

This document represents the initial pre-review draft of the chapter. For citation, please refer to Krysanova T. Meaning-making in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials: Multimodal perspective. In Butler, R. (ed.). *Political Discourse Analysis: Legitimation Strategies in Crisis and Conflict*. Edinburgh University Press, 2024. P. 123-144.

Meaning making in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials: multimodal perspective

Tetiana Krysanova

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University

krysanova@vnu.edu.ua

1. Introduction

Important political events nowadays are accompanied by various media interpretations that have a great potential to influence the public opinion (Wodak 2020). The growing role of video commercials in modern political campaigns arises the interest to the context-based process of meaning-making through the synergy of multisemiotic resources. A multimodal perspective paves the way for explaining the persuasive force of political discourse taking into account the constructive integration of semiotic modes and resources in a certain semiotic environment in its connection with the communicants' shared knowledge as well as social and cultural factors.

This paper's objectives are to provide some insights into multimodal issues of emerging meaning in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials. I focus on Trump's 2020 election campaign commercials with a twin aim: theoretically, I intend to explain the mechanism of multimodal meaning-making in political campaign advertising and empirically, I define the combinability potential of each semiotic resource in meaning making. My research concerns not so much which meanings are constructed in the commercials, but to a greater extent, what multimodal means are employed to construct a particular meaning and which regulations provide the process of meaning making. To reach my goals, I employ an integrative cognitive-pragmatic and cognitive-semiotic framework to study multimodal meaning-making in commercials. Cognitive and pragmatic accounts on meaning-making emphasize the intersubjective interaction of communicants in (re)constructing meanings as well as enactive and embodied character of meaning making. The cognitive-semiotic vantage point stresses the meaningful potential of semiotic modes and resources in commercials.

Political advertising is a form of campaigning that enables candidates to indirectly communicate with their voters and influence their choice. By running ads on TV and the Internet, candidates not only communicate important issues to the target audience, but also highlight the

shortcomings of their opponents. Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials are short films (about thirty seconds) aiming at persuading viewers to vote against Biden by eliciting viewers' negative emotions, mainly of fear. They make up a brief story predicting a fearful future life of American citizens under the Biden's presidency on the basis of shared patterns of verbal and nonverbal human behavior.

Although there is a significant number of works on various aspects of commercials, including lexical analysis of differences between winning and losing commercials (Lowry and Naser 2010), campaign advertising strategies (Denton et al. 2020), gender peculiarities (Williams 2019), and functional differentiation of political commercials (Airne and Benoi 2005), there are very few multimodal accounts of meaning making in political campaign commercials. Meade and Robles (2017) explore how language and communication are linked with historical narratives through the use of multimodal stories in US political commercials. Arnold-Murray (2021) examines a variety of semiotic resources used to construct dialogues multimodally in political commercials. Horst (2018) studies multimodal metaphorical and metonymical meaning making processes in German and Polish commercials.

In this paper, I will first explain the rationale of the integrative approach applied to the study of meaning making in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials. Then, I provide a succinct yet profound insight into cognitive-pragmatic and cognitive-semiotic aspects of meaning making in commercials. Next, I determine various semiotic resources peculiar to constructing fear in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials, specify the meaningful potential of each semiotic resource, and single out multisemiotic patterns of meaning making. Finally, I draw some tentative conclusions and make suggestions for broadening this multimodal analysis of meaning making in commercials.

2. Analyzing meaning making in political campaign commercials: method and data

In order to analyze meaning making in Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials, I base my research on the interactional-dynamic view highlighting the interaction between a candidate and electorate aimed at (re)constructing meanings. Multimodal and multisemiotic nature of commercials enables to regard them as a cinematic phenomenon where meanings can be constructed not only by verbal means, but also by dynamic images and specific technical devices peculiar to cinematography.

2.1 Political campaign commercial as cinematic phenomenon

The issue of constructing meanings in political campaign commercials draws attention to the cinematic features of this type of videos. They are created to make an impact on voters and to ensure that they will consume the a candidate's message constructed by the combination of various

semiotic means specific for film. Meaning making in commercials emerges as a dynamic process of social interaction between the candidate and voters. The communicative nature of political campaign commercials is rooted in the reality as it joints the ‘worlds’ of politicians and voters on the basis of the shared knowledge. Their interaction emphasizes communication as a dynamic situationally-dependant process of constructing social values and social relations that emphasizes the interpretive and constructed character of meanings. This interaction is mediated by camera, which guides and directs the joint attention providing the meaning-making process. Meanings emerge as the result of ongoing and enactive joint interpretative activity of politicians and voters who appear to be participatory meaning-makers. As Foolen (2019:44) puts it,

the mind is not seen as something isolated from the rest of the world, [...], but as connected to body, the environment, and other minds; or, in a popular phrasing in this approach, it is embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive.

The interactive character of meaning-making in commercials is due to the active role of filmmakers and viewers in (re)constructing meanings. Filmmakers comprise all participants involved in constructing on-screen meanings—a candidate, namely Donald Trump, and his PR team members who intend the meaning, and those directly involved in the filmmaking process—director, cameraman, actor, etc., who construct the intended meaning on the screen. The target audience of political commercials are viewers, they are remote in space and time with different ethnic, socio-cultural, and gender characteristics. They don’t take the immediate part in meaning making, their participation is indirect. However, filmmakers take into account their world knowledge including social and cultural characteristics.

Commercials provide the dynamics of meaning making through sensory perception, body, emotions, language, and worldview. This highlights the interplay of material-perceptive and socio-semiotic aspects of meaning making in political commercials. The former is realized in the embodiment of meanings on the screen through human bodies, artifacts, and technical cinematic devices, while the latter represents the system of social values of a certain society constructed by the combination of semiotic resources. It focuses the research attention on the interaction between filmmakers and viewers as participatory meaning makers as well as the interplay of semiotic resources and modes involved in constructing meanings.

Political campaign commercials are multimodal and multisemiotic in their nature since a synergistic combination of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic systems constructs the film meaning through audial and visual modes. Mode, as Bateman and Schmidt (2012) put it, is considered the information channel of communication associated with sensory modality as it is related to the way an individual hears, sees, or tactilely perceives material objects. Audial and visual modes in commercials provide perception as the audial mode is realized through speech, music, voice, sound effects, etc. and the visual mode is represented by the screen image—mimics, body

movements, visual effects, drawings, etc. Every mode contains semiotic resources—socially conditioned meaning-making resources that construct social, individual, affective, etc. meanings according to the needs of a particular community (Leeuwen 2006). In Section 3.2, I will describe semiotic resources typical for meaning making in commercials.

The meaning emerges as the result of the integration of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources implemented through aural and visual modes. Each semiotic resource is presented in both modes employing specific semiotic means: verbal resource involves lexical, syntactic, and discursive means represented in the form of oral speech or in the written form on the screen; nonverbal resource encompasses facial expressions, gestures, voice changes, and body movements, and cinematic resource includes camera shot, camera angle, sound and light effects. The synergistic effect gives rise to meaning making, which is grounded on the bodily experience associated with the emotional perception.

2.2 Constructing emotive meaning in political campaign commercials

Emotions are crucial for most people's cinematic experience, and, therefore, are widely constructed in commercials. The commercial is emotively prefocused as "emotion is both central and legitimate in political persuasion" (Lakoff 2008: 8) and "it is rational to be outraged by torture, or by corruption" (Lakoff 2008: 8). Therefore, meanings constructed in commercials should be viewed through the prism of their emotionality. Emotions, as Barrett et al. (2007: 374) put it, are "entailed or instantiated by physical processes in the brain or body and thus can be explained by events in the physical world". They are immanently represented in social interaction and they are dynamic, interactive, and socially constructed. According to Tan (1999: 50), film is an 'emotion machine' where "the visual image of a film character is capable of producing direct appeal". The constructing of emotive meaning is closely related to social contexts, namely specific communicative situations. These situations reflect the functional characteristics of emotions as a psychobiological, cultural, and social adaptive mechanism.

Emotions in commercials have a significant motivational potential, which consists in a twofold impact on viewers. On the one hand, filmic emotions activate viewers' perceptual and cognitive spheres involved in the reconstruction of meaning and associated with their world knowledge. On the other hand, they elicit viewers' feelings and emotions grounded on their "identification with character" (Grodal 1999: 131), which is at the heart of empathy (Tan 1999). Empathy as well as emotions makes up the moral-based frame, which is able to ensure the success of a politician (Lakoff 2008: 53). In Lakoff's (2008: 53) parlance,

political thought begins with moral premises, since all political positions are supposed to be correct. To get the public to adopt progressive moral positions you have to activate progressive moral thought in them by openly and constantly stressing morality.

Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials intend to influence the audience through eliciting fear associated with the Biden's presidency and are directed to make the voting for Biden impossible. Fear is a basic negative emotion, caused by a maleficial action and aimed at mobilizing efforts to prevent harm to the individual. Constructed fear in commercials has a social nature and is connected with real life situations, which seem to be frightening for voters: a decreasing police funding, which will lead to higher crime rates, raising taxes, deterioration in the standard of living, the immigrants crisis, and unemployment, etc. In order to reduce the risk of becoming a victim and prevent from these situations viewers are expected to mobilize themselves against Biden.

2.3 Method and data

The integrative cognitive-pragmatic and cognitive-semiotic approach applied in this research is underpinned by the theories of blended classical joint attention (Turner 2017), performativity (Fischer-Lichte 2008), and conceptual integration (Fauconnier and Turner 2003). Both cognitive pragmatics and cognitive semiotics stress 'on-line' properties of meaning-making, which are due to its procedural nature. In this perspective meaning making appears as a dynamic, enactive, and embodied process, which is the result of the intersubjective interaction of the candidate and electorate in constructing 'meaning-in-context'.

The data include two Trump's anti-Biden political campaign commercials entitled *Cards* and *Break In*, which address criminal justice and economic issues. In the following pages, I carry out a case study analysis of affective episodes comprising the on-screen construction of fear perceived by characters. Both commercials construct fear on the examples of life situations, when ordinary American citizens worry about the decrease in police funding, the taxes raise, and the increase of unemployment. *Break In* depicts an elderly scared woman who becomes a victim of a home burglar attack due to the defunding of the police attributed to Biden's future policy. *Cards* is focused on worries of a young woman grounded on economic and financial problems, which may be caused by Biden's policies.

The integrative approach applied in this research comprises three stages of the procedure. Firstly, I determine the elements of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources peculiar to constructing on-screen fear in commercials. Then, I highlight the meaning-making potential of multisemiotic elements and differentiate their possible configurations. Finally, I single out typical multisemiotic patterns of their combinability on the basis of cognitive and functional parameters.

Emotions on the screen are not real, they are constructed and embodied by actors through physiological and sensory-perceptual manifestations and behavioral patterns characteristic for a certain emotion. On-screen emotions are viewed as "construction of signs, formed after a model of a general human emotion, to create a believable and convincing illusion of the emotion as we know

it in daily life” (Konijn 2000: 60). Accordingly, actors’ body movements, facial expressions, and dialogues, etc. should refer to the components of a real life in order to construct the imitated emotion on the screen. The main ‘tools’ for the implementation of constructed life situations include the combination of verbal and nonverbal means as well as specific technical cinematic devices aimed at intensifying filmic emotion.

3. Results and discussion

This section addresses cognitive, pragmatic, and semiotic issues of meaning making underpinned by the theories of intersubjectivity, performativity, and conceptual integration. The analysis of multisemiotic means peculiar for constructing fear in commercials makes it possible to determine the meaningful potential of semiotic resources and to systematize typical patterns of their integration.

3.1 Meaning making as co-participation of candidates and voters

In my analysis of the emergence of meaning in political campaign commercials I proceed from my claim that meaning making is the dynamic process of intersubjective interaction between filmmakers and viewers (Krysanova 2019), who can be viewed as participatory meaning makers. Meaning making appears to be intersubjective resulting from the human desire to interact, which is realized in the ability of sharing feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Political campaign commercial is the ‘environment’ for meaning making in the process of communication between candidates and voters. Filmmakers and viewers take part in meaning making interactively as co-participants. Their interaction is situationally-dependant and socially-related, since they co-participate in meaning making through implementation of social values within the framework of social practice.

On the one hand, filmmakers intend to use various semiotic means to construct on-screen meanings. On the other hand, viewers strive to reconstruct them basing on their shared knowledge. Filmmakers’ and viewers’ co-participation is grounded on the awareness that communicants who exist in different spatial and temporal environment are jointly attending even if they don’t know of each other’s existence (Turner 2017: 3). In this case, their joint attention is bidirectional as “each agent is aware of the other’s experiences—even if they are not mutually aware of sharing experiences” (Brinck 2008: 121). The integration of filmmakers’ and recipients’ views is achieved through the camera, which provides the perception.

Since the commercial is made for viewers and is directed to a particular social group of viewers, it brings to the fore the performative aspect of filmmakers-viewers interaction. Commercial is viewed as a communicative event in the course of which social relations between filmmakers and viewers are established. I claim that the performative aspect emphasizes how viewers perceive and reconstruct on-screen meanings as well as how filmmakers take into account social, national, or gender characteristics of viewers. Applying the theory of performativity

(Fischer-Lichte 2008), I view meaning-making in political commercials as a performative act grounded on the dynamic intersubjective interaction of communicants. Being involved into on-screen events through identification with characters, viewers experience the same emotions. Everything that happens on the screen, namely terrifying music, crying, screaming, pleas for help, etc., triggers unpleasant emotions, mostly fear and despair, engaging viewers to co-participate in meaning making. On-screen events, though constructed by various semiotic resources, turn to be real for viewers that makes their experience liminal as “generating emotions and inducing a liminal state go side by side and cannot be separated from one another” (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 177). The state of liminality occurs when the boundaries between watching on-screen events and co-participating in them get blurred, placing viewers in-between.

The intersubjective and performative aspects of filmmakers-viewers interaction via commercials implicate the pivotal role of embodiment in meaning making. Embodiment is viewed as bodily states that arise during the perception of an emotional stimulus (Barret et al. 2007) and is manifested through person’s sensorimotor skills in the process of social interaction. Emotive meaning in commercials is always embodied as a human body and emotion are interconnected. The human body appears to be phenomenal and semiotic since it expresses the emotion as well as serves as its sign. The connection of emotions with the body lies in the fact that emotion, as Damasio (2003: 86) puts it, “is the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking”. In Zlatev’s parlance (2008: 228), embodiment involves a cross-modal mapping between the perception of the surrounding and the perception of the body and corresponds to a certain action, object, or event. A bodily sign in commercials is used communicatively and, therefore, is apt to be meaningful. Embodied meaning in commercials is realized by the use of nonverbal means, such as voice changes, facial expressions, or gestures, etc., which are the integral component of meaning making.

In commercials, intersubjective, performative, and semiotic aspects are interweaven. While the intersubjective aspect stresses the interaction of communicants in meaning making, the performative one emphasizes the active role of viewers in reconstructing meanings, and the semiotic aspect focuses on the materiality of signs and their combinations involved in the constructing of meanings.

3.2 Semiotic resources of constructing fear in political commercials

Multimodal perspective of political commercials focuses the research attention on the interplay of modes and semiotic resources in meaning making. These semiotically heterogeneous resources are blended to construct emotive meaning and the configurations of semiotic elements determine contextual properties of emotive meanings.

Fear in political commercials is constructed by specific components of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic semiotic resources through aural and visual modes. Verbal semiotic resource of constructing fear comprises lexical and syntactic means. It includes words that name fear: panic, horror and describe it: scared, afraid, worry, terrified. The empirical analysis shows that fear is mostly constructed by words of different parts of speech with the negative meaning: violence, risk, fatally, unacceptable, rape, insult, ruin, defund, crime, criminal, etc. They indirectly express fear appealing to the reasons for its appearance. Such emotion-laden words aim at eliciting the state of fear and their ability to construct fear is context-dependent and tied to a particular communicative situation.

Syntactic means implicitly realize fear performing an expressive function. They are represented by negative or incomplete sentences, and inverted constructions. These expressive forms are directed to affect the viewers through conveying the speaker's psychological state as a reaction to the state of affairs.

Most of the cases analyzed show that verbal speech is not represented by on-screen characters. It is used orally by the over-the-screen speaker and in written form by on-screen signs, slogans, statements.

The following examples illustrate the construction of fear by the use of lexical and syntactic means. In the commercial *Cards*, a woman, who is a mother of four, is sitting silently, displaying posters with sentences in block text. Two of her posters claim:

- (1) I'm afraid to say this out loud ... (*Cards*, 00.00.21).
- (2) I won't risk my children's future with Biden (*Cards*, 00.00.23).

The first example contains the lexeme *afraid*, which describes her fear. The utterance is incomplete what is marked graphically. It intensifies the emotion of fear experienced by the woman, which is explicitly realized in the utterance. The second example illustrates the use of an emotion-laden word *risk* combined with the syntactic negation. The meaning of fear is conveyed implicitly and is connected with the predicted situation of raising taxes and increasing of unemployment specified in the previous context.

Nonverbal means of constructing fear include physiological manifestations of the emotion, which have asthenic and sthenic forms. The first is manifested in the passive reaction to the imaginary danger: numbness, stupor, and the second—in the active movements aimed at preventing danger. As fear is always embodied in commercials, it is constructed in most cases by facial expressions: wide eyes, a panicked look, a pale face, trembling lips, a twitched mouth, and body movements—trembling, immobility, uncontrolled gestures, etc. Fear also can be constructed by aggressive movements of on-screen characters that implicate the meaning of danger for the audience. Voice changes are not typical for commercials and may be represented by screaming.

Cinematic devices, such as camera shots, angles, light, and sound techniques, etc. also possess the meaning-making potential in commercials. They create the mimetic effect and may complement, intensify, or contradict the emotive meaning constructed by verbal and nonverbal means. As recent researches show, viewers are bodily engaged while observing both the movement of cinematic devices and emotions of film characters. Moreover, sensory-motor areas of the human brain are able to change their activity due to the camera position (Heimann et al. 2014). My empirical analysis demonstrates that the most peculiar cinematic devices for constructing fear in commercials are shot size, camera angle, light, and sound effects.

A close up or a middle up is a mandatory component of constructing fear emphasizing different aspects of the emotion. While a close up is affective highlighting mostly the facial expression, a middle up, in its turn, stresses the activity connected with body movements.

A camera angle focuses on the dynamics of character's actions indicating the emotional state of fear. This requires a wide use of various angle types: side, top, and bottom angles, over-the-shoulder shot, Dutch angle, and POV, etc. They emphasize different aspects of the emotion, for instance, a top angle indicates helplessness and confusion of the character experiencing fear; and POV enables to see the reality through the character's point of view, forcing the audience to experience fear at the same time as the film character.

Sound effects represented in commercials for constructing fear are widely employed. They include non-diegetic music, voice over the screen, and both diegetic and non-diegetic noises. While diegesis refers to the fictional world of the commercial, non-diegesis involves the objective world of the audience. The prevalent use of non-diegetic music proves the idea that all events in the commercial aim at affecting viewers. Emotions caused by music arise as a result of a complex interaction between music, viewers, and the situation (Juslin 2001: 7) and emerge independently of the viewers' consciousness (Cohen 2011: 264). While music is able to express and cause emotions, the screen represents the object to which this emotion is directed (Cohen 2011). Music employed in commercials may be described as sharp, discontinuous, non-linear, disturbing, and ominous with a preference for stringed instruments.

Light effects characteristic for constructing fear in commercials include dim light, combinations of black and white light, flashes, flickering, etc. Such effects create the atmosphere of ominousness.

Example (3) illustrates the construction of fear verbally, non-verbally, and cinematically in the commercial Break In. The fragment under analysis depicts an elderly woman who is under a home burglar attack. Watching TV news about defunding the police she notices someone breaking into her house and experiences fear. The verbal semiotic resource is represented by emotion-laden words defund, remove, which implicitly convey fear by appealing to the situation of increased

danger. Nonverbal means contain such indicators of fear as a contoured face, twitched lips, and a panicking look. Her body in stupor testifies the asthenic form of fear (Figure 1). Cinematic devices clarify and intensify the emotive meaning. While the middle up stresses her actions in fear, Dutch angle demonstrates her state of unease for viewers. Sound effects employed in this commercial comprise slow in tempo but sharp and disturbing in tone non-diegetic music accompanied by a loud over-the-screen voice, which reports cuts to police funding. The combination of a black and white light creates an ominous atmosphere.

(3) Seattle's pledge to defund its police department by 50 percent, even including a proposal to remove 911 dispatchers from police control...(Break In, 00.00.05).



Figure 1 Break In (00.00.05)

The results of a multifaceted analysis of political commercials show that the meaning cannot be constructed by the means of a separate semiotic resource. The meaning appears to be the effect of the semiotic integration. As Bateman and Schmidt (2012:91) put it,

This is the central issue for a theory of multimodality in a nutshell: just what are the ways in which semiotic modes can be brought together and what does the combination achieve?

Different semiotic resources applied in political commercials interact producing meaningful sequences that can be analyzed only in their dynamics. Their integration constructs meanings synergistically creating multisemiotic blends.

3.3 Multisemiotic integration in political campaign commercials

In cognitive-semiotic vantage point, emotive meaning in political commercials may be viewed as a result of conceptual integration. Applying the theory of conceptual integration (Fauconnier and Turner 2003), each semiotic resource, verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic ones, is treated as a separate mental input space since meanings constructed in each mental space are interpreted and processed in different ways (Krysanova and Shevchenko 2021). This involves the activation of the generic mental space, which contains information about communicants' shared knowledge. Meanings of each input space are projected into a mixed space, where they intersect and cross-map giving forth the creation of a blend. The meaning constructed in the blended space is emergent as it is only partially motivated by the meanings in input spaces. The specificity of emergent meaning lies in its novelty, indivisibility, and unpredictability. Therefore, emergent blends tend to be dynamic integrated entities that though created by the integration of semiotic components appear to maintain their own meaningful identity. The formation of emergent blends of

emotive meanings is a continual process as any change of a semiotic element provokes the formation of a new blend with the modified meaning.

The analysis of the mechanisms of multisemiotic integration may shed light on multimodal perspective of meaning making in political commercials. By applying cognitive-pragmatic and cognitive-semiotic approaches, I claim that the combinability of semiotic resources can be reduced to certain multisemiotic patterns based on static and dynamic criteria. The static criterion enables to single out patterns caused by quantitative, qualitative, and salient issues.

The meaning of fear in Trump's anti-Biden political commercials is constructed by elements of three semiotic resources forming a three-component pattern, which indicates the quantitative issue. The prevailing employment of this pattern can be explained by the significant persuasive force of the combination of multisemiotic elements. The verbal component, represented orally or in written, reinforces the image, which, in its turn, underpins the verbal text, and cinematic elements specify and intensify the emotive meaning. This pattern includes multifarious configurations of semiotic elements causing the volatility of combinations. The most typical is the combination of a verbal component, facial expressions, a middle up, non-diegetic music, and voice over.

The qualitative issue is connected with the ability of multisemiotic elements to be unidirectional or multidirectional in constructing the emotive meaning. As components of all semiotic resources in commercials are directed to construct fear, I can assert about the use of a convergent pattern in commercials. The components of the convergent pattern jointly construct fear, complementing and/or intensifying one and the same meaning. The divergent pattern characterized by the components, which contradict each other in constructing meanings, are not peculiar to Trump's anti-Biden commercials.

In terms of salience of multisemiotic elements within the meaningful combination, I determine the use of both a parity and a non-parity pattern in commercials. The parity pattern involves the equivalent use of multisemiotic elements equally participating in constructing fear and it makes up 62 % of all analyzed fragments. On the contrary, the non-parity pattern is marked by the prevalence of elements belonging to one semiotic system within the combination.

The dynamic criterion enables to distinguish synchronous or consecutive patterns by the simultaneous or sequential use of multisemiotic means. The semiotic elements within the synchronous pattern simultaneously participate in emotive meaning making while the components of the consecutive pattern are consistently involved in the construction of fear. The statistical analysis shows that the synchronous (58%) and the consecutive (42%) patterns are represented in commercials by almost the same ratio, which indicates a tendency to the dynamic construction of fear in commercials.

Consider example (4), which illustrates the use of three-component, convergent, parity, and consecutive patterns within one fragment. It shows the episode of the burglar's attack on the elderly woman. The woman is terrified when she notices a burglar but after trying to dial 911, she hears a voice recording that no one can answer her emergency call. The woman's fear is constructed non-verbally—her face is distorted, the mouth is wide-open, and movements aimed at the self-protection are uncontrolled. The cinematic resource is represented by the middle up and the side angle combined with the over-the-screen voice, non-diegetic alarming music, and the dim light. The verbal semiotic resource includes oral and written utterances indicating the probable cause for the burglar's attack and containing the emotion-laden word reduce and the negative sentence, which denies the possibility of a safe life during a Biden presidency. These utterances are represented graphically on the screen while the voice-over constructs the call answer demonstrating the probable result of a future Biden's policy. The combinations of elements belonging to three semiotic systems, which are directed to construct fear, make up three-component and convergent patterns. The parity use of multisemiotic elements demonstrates the equal meaning-making potential of all semiotic systems. The consecutive chain of meaningful combinations gives the episode more dynamism and intensifies the constructing of fear.

(4) You have reached 911. I'm sorry that there is no one here to answer your emergency call. Leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can (Break In, 00.00.18).



Figure 2 Break In (00.00.19)

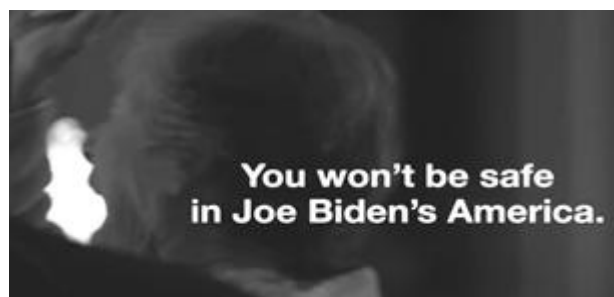


Figure 3 Break In (00.00.24)

Thus, the examples above illustrate the typical patterns of emotive meaning making in Trump's anti-Biden political commercials aimed at constructing fear caused by predicted Biden's presidency. Multisemiotic resources are able to form various meaningful combinations dependent on the filmmaker's intentions. It becomes possible as any element in the multimodal discourse is

semiotic and may be used to communicate. Though multisemiotic combinations may be characterized by the volatility of their elements, they can be organized according to particular regulations. They are connected with cognitive, semiotic, and functional aspects of multimodal meaning making. Specified above patterns may be used to further interpret underlying mechanisms of meaning making in political commercials.

4. Conclusions

This paper provides the multimodal perspective of the emergence of meaning in political commercials. Drawing on the theories of blended classic joint attention, performativity, and conceptual integration, I apply the integrative cognitive-pragmatic and cognitive-semiotic approach to explain how the meaning of fear is constructed in Trump's ant-Biden political campaign commercials.

I argue that meaning-making in political campaign commercials is a performative act grounded on the dynamic intersubjective interaction between a candidate and electorate constituted by bodily and environmental factors. Political commercials are viewed as a cinematic phenomenon of multimodal and multisemiotic nature that highlights the decisive role of modes and semiotic resources in meaning making. Accordingly, emotive meaning in commercials appears as an emergent dynamic construct, the result of multisemiotic integration of verbal, nonverbal, and cinematic elements, which possess a significant meaning-making potential. The peculiar multisemiotic components characteristic for constructing fear comprise: verbal means, which explicitly and implicitly express the emotion; specific facial expressions and body movements; and cinematic devices—a close up and a middle up, various angle types, non-diegetic music and noises, and voice-over.

The combinations of multisemiotic elements are subject to static and dynamic criteria that enable to single out constructive patterns, which demonstrate the paradigmatic relations of semiotic elements. Typical for constructing fear in commercials are three-component, convergent, parity, synchronous/consecutive patterns.

I hope that the suggested integrative approach will contribute to deepen our comprehension of meaning-making and shed light on the ways how different modes and semiotic resources create semantic sequences in political commercials.

References

- Airne, D & Benoit WL 2005, 'Political television advertising in campaign 2000', *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 473-492.
- Arnold-Murray, K 2021, 'Multimodally constructed dialogue in political campaign commercials', *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 173, pp. 15-27, DOI:/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.11.014.

- Barrett, L, Mesquita, B, Ochsner, KN, & Gross, JJ 2007, 'The experience of emotion' *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 58, no 1, pp. 373-403, DOI:10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085709.
- Bateman, A, & Schmidt, KH 2012, *Multimodal film analysis. How films mean*, Routledge, London, New York.
- Break In* 2020, video commercial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moZOrq0qL3Q>.
- Brinck, I 2008, 'The role of intersubjectivity in the development of intentional communication', in J Zlatev, TP Racine, Ch Sinha, & Itkonen E (eds.), *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 115-140.
- Cards 2020, video commercial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FucY0Tm6XO0>.
- Cohen, A 2011, 'Music as a source of emotion in film', in JA Sloboda & PN Juslin (eds.), *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*. University Press, Oxford, pp. 249-272.
- Damasio, A 2003, *Looking for Spinoza: joy, sorrow, and the feeling brain*, Harcourt, New York.
- Denton, RE, Trent, JS & Friedenber, RV 2020, *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham.
- Fauconnier, G, & Turner, M 2003, *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. Basic Books, New York.
- Fischer-Lichte, E 2008, *The transformative power of performance: A new aesthetics*. Routledge, London & New York.
- Foolen, A 2019, 'Quo vadis pragmatics? From adaptation to participatory sense-making', *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 145, pp. 39-46, DOI:10.1016/j.pragma.2019.03.008.
- Grodal, T 1999, 'Emotions, Cognitions, and Narrative Patterns in Film', in C Plantinga & GM Smith (eds.), *Passionate View: Film, Cognition and Emotion*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, pp. 127-145.
- Heimann, KS, Umiltà, MA, Guerra, M, & Gallese, V 2014, 'Moving mirrors: A high density EEG study investigating the effects of camera movements on motor cortex activation during action observation', *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, vol. 26, no. 9, pp. 2087-2101.
- Horst, D 2018, *Meaning-making and political campaign advertising. A cognitive-linguistic and film-analytical perspective on audiovisual figurativity*, De Gruyter, Berlin.
- Juslin, PN 2011, 'Music and Emotion: Seven Questions, Seven Answers', in I Deliège & J Davidson (eds.), *Music and the mind: Essays in honour of John Sloboda*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 113-135.
- Konijn, EA 2000, *Acting emotions. Shaping emotions on stage*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

- Krysanova, T 2019, 'Constructing negative emotions in cinematic discourse: a cognitive-pragmatic perspective', *Cognition, Communication, Discourse*, no. 19, pp. 55-77, DOI:10.26565/2218-2926-2019-19-04.
- Krysanova, T & Shevchenko, I 2021, 'Conceptual blending in multimodal construction of negative emotions in film', in A Pawelec, A Shaw, & G Szpila (eds.), *Text-Image-Music: Crossing the Borders. Intermedial Conversations on the Poetics of Verbal, Visual and Musical Texts. In Honour of Prof. Elzbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska. Series: Text –Meaning – Context: Cracow Studies in English Language, Literature and Culture*, vol. 19, Peter Lang, Berlin, pp. 357-371, DOI:10.3726/b18012.
- Lakoff, G 2008, *The Political mind. A cognitive scientist's guide to your brain and its politics*. Penguin Books, London.
- Leeuwen, T van 2006, *Introducing social semiotics*, Routledge, London.
- Lowry, DT & Naser, MdA 2010, 'From Eisenhower to Obama: lexical characteristics of winning versus losing presidential campaign commercials', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 87, no. 3-4, pp. 530-547.
- Meade, MR & Robles, JS 2017, 'Historical and existential coherence in political commercials', *Discourse & Communication*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 404-432, DOI:10.1177/1750481317707560.
- Tan, ES 1999, 'Sentiment in film viewing', in C Plantinga & GM Smith (eds), *Passionate View: Film, Cognition and Emotion*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, London, pp. 48-64.
- Turner, M 2017, 'Multimodal form-meaning pairs for blended classic joint attention', *Linguistics Vanguard*, vol. 3, pp. 1-7, DOI:10.1515 / lingvan-2016-0043.
- Williams, L 2019, 'Political Advertising in the "Year of the Woman": Did X Mark the Spot?', in EA Cook, S Thomas & C Wilcox (eds), *The year of the woman*, Routledge, New York, pp.185-203.
- Wodak, R, Culpeper, J, & Semino, E 2020, 'Shameless normalisation of impoliteness: Berlusconi's and Trump's press conferences', *Discourse & Society*, pp. 1-25.
- Zlatev, J 2008, 'The co-evolution of intersubjectivity and bodily mimesis', in J Zlatev, TP Racine, C Sinha & E Itkonen (eds.), *The Shared Mind: Perspectives of Intersubjectivity*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 215-244.
- Corpus
- Break In, 2020, video commercial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moZOrq0qL3Q>.
- Cards, 2020, video commercial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FucY0Tm6XO0>.