children do not learn about politics or U.S. presidential debates, but rather, it is harmful to them to watch ("inappropriate for parents to sit down with their children to watch the televised debates").

5. Summary

Various identities of the two candidates are represented in the data. In *The Mainichi*, Clinton is represented as modest, sincere, and well-prepared for the debate, while Trump is represented as being ill-mannered and autocratic. *The Japan Times* represents Clinton as being knowledgeable and experienced in politics and reliable in Asian diplomacy, while representing Trump as a businessperson who considers diplomacy in terms of money. In *The Guardian*, Clinton is represented as a politician who supports human rights, while Trump is represented as falling short of debating skills.

We see differences in how the debates were perceived, and the ideologies represented in the texts of the two Japanese newspapers and one English newspaper. *The Mainichi* perceives the debates as opportunities to learn about the candidates' personal characters, and identify which politician would

be suitable for the position of U.S. President, according to its ideologies. The editorial and the signed column in *The Mainichi* have offered the readers the information on the personalities of the candidates vividly.

The Japan Times uses the debates to assess Japan's likely future diplomatic relations with the United States, and to discuss U.S. ideologies in relation to the readers' political awareness. The news stories of *The Japan Times* have offered the readers newsworthy information on Japanese diplomacy.

The Guardian's editorials use the debates to assess the status of democratic governance, and reveals its ideologies about U.S. influences on the world.

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Articles on the third debate

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