# Analyzing Donald Trump's global warming communication: a polyphonic reading of tweets

**Francis Badiang Oloko**

## 1  Introduction

Social media has proven to be a formidable unmediated communication tool through which politicians can interact directly with the citizens, i.ie., without any other intervening agency. At various stages of their political career politicians nowadays, more than before, rely solidly on platforms like Twitter or Facebook to achieve various goals: directly reaching out to voters, mobilizing supporters, influencing the public agenda, disseminating their political beliefs and policy stances, etc. (Engesser et al. 2017, Stier et al. 2018, Sobieraj et al. 2020). Donald Trump can be said to represent the most prevalent example of this "tweet politics" era (Kreis 2017). He used Twitter to share information with the public in real-time (Brans and Scholtens 2020) but the platform was also central to his negative communication strategy (see Ott 2017; Dolezal et al. 2017; Ross and Caldwell 2019). Since its first tweet in 2009[1], the @realDonaldTrump account grew to become a major tool in Trump's ambition to shape public opinion into believing his political opponents were unfit to carry out the task of governing. The content of Trump's Twitter account has been subject to scrutiny from scholars over the past years. To some, Twitter was a tool "under Trump's thumbs" to exert his influence on Americans (Brans and Scholtens 2020: 1). Zhang et al. (2017) study how Trump used Twitter as an amplification tool to aggregate and direct attention through the constant creation of buzz. In this field, Zhang et al. conclude, Trump is "one of the most successful users" (p.3163). His influence by means of Twitter has been investigated in relation to the stock markets and the treasury (Brans and Scholtens 2020; Tillmann 2020), to his populism (Kreis 2017, Wells et al. 2020; Schertzer and Eric Woods 2021), to his opposition to Hillary Clinton (Ross and Caldwell 2019), and more. Trump's discourse was further analyzed during the last years, including from a structural and linguistic perspective. However, more remains to be explored regarding his use of language specifically in his tweets (Clarke and Grieve 2019) and specifically those on global warming.

Like Clarke and Grieve, I believe that the form of Trump's tweets can reveal a great deal about his communicative strategy. I also opt for a bottom-up approach that studies phenomena

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[1] https://time.com/5412016/donald-trump-realdonaldtrump-twitter-first-tweet/, consulted November 24, 2020.

ranging from linguistic encoding to the context of the utterance and the knowledge and expectations of the interlocutors (Nølke 2017). Unlike Ross and Caldwell (2019) who analyze Trump's tweets based on the interpersonal metafunction of language, I wish to apply a text-linguistic approach. I, therefore, consider tweets like text.

In political communication – including social media – "[…] individuals are not only aware of their ability to choose among offerings but are also increasingly aware of the structure and the fact that the structure [chiefly media companies and social media platforms] makes decisions that affect how others' attention is directed" (see Zhang et al. 2017: 3166). However, structure might also be put at the service of users to pursue their own goals as is the case with Trump. Language can be a crucial lens to analyze users' strategies to influence their followers' opinions. All selected tweets by Trump on global warming (GW) can be linguistically analyzed because they have the characteristics of the utterance/text. A linguistic analysis of tweets may focus on how the combination of linguistic resources in tweets helps produce meaning. This article is based on the assumption that Trump's global warming (GW) tweets are polyphonic, i.e., besides Trump's own voice, the tweets stage other voices. And this polyphony is expressed by various linguistic phenomena. The main hypothesis is that Trump used to tweet about GW to emphasize his denial of its existence and, most importantly, to attempt the character assassination of his opponents through the transfer of negative attention onto them. And this, I argue, can be supported by polyphonic analyses, i.e. through the study of how he includes other voices by quoting them, refuting them, or mocking them for example. For example, the tweet *The global warming scientists don't want to be airlifted off the ship (...)* [Dec 28, 2013, 07:37:03 AM ] is polyphonic because the negation marker 'not' (in don't) thanks to which the speaker rejects the previous assertion *The global warming scientists want to be airlifted off the ship* which is monophonic because it does not have a polyphonic marker.

The research question of this paper is: how does Trump utilize GW to position himself on the global climate debate and to try to damage the reputation of his opponents? Trump is well known for his dark, degrading, and dehumanizing discourse (Ott, 2017) and for slandering and misrepresenting others' views (Clarke and Grieve 2019, Ross and Caldwell 2019). Therefore, this article does not set out to re-discuss these undebatable facts. Rather, by resorting to text linguistics it seeks to offer an improved understanding of his GW denial as part of his going-negative communication strategy (Ott 2017) through which a speaker cast negative sentiments on a target in a bid to communicate them to their audience. The added value of a polyphonic study is that it reveals and interprets even the implicit voices encoded in the linguistic form of the word. Furthermore, it helps unravel and disentangle voices to point out the protagonists and their roles in the utterance and the type of relationship that can be yielded from them. The role of language in the climate debate has previously been discussed extensively (see Nerlich et al. 2010; Fløttum 2017) and polyphony has grown to become a key tool in analyzing climate communications (see Badiang Oloko 2019; Fløttum et al. 2020)

The presence of discourse participants is a phenomenon known to be embedded in natural languages. However, points of view (POVs) other than those emanating from the speaker and the hearer may be mediated through the utterance (Nølke 2017: 52). The main advantage of

the Scandinavian theory of linguistic polyphony – ScaPoLine – is that it allows the uncovering of the POVs (voices) in utterances. Furthermore, the ScaPoLine highlights the "utterance links" (Nølke ibid: 58) which connect the discourse beings to POVs. Discourse beings are semantic entities that can be held responsible for the POVs – the utterance speaker, the text speaker, the utterance and textual addressees, etc. (ibid.). In other words, the ScaPoLine underscores the relationships between the different voices in terms of responsibility or non-responsibility (see Nølke 2017: 81-88). The polyphonic structure of Trump's tweets essentially yields instructions for their interpretation while his depiction of his opponents is part of this interpretation as in the case of irony.

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews polyphony; section 3 presents the data; section 4 analyzes polyphony in the data; and the closing remarks section sums up the discussion.

## 2   Theory: ScaPoLine

The concept of polyphony originates from music and was introduced into the study of language from the early works of Bakhtin (1970 [1929]). Decades after Bakhtin, Ducrot (1984) introduced polyphony into (French) linguistics. Polyphony refutes the established idea of the unified nature of the speaker by arguing that "every utterance may involve several 'crystallized' dialogues" (Nølke 2007: 111). Today, there exist many approaches to polyphony among which is the ScaPoLine.

The ScaPoLine apprehends language as fundamentally polyphonic. To this approach, "the meaning of the utterance consists of the superimposing of a certain number of elementary discourses" (Nølke 2007: 111). Nølke and his colleagues worked to develop an analytical apparatus to help identify and interpret voices within the limited scope of language and, most importantly, within an utterance (Nølke et al. 2004). The interest of the ScaPoLine in analyzing Trump's tweets lies in the assumption that an utterance conveys traces of its protagonists. And it does so using a wide range of linguistic phenomena – known as polyphonic markers – such as personal pronouns, connotative adjectives, connectors, modality, syntactic structure, reported discourse, etc. (Nølke 2009, 2017). These linguistic devices – polyphonic markers – will serve as the basis for polyphonic analyses.

The ScaPoLine observes a bottom-up approach which is extensively discussed in several publications (see Nølke et al. 2004, Gjerstad 2011, Nølke 2017, Badiang Oloko 2019). The analysis starts with the identification of the polyphonic structure (p-structure) of the utterance. The p-structure is designed by the instructions coded by the linguistic marker. These instructions specify which POV is the speaker's, and which is not. A typical POV consists of a source (*X*), a judgment (*JUDGE*), and content (*p: POV: [X] (JUDGE (p))*.

Let us exemplify this with an instance of polemic negation which yields two POVs: one underlying POV and one opposing the underlying POV. In the following example, polemic negation is introduced by the negation adverb (not) in *don't*.

(1) The global warming scientists don't want to be airlifted off the ship – they are having too much fun and that is too simple a solution – FAME! [Dec 28, 2013 at 07:37:03 AM]

The configuration for (1) is the following, where *X* is an unidentified being and $S_0$ is the utterance speaker:

POV$_1$: [X] (TRUE (The global warming scientists want to be airlifted off the ship))

POV$_2$: [$S_0$] (FALSE (POV$_1$))

In the above configuration, the speaker is the source of POV$_2$, while it is not clear who is the source of POV$_1$. Its source might be identified in the context. Besides, in some cases, it is not a must to identify the source of the POV because the person responsible for the very utterance act (LOC) may create virtual entities for a better statement of their POV. In such cases, the discourse beings might not have a source. By using negation in (1), the speaker does not merely inform the addressee about the anecdote. It is also a tactic to damage the scientists' reputation and credibility by suggesting they "are having too much fun" (Ott 2017, Ross and Caldwell 2019).

The interpreter will repeat this process with every POV, the number and nature of which are instructed by the marker. They may identify the other sources by applying conversational maxims. The result of this process is the (polyphonic) configuration (Nølke 2017). The last stage of the process, as will be the case with Trump's tweets, is the interpretation which consists in combining the configuration with information from context, including the real protagonists in the US political arena and mainly those who are either named or implied by Trump, the ongoing political battles, the events which preceded and may have triggered the tweet, etc. At this level of the process also, sources in the configuration may become protagonists.

The following example, where the polyphonic marker is the reporting verb *announce*, highlights a minimal version of the configuration[2].

(2) Well, it happened again. Amy Klobuchar announced that she is running for President, talking proudly of fighting global warming while standing in a virtual blizzard of snow, ice, and freezing temperatures. Bad timing. By the end of her speech, she looked like a Snowman(woman)! [Feb 10, 2019 at 05:04:48 PM]

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[2] The minimalistic version of the ScaPoLine will consist in narrowing the POVs to the content while I will comment on the source and judgment (see Dahl and Fløttum 2014; Nølke 2017). The aim is to ease the understanding of the configuration and, hence, the interpretation.

Before presenting the POVs, let us extract the argument *p= I am running for President*. Polyphony in (3) yields two POVs as follows:

POV$_1$: (p)

POV$_2$: Amy Klobuchar announced (p)

In (2), the speaker, source of POV$_2$, reports what had previously been said by another speaker identified in the text as Amy Klobuchar. The semantic instructions embedded in *announce* indicate the speaker's neutrality towards the reported content. The tweet begins with the news of Senator Klobuchar entering the race to become the democratic party's candidate for the 2020 presidential election. As a democrat, she vows to fight GW, which to the speaker is a naive claim because she is standing in a "blizzard of snow, ice and freezing temperatures" – proof to the speaker that GW does not exist. Polyphony allows the speaker to expose the contrast between the situation and Amy Klobuchar's discourse to underscore the political scam he accuses her of engaging in.  He expects the reader to agree that Klobuchar should not be trusted. She is unsuitable to carry out the task of governing.

Let us consider the case of irony which, according to many scholars, is pervasive on Twitter (Reyes et al 2013; Hernandez Farias et al. 2016; Sulis et al. 2016). Irony in Trump's GW tweets seems to follow a pattern. Previous studies have demonstrated the polyphonic nature of irony (Ducrot 1984; Perrin 1996; Dendale 2008; Bres 2010; Rabatel 2012; Bres et al. 2019). Nølke (2017) recognizes the complexity of irony and notes that there are many types of ironic markers. Irony is made apparent through specific linguistic forms, the cotext, paralinguistic phenomena, (presumed) mutual knowledge, genre and/or type of situation, and the shift in style or genre (pp. 175-181). These five clues, Nølke argues, can overlap, while paralinguistic phenomena may not be identifiable in written text.

Verbal irony is a form of mockery aimed at a particular target (another person, a group, oneself), which excludes oneself from the object of the mockery in the here and now of the enunciation and is based on not saying directly what one thinks (Rabatel (2012: 44). To achieve the desired mockery effect, irony echoes an earlier statement (Clark & Richard 1984). The early polyphonic interpretation of irony dates back to Ducrot (1984). To him, being ironic consists for a speaker *L* to present an utterance as expressing the position of an enunciator *E*, a position for which the speaker is known not to take responsibility, and much more so than he or she considers it to be absurd. *L* is not equated with *E*, the origin of the point of view expressed in the utterance (p. 211). To Nølke (2017) the art of irony "consists in understanding that the speaker is presenting a POV as his while at the same time indicating that he considers this POV to be absurd" (p. 176). Nølke chooses to write "his [the speaker's] 'own' POV" because the utterance speaker ($s_0$) is "a false $s_0$, an imposter". "It is a stranger

who has disguised himself as $s_0$." And by presenting this imposter's POV as being absurd, the LOC makes him the target of the irony. (Ibid.: 178)[3]

Nølke (2017) does not indicate the number of POVs ironic statements must have – unlike negation or concessive constructions. This is probably due to their diversity and their complexity - they may include other markers as in the example he cites[4] (p. 178). $POV_1$ is absurd and the textual addressee $A^5$ is its supposed source (Ibid. 178). $S_0$ is the source of $POV_2$ which indicates that the speaker was just playing the false naive in $POV_1$. Most importantly, they know and point to the fact that $POV_1$ is absurd. As the bottom-up ScaPoLine approach prescribes, the interpretation of verbal irony starts with the identification of the irony clue which is also the polyphonic marker. Irony is construed in this paper as an enunciative phenomenon *sensu stricto*. What is important therefore is not only the speaker's intention but also how it combines with the interaction of POVs within the utterance to produce the desired ironic effect. No distinction will be made between irony and sarcasm (Hernandez Farias et al. 2016: 2).

Let us consider (3) as follows:

> (3) Do you believe @algore is blaming global warming for the hurricane? [Nov 1, 2012 09:13:39 AM]

The presence of several markers in (3) may complicate the analysis of this tweet. Besides the interrogative structure, there seems to be an element of reported discourse with *blaming* acting as a reporting verb to Al Gore's speech. However, I will analyze only verbal irony. The irony clue in (3) is certainly the (presumed) mutual knowledge: Al Gore usually blames global warming for hurricanes. Therefore, the rhetorical question accentuates the ironic effect. The tweet has two POVs[6] as follows:

> $POV_1$: Global warming is to blame for the hurricane

> $POV_2$: $POV_1$ is absurd

The ironic effect of this tweet results from the knowledge that the target may have a history of blaming phenomena such as a hurricane on global warming. $POV_2$ – the speaker's – exposes the mockery, which is being made of Al Gore who, as it is implied, is the imposter. The speaker does not feign to agree with their target's POV. Rather, they use this very likely statement to mock him. As this example of irony shows, the polyphonic analysis of Trump's tweets can reveal how he depicts his opponents.

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[3] According to the ScaPoLine, $s_0$ is an instance of the utterance speaker ($s_t$) who is the source of a POV which the speaker holds here and now. LOC is not a discourse entity. Rather, itis a representation of the speaker and exists only in the latter's discourse. (see Nølke 2017, 61-71)

[4] Tell me what I ate this morning, *since* you know everything. Not only is the sentence an ironic statement, it also has the polyphonic marker *since* which introduces three voices.

[5] A source of a POV the addressee held before the act of utterance and which he still holds. (Nølke 2017, 178)

[6] Nølke (2017), like Rabatel (2012), does not propose a polyphonic configuration for ironic statements. The proposed configuration in this paper is therefore strictly based on my own interpretation of Nølke's description of this phenomenon.

Thanks to the ScaPoLine, as (1), (2), and (3) illustrate, it is possible to uncover the communicative intentions via the POVs in Trump's tweets and based on different polyphonic markers.

## 2   Methodology

Trump was elected the 45$^{th}$ US president in 2016. But, before, he had been an influential figure for decades. His views on many issues, including GW, have influenced not only the destiny of his country but also that of the entire world, all thanks mainly to media content. Scholars have argued that media – including social media – constitute the space where power is decided in our post-industrial information society (see Castells 2007; Zhang et al. 2017). Trump was one of the most influential people on Twitter (Brans and Scholtens 2020, 1-2). The @*realDonaldTrump* account had 87,322,858 million followers[7], which made it the 7$^{th}$ most-followed account on the platform in 2020. Trump was the 2$^{nd}$ most-followed politician, behind Barack Obama, who had 124,110,402 million followers in the same period[8].

Trump's views on GW essentially have a negative argumentative orientation and display the use of populist tropes (see Kreis 2017, Nordensvard & Ketola 2021). He has made his climate denialism known to all through various ways including speeches, tweets, and decisions. One such landmark decision was his withdrawal from the Paris accord. Trump tweeted the entry "global warming" 100 times[9] between March 2012 and February 2019[10]. The data for this article were collected online via trumptwitterarchive.com. This website provided all the tweets from the @*realDonaldTrump* account from its creation until October 22, 2020. All 100 tweets containing the word "global warming" were collected. Additionally, given its semantic proximity to GW, I also searched the term "climate change" (CC). The website automatically calculated 36 tweets with CC. Combined with GW, it would have totaled 136 tweets. It is recurrent, however, that both entries appear in the same tweets as in "Wow, record setting cold temperatures throughout large parts of the country. Must be global warming, I mean climate change!" [Dec 4, 2013, 06:40:26 PM] This justified my choice to focus solely on GW. Every selected tweet was read to eliminate instances where "global warming" could have been used metaphorically, i.e., to refer to something other than climate.

Based on the prescriptions of the ScaPoLine, 58 out of the 100 tweets are polyphonic. The immediate interpretation can be that Trump interacts with other voices in most of his tweets on GW. The remaining challenge is to uncover how this interaction is staged, the sources of the voices, and how the opponents are depicted.

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[7] The last time I checked was 21$^{st}$ October 2020.
[8] https://friendorfollow.com/twitter/most-followers/, consulted on October 21, 2020.
[9] No distinction is made between tweets from Android phone as opposed to those from iPhone to question the authorship of Trump's tweets. Many studies address this concern (see Clarke and Grieve (2019).
[10] http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive, consulted on October 22, 2020.

### 3    Polyphonic analyses of the tweets

This section analyzes polyphonic tweets. Tweets are not analyzed individually and systematically but grouped under the phenomenon they fall under, based on their polyphonic marker (Nølke 2017; Bres et al. 2019). This will also prevent repetition, as Trump often repeats the same format in many of his tweets. The phenomena encountered in the 58 polyphonic tweets include negation, reported speech, and irony. I will refer to the corpus in the case of several tweets repeating the same pattern as it is often the case with irony. The polyphonic marker will be highlighted (in italics) where relevant.

### 3.1 Represented discourse

Represented discourse (RD) is the polyphonic phenomenon "par excellence" (Nølke et al. 2004: 57). It is characterized by the staging of an utterance from another speaker (Ibid: 58-59). To Spronk and Nikitina (2019: 122), it is "a representation of an utterance as spoken by some other speaker, or by the current speaker at a speech moment other than the current speech moment". There are four prototypes of RD: framed direct speech, free direct speech, indirect speech, and free indirect speech (Nordqvist 2001a; Nølke et al. 2004; Rosier 2008), to which should be added several mixed forms.

Most polyphonic instances fall under irony (39), whereas there is very little use of polemic negation (1). Trump seems to prefer ironic criticism to polemic negation because it allows him to express a stronger opposition to the GW believers. These results are exposed in the following chart:
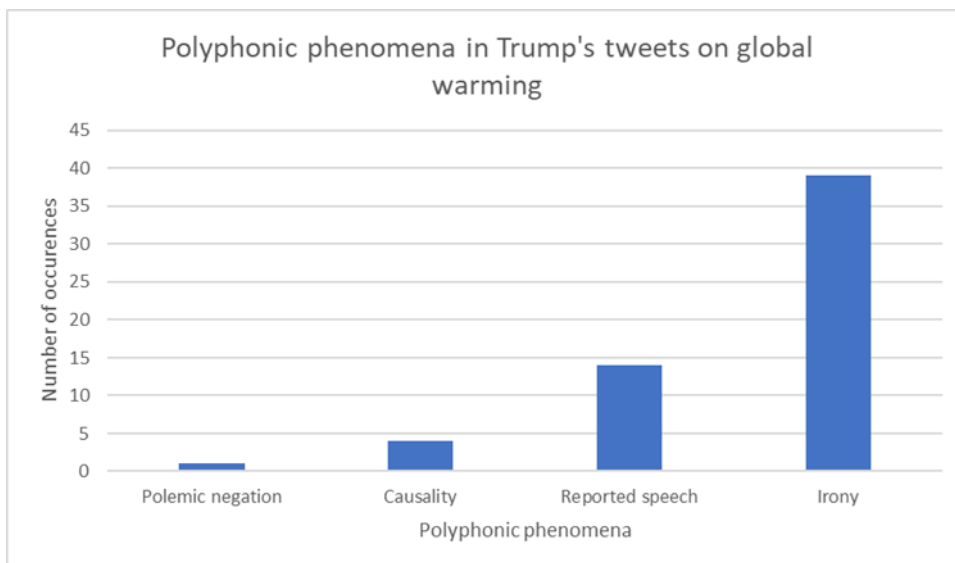
My aim is not to discuss the typology of RD extensively but rather to uncover the polyphonic nature of those in the tweets and explain how the interpretation of these tweets can be determined by the staging of voices. 13 of Trump's 58 polyphonic tweets can be labeled 'reported speech': indirect speech, framed direct speech and indexicals.

### i. Indirect speech

The first instance of indirect speech in the corpus points to a voice other than Trump's:

> (4) It's really cold outside, *they are calling it a major freeze*, weeks ahead of normal. Man, we could use a big fat dose of global warming! [Oct 19, 2015 08:30:30 AM]

In the highlighted segment, *they are calling it* indirectly attributes the noun phrase *a major freeze* to a source other than the speaker. The verb *to call* is the reporting verb, and it indirectly assigns the propositional content *a major freeze* to an unknown source. The resulting polyphonic configuration is as follows:

$POV_1$: [There is] a major freeze (p)[11]

$POV_2$: They call it (p)

The speaker is responsible for $POV_2$ which reports $POV_1$. By so doing, they assign (p) to a source other than themselves as *they* helps them distance themselves from the content without expressing any judgment. The source of $POV_1$ can be anybody or any group of people – politicians, scientists, or the media. The judgment comes in the following sentence in the form of ironic criticism (see section 4.2.). This rhetorical strategy can change depending on the speaker's intention. The following instance provides evidence.

> (5) Windmills are the greatest threat in the US to both bald and golden eagles. *Media claims* fictional 'global warming' is worse. [Sep 9, 2014 03:19:52 PM]

The speaker in (5) cites the media through indirect speech, introduced by the reporting verb *to claim*. This tweet has the following polyphonic configuration:

$POV_1$: Global warming is a worse threat in the US to both bald and golden eagles (p)

$POV_2$: The media claim (p)

Unlike in (4), the speaker in (5) names the source of $POV_1$ – the media. This example is also different and more complex than the former because the speaker introduces their judgment of a section they deliberately put in inverted commas. The way they frame 'global warming' indicates that they distance themselves from the concept which is dismissed as "fictional". One can read the speaker's lack of trust in the media as they assume that the media work with

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[11] I will label the content of the first pov (p) to easily refer to it in the second pov.

their political opponents: the democrats and Barack Obama, whom the speaker cites in the sixth example.

(6) *According to* @BarackObama the War on Terror is over http://t.co/7SRYZNQ1 but global warming is a national security threat. Feel safe? [May 4, 2012 03:12:10 PM]

Like the preceding examples, (6) has two POVs:

POV$_1$: The War on Terror is over but global warming is a national security threat (p)

POV$_2$: According to @BarackObama (p)

The speaker (POV$_2$) imputes POV$_1$ to Barack Obama. If they do not express any judgment of POV$_1$, it is probably because of its inherent incoherence they highlight with the connector "but"[12]. By using "but", the speaker creates a prioritization scale for their opponent where the latter favors the second argument ('global warming is the main national security threat') over the first one ('terror is the main national security threat'). The logical relationship between these two arguments is highlighted by the last sentence "Feel safe?". By this rhetorical question, the speaker seeks to achieve a twofold objective. They both taunt the audience and cast pejorative attention onto the POV$_1$. direct their attention to what should be the priority for them (national security).  When associated with this statement, the content of POV$_2$ ceases thus to be a naïve reporting statement to express criticism of Barack Obama for prioritizing global warming over terror, which, to them, is the more realistic and serious threat to the US.

The interpretation of these three indirect speech instances may lead to an early conclusion that Trump uses RD simply to assign an utterance to its source speaker – whether the latter is named or not. Trump's main strategy seems to feign neutrality by not overtly taking responsibility for the reported propositional content. However, framed direct speech seems to prompt different conclusions.

## ii.  **Framed direct speech**

Framed direct speech typically had the form "X said, __" or "__, X said" (Nordqvist 2001b). Other forms like "__ by X" are also possible. Framed direct speech, therefore, has the characteristic of having a framing clause. It occurs in two of the 13 RD instances. Let us consider the first one:

(7) Via @financialpost: *"Climate changing for global warming journalists"* by Lawrence Solomon http://bit.ly/ZxJNyk Consensus is "cracking." [Apr 16, 2013 02:45:30 PM]

In this example, there is a quotation, whose source is distinctly named – Lawrence Solomon. The following polyphonic configuration can therefore be applied.

POV$_1$: Climate changing for global warming journalists (p)

POV$_2$: (p) by Lawrence Solomon

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[12] "But" is a polyphonic marker. However, it is not the primary marker in this example which analyzes framed direct speech. I thus did not deem it relevant to the interpretation. It does however play a role in the interpretation of the indirect speech.

The speaker (POV$_2$) uses a direct quotation to point to another speech. If the speaker does not seem to express any judgment – approval or disapproval – of Solomon's speech, their support probably lies in the context of the climate debate. The consensus is said to be "cracking", as suggested by an indexical assigned to Solomon.

The same strategy is used in (8). The only difference is that the speaker gives a positive assessment of the title of the article he reports.

> (8) Great article in the @NewYorkPost by Ben Garrett-*"Don't Blame Sandy on Global Warming"* [Nov 5, 2012, 11:06:25 AM]

This example, unlike the previous ones, has three POVs due to the polemic negation introduced by don't and the resulting two hierarchical POVs.

> POV$_1$: Blame Sandy on Global Warming

> POV$_2$: POV$_1$ is false

> POV$_2$: POV$_2$ is correct

The speaker uses a quotation to side with the stance taken by Ben Garett in one article. The latter warns not to blame Sandy on GW, rejecting thus an opinion that would do so. The speaker cites Garett's article to authoritatively discredit the widely accepted theory that GW was largely responsible for Hurricane Sandy, a hurricane that led to at least 147 deaths in the US, Canada, and the Caribbean. By praising Garrett's article as "great", the speaker sides with him in rejecting the theory that Sandy was caused by GW (POV$_1$).

Trump appears to use direct speech as an authority argument, a rhetorical strategy whereby an argument is assigned to a source deemed authoritative in a given field, in a bid to increase the persuasive effect of discourse (Nølke et al. 2004, 130). In the case of (7) and (8), Trump credits Solomon and Garrett respectively as authoritative sources in the GW debate. Pointing to them directly should therefore increase the reliability of his positioning in the debate and take sides against the mainstream opinions and theories on GW also held by his opponents. Trump uses RD to do more than just increase the reliability of his arguments. It all depends on which form is used, whose speech he reports, and the textual context in which the RD occurs, among other factors (see Rosier 2008).

### iii. Indexicals

Indexicals are a form of hybrid quotations (De Brabanter 2019). This type of RD is hybrid in the sense that it combines direct speech (quotation) and indirect speech (syntactic integration) (Chovancova 2008, 367). One important trait of such quotations is that "they involve strings of words whose internal structure is part and parcel of the host structure" (De Brabanter 2019, 5). These segments of foreign discourses insert themselves naturally into the utterance, while keeping their original structure, and can vary in length (Chovancova 2008, 369). However,

they are generally short and do not go beyond a clause for structural and stylistic reasons. This type of RD records the highest number of instances (9) in Trump's tweets, as compared to the rest. Because of this, I will show the POVs contained in the first two examples and bridge from there to propose an interpretation of the rest. The polyphonic marker, in this case, is always the inverted commas which indicate that the fragment thus highlighted has a source other than the utterance speaker (see Rosier 2008).

> (9) They call it *"climate change"* now because the words *"global warming"* didn't work anymore. Same people fighting hard to keep it all going! [Dec 15, 2013 04:58:18 AM][13]

The structure of (9) presents a speaker introducing segments from another discourse into theirs. It cannot be interpreted without considering its hybrid nature whereby the two segments in quotes are linked to each other by free indirect speech – "because the words" and "didn't work anymore" – which has the same source as the quoted segments. Following the model proposed by Nølke et al. (2004), (9) may have two POVs:

> POV$_1$: Global warming is now climate change (p)

> POV$_2$: They call it (p)

The speaker uses indexicals to take distances with discourses they do not side with. By so doing, they want to expose what appears to them as fraud. They provide a reason for this change in the appellation, which advances their argument – this justification summarizes the structure of (9)[14]. One can view this justification "the words 'global warming' didn't work anymore" as an example of free direct speech as it does not have an inquit (introductory expression or inverted commas. (9) is therefore a case of hybrid quotation. The same seems to operate under (10).

> (10) Waste! With a $16T debt and $1T budget deficit, @BarackObama is sending $770M overseas *"to fight global warming"* [Mar 30, 2012, 12:55:45 PM]

In the case of (10), Obama is the designated source of the reason evoked for sending $770M overseas. The juxtaposition between the US budget deficit and the decision by @BarackObama to "send" such funds abroad should allow the followers to see the underlying criticism. This criticism is exacerbated by the justification Obama 'provides' – "to fight global warming". It should be understood here that the speaker does not think GW is a reason for US leadership to "send" money abroad, while the country's budget deficit is high – a "waste". This, to them, appears as disrespect to Americans, which (11) seems to confirm.

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[13] (7) has the same structure as tweet 12 (see appendix)

[14] The relevant polyphonic phenomenon in this case is indexicals and reported speech. I would however agree with an interpretation of (9) that would seek to analyze justification and the argumentative structure as source of multivoicedness. This would be possible if we analyzed a hypothetical original speech "From now on, we will call it "climate change" *because* "global warming" is not working", where "because" is a polyphonic marker. Two reasons why we did not analyze this: (1) it seems more of a fabricated speech; (2) the justification and the polyphonic marker are a creation of the speaker. Indexicals are known to give the speaker the freedom to attempt to manipulate his readers through the integration of these fragments in statements whose pragmatic aims are different from those of the original discourse. (see Nølke et al. 2004, De Brabanter 2019)

(11) There are many Jonathan Gruber types selling the global warming *"stuff"* – and they really *do* believe *the American public is stupid*. [Nov 18, 2014 07:59:19 PM]

In (11), the source of the POV staged under the indexical "stuff" is identified as Jonathan Gruber types. The speaker does not side with them as the "selling" seems to suggest. On the contrary, they distance themselves from the segment they quote, and denounce those who, by taking such stands, "believe the American public is stupid". Even if this last segment resembles an instance of indirect speech, it appears more as a rhetorical strategy of an omniscient speaker who can read the other camp's mind and expose it to the public. Furthermore, *do* is a polyphonic maker because it negates an implicit negative predicate (double polemic negation, therefore): *they do not believe the American public is stupid*. By stating "they really *do* believe", the speaker seems to anticipate a potential negation – 'they *do not* believe' – reassuring their followers on the truthfulness of the predicate "believe the American public is stupid". The adjective "stupid" is the indexical on tweet 14 (see appendices). This time, it is assigned directly to Jonathan Gruber, reinforcing the claim that he and his types view Americans through this derogatory term. (12) is slightly more subtle.

(12) Obama said in his SOTU that *"global warming is a fact."* Sure, about as factual as *"if you like your healthcare, you can keep it."* [Jan 30, 2014 01:14:29 PM]

In (12), the speaker assigns both strings to Obama. They create unity between two segments dealing with two different issues. The correlation the speaker draws is meant to "expose" Obama. The claim about GW, as it appears, is as much a lie as the one about the possibility for Americans to keep their health care if they like it under the Affordable Care Act. In (13), the speaker addresses GW directly.

(13) So much for *'global warming.'* Earth is cooling at a record pace [Sep 9, 2013, 04:44:38 PM]

The indexical in (13) is introduced with a judgment that discounts GW. The criticism is reinforced by the speaker adding that "Earth is cooling at a record pace", which to them is a counterargument to GW. Two months later, Trump would specify what the problem with the concept of GW is.

(14) The problem w/ the concept of *"global warming"* is that the U.S. is spending a fortune on "fixing it" while China and others do nothing! [Dec 5, 2013 08:54:50 AM]

The speaker distances themselves from the concept of "global warming" while assigning it to another source. The same is done with the efforts to "fix it" which makes the US "spend a fortune". We learn thus that for the speaker, GW is no more than a concept, an abstraction. But this concept has economic repercussions on their country, while others –China – are not doing anything. (14) appears to be the only tweet where RD is used to argue. He informs his followers about what he thinks is wrong with GW.

The analysis of RD in Trump's GW tweets reveals that he uses hybrid forms of RD more than direct or indirect speech. With 9 instances out of 13, indexicals emerge as his preferred strategy to report other voices, the majority of which he disagrees with. The reason for this disparity is probably inherent to the hybrid nature of the quotations themselves and which, as it is claimed by pragmaticists, adds felicity conditions to an utterance, not truth-conditions. Trump could therefore be simply echoing presuppositions he shares with his followers and not revealing new information. In other words, by quoting previous discourse or simply pointing to them Trump does not add arguments to support their conclusion in a bid to make them more credible. Rather, he uses them to achieve his personal communicative purposes: deny the reality of GW and lampoon climate believers. Besides, the use of free direct speech to surround the quotations allows Trump to manipulate their content as he sets the context and connotation attached to them during interpretation.

### 3.2 Irony

Irony is the most prevalent polyphonic phenomenon in the corpus with 39 instances. This section will not propose a detailed analysis of every ironic tweet from the corpus but rather that of a selection of tweets, mainly because there is a constant repetition of the same format in several tweets. I will therefore refer to specific tweets in the appendix.

In every tweet analyzed, I will uncover the POVs and highlight the contradiction that creates the expected mockery effect. Let us consider (15) where exaggeration ('continue to destroy the competitiveness') is the ironic/polyphonic marker. The exaggeration is probably introduced by the presupposition yielded by *continue*, which points to the fact that the destruction of competitiveness had been occurring before the tweet. The first clause is a naïve and untrue justification/consequence as *fight mythical global warming* reveals. More specifically, the attributive *mythical* points to the speaker's awareness of the naivety of this POV whose source is, therefore, the false $s_0$ (Nølke 2017, 178).

> (15) Let's *continue to destroy the competitiveness* of our factories & manufacturing so we
> can *fight mythical* global warming. China is so happy! [Nov 1, 2012 09:23:22 AM]

(15) has the following POVs:

> $POV_1$: Let's continue to destroy the competitiveness of our factories & manufacturing (p)

> $POV_2$: we can fight mythical global warming

> $POV_3$: if *p* then *q*

> $POV_4$: $POV_3$ is absurd

The last sentence exacerbates the naivety of the false speaker and makes them even more of an imposter. US officials' policies are accused of favoring China rather than Americans.

In other tweets, the speaker opposes a situation which, to them, is contradictory to the claims of the other source. The irony emerges from this 'exposition of the truth', as in (16) where the ironic marker is the interrogative structure.

(16) It's extremely cold in NY & NJ – not good for flood victims. Where is global warming? [Nov 5, 2012 10:55:30 AM]

POV$_1$: The cold in NY & NJ is due to global warming

POV$_2$: POV$_2$ is absurd

The speaker aims to expose GW as a "fraud" and a "myth". To them, the extreme cold indicates that the earth is cooling down rather than heating, as the target suggests (POV$_1$). This same pattern whereby the speaker exposes the other voice by confronting their POV to the supposed "reality of the situation" comes back very often in Trump's tweets[15]. The only variation appears to be location: USA, Middle East, UK, etc.

35 of the 39 instances of irony in the corpus resort to the same pattern which consists in assigning a POV$_1$ – "It is extremely cold because of global warming" – and feigning to be its source while the reality of cold temperatures to the speaker is enough proof that earth is rather cooling down[16]. There is often little lexical and syntactic variation between the tweets. Their most common feature is the recurring question – "Where the hell is Global warming?" – where the speaker not only feigns ignorance but also feigns to "need" GW to heat the freezing temperatures. The targets in these tweets, though coming from different sources – politics, media, civil society including researchers – are all GW believers. Statistically, the use of this line of attack certainly demonstrates its importance in Trump's positioning in the GW debate. The reality of freezing temperatures appears to be his favorite line of argument, which allows him to belittle scientists as in (17). The ironic clue here is the exaggeration in *too bad*.

(17) It is really *too bad* that the scientists studying GLOBAL WARMING in Antarctica got stuck on their icebreaker because of massive ice and cold [Dec 27, 2013, 07:02:58 AM]

This tweet has two povs as follows:

POV$_1$: It is really too bad that the scientists studying GLOBAL WARMING in Antarctica got stuck on their icebreaker because of massive ice and cold

POV$_2$: The massive ice and cold in Antarctica is caused by global warming

POV$_3$: POV$_2$ is absurd

Thanks to the overstatement (Rabatel 2012) *too bad*, the speaker feigns to lament the situation. But the capital letters in GW are a clue to an opposite interpretation. As a GW denier, that the speaker, through (17), is making fun of this scientific expedition to investigate

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[15] I will come back later to the confusion made between temperatures and climate in the tweets (Allen and MacAleer 2018)

[16] See appendices, tweets: 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 20, 24, 27, 32, 37, 43, 44, 47, 57, 61, 62, 66, 68, 73, 74, 75, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88.

GW in the Arctic. The dark humor results from what the speaker presents as situational irony. As can be seen under (18) too, the speaker gives the addressee cues for the interpretation of irony in his tweet. The rhetorical question and the capital letters in GW are the main ironic markers.

(18) I wonder if when Secy. Kerry goes to Iraq and Afghanistan he pushes hard for them to look at GLOBAL WARMING and study the carbon footprint? [Jun 23, 2014 11:26:10 AM]

This tweet, like the others, presents a naïve speaker – who is ignorant of what Kerry does in Iraq and Afghanistan. (18) has the following POVs:

POV$_1$: When Secy. Kerry goes to Iraq and Afghanistan, he pushes hard for them to look at GLOBAL WARMING and study the carbon footprint

POV$_2$: POV$_1$ is absurd

Thanks to its interrogative structure – a rhetorical question, the tweet exposes a naive speaker as the source of the absurd POV. The rejection of POV$_1$ covers a serious and sharp criticism of John Kerry accused of applying double standards. He cannot influence other countries to look into GW and study carbon footprint the same way he does with his own country. The speaker is laying the blame on Kerry here for lacking key virtue (Ross and Caldwell 2017). The analysis of irony in these tweets reveals a regular pattern and often the same goals. There is always an imposter, a stranger who disguised himself as the speaker (Nølke 2017) to express a naïve POV. The latter is rejected by the actual speaker and the ironic effect results from the way this rejection is staged. The aim is first to argue that the planet is cooling down instead. This is probably the reason why Trump ironically and repeatedly calls for a "dose of global warming" to help heat the planet. Second, Trump's sarcastic tweets seek to "expose" GW as a "fraud" on American citizens by the political, intellectual, and media elites. Finally, thanks to irony, Trump paints a picture of his opponents as unintelligent, political imposters, and geopolitically weak.

## 4   Closing remarks

The polyphonic analysis of Trump's tweets on GW reveals the following. (1) polyphony is a pervasive phenomenon – almost 2 in 3 tweets are polyphonic – and Trump mainly uses three types of polyphonic markers: negation reported discourse, and irony. This points to steadfastness in terms of strategy. (2) The majority of polyphonic instances fall under irony.

Trump's climate denial is engraved in his GW tweets. This denial relies solidly on the interaction of voices he stages in the majority of his tweets. Most of the time the other voices are those of his opponents in the climate debate. RD is at the center of the strategy to expose his opponents and transfer negative attention onto them. In fact, in most instances, (10), (11), (12), Trump does not innocently transfer the attention, but he wraps it with a negative connotation in the process. Although he agrees with the GW-denying voices in some of the RD instances, he wishes the followers to remember that GW is associated with the opponent's

voice, not his. In polyphonic terms, he is not the source of the propositional content they express. RD participates thus in Trump's negative campaigning strategy whereby the focus is laid on the competitor's alleged faults and weaknesses (Dolezal et al. 2017). He prioritizes the attack on opponents – liberal politicians, intellectuals, and media – over his self-promotion and the promotion of his climate policies if any (Ross and Caldwell 2019, 14).

Trump uses GW to consistently attack the character of his political and ideological opponents and attempt a character assassination on them. His negative tone on GW is not only meant to deny its existence but also to nurture a dark and degrading depiction of his opponents as an all-going-negative rhetorical tactic (Ross and Caldwell 2019). The polyphonic analysis of irony works to highlight that the former US president's approach to GW was to hold up for mockery those he disagreed with. Thanks to irony, Trump paints an unsavory picture of his political opponents in a bid to discredit them. The final goal is to cause reputational damage. Trump is aware that laying the blame on the other can prove to be "more destructive to the political ambitions and plans of any given actor than a failure in action". (Ross and Caldwell 2019, 15) More importantly, as a prominent figure on Twitter, one can assume that Trump knew Twitter's audience expands beyond mere Twitter users to the broader citizenry. Therefore, his negative campaign on GW would not limit itself to Twitter users but spread even to non-users through other channels that echoed his tweets. I agree with Zhang et al. (2017) that Trump's Twitter strategy included aggregating and directing negative attention toward his opponents. However, with GW, he seems to do more than that. He mainly wraps the attention with a negative connotation before directing it to his followers while emptying GW of its meaning in the process and using it mostly as a political and a rhetorical tool to slander his opponents and portray them as unfit for office or for research positions.

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Francis Badiang Oloko

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