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A Swirl of Semiosis of Communication in Media and Political Discourse: Candidate Trump's Visit to Mexico in 2016

Abstract

The 2016 US elections offer the opportunity for interpretation within a continuum of semiotic processes. This is particularly acute in regards to previous events, such as the visit in August 31, 2016 of US president candidate Donald Trump to Mexico. This paper aims to approach this political event as a cultural text containing several subtexts with diverse layers of meaning production: the mentioned visit as a candidate; Mexican president Peña Nieto's dismissal of secretary Videgaray; Candidate Trump's rally in Phoenix, Arizona, USA. Drawing from Lotman's ideas, special attention is given in this semi-otic process to the inflection point where the paths of history cross and become unpredictable (1999; 2013; 2000). Also, it incorporates this theorist views about the concept of text and semiosphere (1996), in particular as container of collective cultural memory, and meaning production, as well as a point of view from a gender perspective. The analysis includes rhetorical devices, such as *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments, metaphors, as well as pragmatic strategies, such as intensifiers and attenuators to appeal to audience emotions, which make evident a populist right wing ideology embedded in political discourse.

Keywords: Semiotic processes, explosion, inflection point, meaning production, text, semiosphere.

Introduction

Political events such as the 2016 US elections offer the opportunity for interpretation within a continuum of semiotic processes. This is particularly acute in regards to previous events, such as the visit in August 2016 of US president candidate Donald Trump to Mexico. An unprecedented invitation, and subsequent visit, of any aspiring candidate to the US presidency to visit Mexico caused an upheaval in Mexican politics, and a swirl of semiosis in communication. The invitation was extended by Mexican president Peña Nieto to candidates, Hilary Clinton, from the Democratic Party, and to Donald Trump, representing the Republican Party. In both countries there is no record of any president extending an invitation to a candidate running for president in the neighboring country (*La Jornada*, Aug 31, 2016, p. 14).

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Given the above, this paper aims to approach this political event as a cultural phenomenon as a semiotic text containing several moments of explosion with diverse layers of meaning production: 1. Candidate Trump's visit to Mexico on August 31, 2016; 2. Mexican president Peña Nieto's dismissal of secretary Videgaray; 3. Candidate Trump's rally in Phoenix, Arizona, after several hours of visiting Mexico.

The objective of this study is to analyze these moments of explosion in Mexico and in the USA, within the continuous and discontinuous political semiotic processes from the perspective of Lotman's theory of cultural semiotics (1999; 2000; 2013). The study incorporates also this theorist's views about the concept of text and semiosphere (1996), in particular as container of collective cultural memory, and meaning production in regards to boundary. From a gender perspective, this paper focuses on candidate Trump's discourse through the concepts of discrimination and sexism in this semiotic text.

Commenting on Lotman's theory of cultural semiotics, in particular the concept of text, Torop (2004) mentions that "a key concept for cultural semiotics is text. At the same time the text is simultaneously an ontological and an epistemic notion. Text is what we understand in culture and it is through the text that we understand something of culture. Lotman calls the association of the structural model of natural language and space the primordial semiotic dualism" (Torop, 2004, p. 4). Applying this notion to the analysis of Mexican – US political relations within the context of the recent US elections, particularly the visit in August 2016 of US president candidate Donald Trump to Mexico, one can argue that it results in the conceptualization of this political event as a text, that it is a semiotic text. Moreover, one can add with Torop (2004) that "in the case of dialogical treatment of text, space has changed – the textual space has turned into a cultural space, and the text as an artefact produced from a material, has become a cultural text" (p. 60). In this case, the semiotic text that is a political event becomes also a cultural text, embedded in overlapping sign systems – Mexican politics, US politics, 2016 US elections, Mexico-US bilateral relationship. One can observe that the dialogical treatment of this political event as text has produced a change from textual space into a cultural space. Mexican–US political relations thus form a semiotic cultural text, with two simultaneous dimensions, ontological and epistemic.

According to Lotman (1999; 2013) one can identify both continuous and discontinuous processes in any given culture. A continuous process has an implicit predictability, a process which manifests a cyclical or a gradual evolution, in contrast to unpredictability during an explosive process. The above semiotic cultural text, Mexican – US political relations, contains three further texts, or subtexts: 1. Candidate Trump's visit to Mexico on August 31, 2016; 2. Mexican president Peña Nieto's dismissal of secretary Videgaray; 3. Candidate Trump's rally in Phoenix, Arizona, after several hours of visiting Mexico. These texts constitute three specific moments of explosion within the continuum of semiotic processes – Mexico- US political relations, as they were disruptions in the continuous political process, and thus produced unpredictable semiotic paths in both countries. For Lotman (2013) the moment of explosion in semiotic discontinuous processes is a point in which there are several paths intersecting: "The moment of explosion is not only the point at which new possibilities take shape but also the point at which one becomes conscious of another reality, a moment of dislocation and of the reinterpretation of memory" (Lotman, 2013, p. 69). It is at this precise moment of time and space that cultural memory is seen with other eyes and provides the opportunity for reinterpretation.

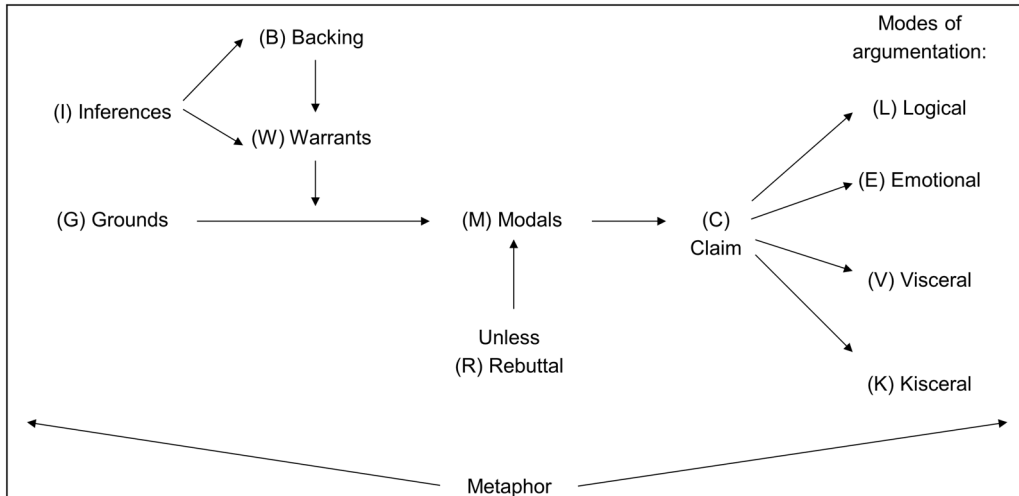
This moment of explosion takes place within what Lotman (2005) has named a semiosphere: “[Systems] They function only by being immersed in a specific semiotic continuum, which is filled with multi-variant semiotic models situated at a range of hierarchical levels. Such a continuum we, by analogy with the concept of ‘biosphere’ introduced by V. I. Vernadsky, will call the ‘semiosphere’” (p. 206). One can say thus that this moment of explosion is informed by a specific semiotic continuum, in this case, the semiosphere of political discourse between Mexico and United States. As it has been pointed out there are several overlapping sign systems. One should note that there is a high degree of information produced at the moment of explosion in a semiotic sign system, followed by an unpredictable and complex path, which could be applied to the whole system. The inflection point in the explosion process is the instant of exhaustion (1999).

There are two other notions within the semiosphere that Lotman has pointed out such as boundary and the semiotic border, both of which reveal interesting aspects of semiotic processes for this study. According to Lotman (2005), there are two dimensions in the notion of boundary: “However, what must also be taken into account is that if (from the point of view of an immanent mechanism) the boundary unites two spheres of semiosis, then from the point of view of semiotic self-knowledge (self-description on a metalevel) in a given semiosphere, it divides them” (pp. 211-212). On one hand, this is to say that from the perspective of an inherent mechanism, the boundary joins two different semiospheres. On the other hand, from the standpoint of self-knowledge, this same boundary divides those semiospheres. Applying this idea, one can identify in the boundary of the semiosphere of political discourse, the two distinct spheres of semiosis of politics, Mexico and the USA, which are united and divided at the same time.

If the boundary unites and divides two neighboring semiospheres at the same time, the semiotic border for Lotman (2005) “[. . .] is represented by the sum of bilingual translatable “filters”, passing through which the text is translated into another language (or languages), situated outside the given semiosphere” (pp. 208-209). In this sense, the semiotic border serves as a clarifying sieve translating and interpreting external semiotic meaning. In addition, this same semiotic border acquires a crucial endeavor in the semiosphere that is “The border of semiotic space is the most important functional and structural position, giving substance to its semiotic mechanism. The border is a bilingual mechanism, translating external communications into the internal language of the semiosphere and vice versa” (2005, p. 210). It is at the semiotic border that language codes are translated into the other semiosphere, and also outside meaning is interpreted and incorporated into the semiosphere.

The semiosphere of political discourse is expressed by a language including rhetorical devices, such as *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments, metaphors, as well as pragmatic strategies, such as intensifiers and attenuators to appeal to audience emotions. According to Lotman, metaphors take form in discourse at the moment of explosion, particularly those semiotic explosions that may have a powerful influence in society (2013, p. 69). As a way to explore this type of political discourse, this study relies on an operative model of argumentation (OMA) (Zárata, 2012; 2015; 2019).

Figure 1. Operative Model of Argumentation (OMA).



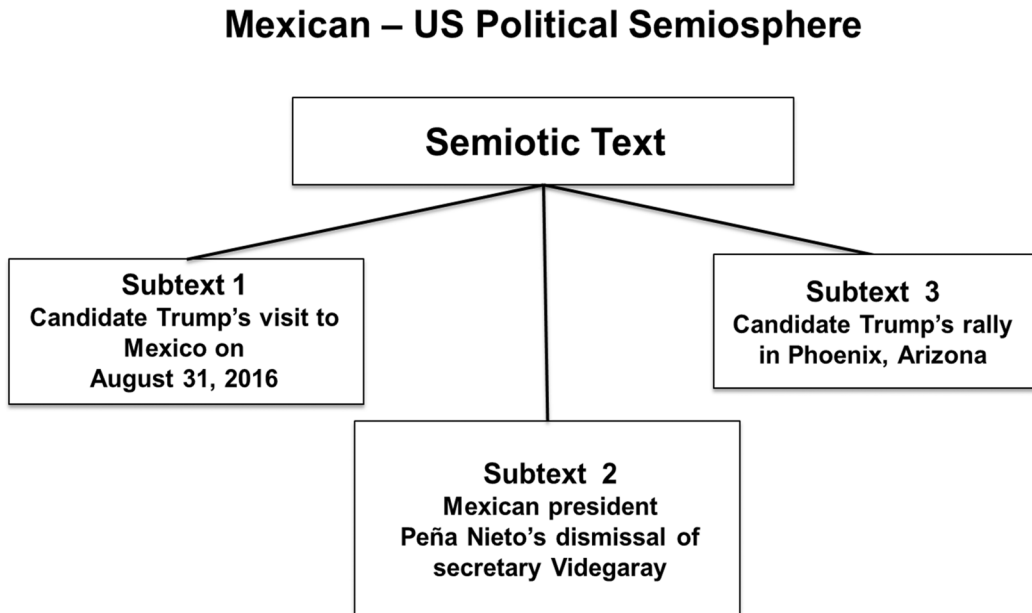
This model articulates Toulmin's model (Toulmin, Rieke, Janik, 1979), and Gilbert's (1997), which stresses the logical mode of argumentation, with the emotional, visceral and kisceral modes of argumentation proposed by Gilbert in the right column, as shown in Figure 1. In this case, the elements to be analyzed in the operative model call for an emphasis on their interdependence, or close connection. For example, warrants (W) are supported by backing (B), that is, legal documents such as laws, statutes that transmit the cultural values of a given society, which contain inferences and assumptions.

For purposes of this study, the focus is on the emotional mode of argumentation which transmits the degree of commitment, resistance, depth and feelings in the discourse, all of which express more than words may seem at the beginning. At the same time, one can identify the visceral mode of argumentation which expresses a physical demonstration of the arguments (that is to say, it can be a quick glance, a touch of the shoulder, hitting a bag or hitting a door), all of which can have a broad spectrum of answers. Beyond the two last modes of argumentation, there is the kisceral mode of argumentation, from the Japanese *ki*, which means energy or vital force, and which stresses the intuitive, imaginative, spiritual, mystical or religious aspects of discourse, for example, "we are all children of God" (Gilbert, 1997).

OMA also includes Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive metaphor concept. Metaphors may be found in all elements of this model, except for modals (M). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that "If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (p. 3). According to the latter our daily activities revolve around the incorporation of metaphors in our lives.

This study also relies in the (Un)predictability operative model (Zárate & Zambrano, 2018), which articulates Lotman's notions of predictability – unpredictability as applied in discourse. Gradual processes and explosive processes exist only in relation to the other (Lotman, 1999; 2013). One cannot exist without the other. Figure 2. (Un)Predictability Operative Model shows the tension of both, predictability in gradual processes, and unpredictability in explosive process in terms of the discourse used in a specific semiosphere. There is always

Figure 3. Moments of explosion in Mexican – US political semiospheres.



1. Moment of explosion in Mexico: Candidate Trump's visit to Mexico on August 31, 2016

The visit to Mexico of a US candidate running for president was an unprecedented event in Mexican – USA political relations. Trump's visit to Mexico as a presidential candidate on August 31, 2016, was covered extensively by media in both countries. Some of the headlines about the event were from *The New York Times*: "Donald Trump to Visit Mexico After More Than a Year of Mocking It" (Corasaniti and Ahmed, Aug 30, 2016), "But instead of chastising Mr. Trump, Mr. Peña Nieto treated him like a visiting head of state at a news conference, with side-by-side lecterns and words of deferential mush" ("Donald Trump's Deportation Nation", *The New York Times*, Aug 31, 2016). It is worthwhile pointing out that the deferential treatment to Mr. Trump as that of a Head of State during his visit as a candidate to Mexico was extremely criticized in Mexican media, as well as by the general population, given his status as a presidential candidate. On this matter, Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* expressed that:

Hasta la fecha no hay registro de que algún presidente de Estados Unidos haya invitado formalmente a candidatos a la presidencia de México; como tampoco hay antecedente de que aspirantes a la presidencia de Estados Unidos hayan sido invitados al país por el Ejecutivo federal [To date there is no record of any president of the United States formally inviting candidates for the presidency of Mexico; nor is there a precedent that aspiring presidents of the United States have been invited to the country by the federal Executive] (*La Jornada*, Aug 31st, 2016, p. 14).

The unpredictability of semiotic processes takes place in this context as a moment of explosion, first through the unprecedented invitation by the Mexican president, and secondly by the subsequent visit, of any aspiring candidate to the US presidency to visit Mexico. This event amounted to a cultural phenomenon immersed in a swirl of semiosis in communication, in both Mexican and US political semiospheres. President Peña Nieto extended the in-

invitation to the two US presidential candidates, Hilary Clinton, from the Democratic Party, and Donald Trump, from the Republican Party:

“Invité a México a los candidatos a la Presidencia de EU, para conversar sobre la relación bilateral. Mañana recibo a Donald Trump” [“I invited both candidates to Mexico to the US Presidency to talk about the bilateral relationship.”] (EPN quoted in *La Jornada*, Aug 31, 2016).

As it has been pointed out, there is no record of any president extending an invitation to a candidate running for president in the neighboring country (*La Jornada*, Aug 31, 2016, p. 14). The reason for such an invitation was the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Semiotic predictability, in this political semiosphere context, is represented by “the bilateral relationship”, a connection that always takes place with another country, and in which issues of economic, political and cultural nature are discussed. In this sense, the semiotic continuous processes fluctuate between predictability, with this bilateral relationship, to unpredictability on the other end, by this unprecedented visit of a US presidential candidate to Mexico. This unpredictability and the moment of explosion are triggered by the following declaration:

“I have accepted the invitation of President Enrique Peña Nieto, of Mexico, and look very much forward to meeting him tomorrow.” (DT quoted in *La Jornada*, Aug 31, 2016).

Following Lotman’s ideas on (un)predictability, as shown in Figure 2. (Un)Predictability Operative Model, there is a tension between predictability and unpredictability in a given semiosphere. This tension is expressed by means of metaphors and argumentation strategies that may include discursive attenuators and intensifiers, as well as different modes of argumentation ranging, from logical, and also emotional or visceral, see Figure 1. Operative Model of Argumentation (OMA). For purposes of this paper, the analysis focuses on the right column of the latter OMA.

The semiosis in communication for this cultural phenomenon, which amounted to the first moment of explosion, continued with exchanges in the Twitter accounts of the Mexican president and the US presidential candidate in regard to the building of a border wall, as follows:

“Al inicio de la conversación con Donald Trump dejé claro que México no pagará por el muro” [“At the beginning of the conversation with Donald Trump I made it clear that Mexico will not pay for the wall”]. ?@EPN. 17:51 – 31 ago. 2016. Enrique Peña Nieto. Verified account.

“Repito lo que le dije personalmente, Sr. Trump: México jamás pagaría por un muro. [“I repeat what I said to you personally, Mr. Trump: Mexico would never pay for a wall”].” @EPN.

The topic of the border wall payment was a crucial issue of Trump’s agenda during this moment of explosion, which continued in both Twitter accounts. As mentioned, one can identify an emotional mode of argumentation in the right column, in Figure 1. Operative Model of Argumentation (OMA), which applied to the two above quotes from President Enrique Peña Nieto, express certainty in regards the complete refusal to pay the wall in the Mexican-US border. Through the use of discursive markers such as “Dejé claro / I made it clear”, “Repito lo que le dije personalmente / I repeat what I said personally”, “México no pagará por el muro / Mexico will not pay for the wall”, “México jamás pagaría por un muro / Mexico would never pay for a wall”, the emotional semiosis in communication emphasizes the negative of a whole nation about paying a border wall. On the other end, it is the declaration by the Republican candidate, Mr. Trump:

“Mexico will pay for the wall!” @realDonaldTrump. 12:06 PM – 1 Sep 2016. Verified account.

In several circumstances, the political semiosphere contains pragmatic strategies within its own discourse, such as intensifiers and attenuators to appeal to audience emotions. The stress again is on an emotional mode of argumentation. One case in point is the use of exclamation marks, such as in the *Twitter* message “Mexico will pay for the wall!” in the US political semiosphere, intensifying meaning production within the continuous-discontinuous processes. The quote expresses a patriarchal discourse as if candidate Trump were the commander in chief of the Mexican nation, qualifying Mexicans as inept and without a government that can defend them. In particular, it should be noted the implicit semiotic meaning production in the sentence emphasizing that of a Mexican government obedient to external authoritarian mandates to win over the American voters. This idea can also be linked to what other studies have identified as authoritarian capitalism, in particular in the case of Mr. Trump performance as a political actor (Fuchs, 2017).

2. Moment of explosion in Mexico: Peña Nieto’s dismissal of Secretary Videgaray

Widespread media coverage was attentive to the development of this second moment of explosion in the Mexican – US political semiosphere. In these political circumstances, the strong man behind Mexican president Peña Nieto, Secretary Luis Videgaray had the idea to invite candidate Trump as a virtual winner of US elections, through his acquaintance to Jared Kushner, Trump’s son in law. General population in Mexico strongly opposed this visit through demonstrations and newspaper articles which led to Secretary Videgaray’s separation from his office in the Mexican Cabinet close to the president, at least for some time, as he was appointed Foreign Relations Secretary when Trump won the US presidency later in 2016. In this sense, one can identify that within the semiotic continuous processes, Secretary Videgaray had the function of a bilingual mechanism actor at the semiotic border, due to his influence in Mexican politics, and particularly because of his acquaintance to Trump’s family.

Time magazine printed a transcript fragment taken from Matt Lauer’s interview with Trump on September 7th, 2016, on this moment of explosion:

“LAUER: ... when you’re commander-in-chief, you can spark a conflict, you can destabilize a region, you can put American lives at risk. Can we afford to take that risk with you?”

TRUMP: Well, I think absolutely. I think if you saw what happened in Mexico the other day, where I went there, I had great relationships, everything else. I let them know where the United States stands. I mean, we’ve been badly hurt by Mexico, both on the border and with taking all of our jobs or a big percentage of our jobs.

And if you look at what happened, look at the aftermath today where the people that arranged the trip in Mexico have been forced out of government. That’s how well we did.” (Beckwith, Sep 7, 2016).

Through the use of different argumentation strategies, and rhetorical devices, such as *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments, as well as pragmatic strategies, such as intensifiers and attenuators this type of political discourse appeals to audience emotions, which make evident a right-wing ideology. Some studies have analyzed this type of political discourse within the Mexican context in regard to gender and ideology applying argumentative and pragmatic strategies (Estrada & Zárate, 2017; 2018).

The quotes offer interesting examples and several levels of meaning in discourse to analyze. The two last quoted sentences contain a metaphor of personalization, in which there are human characteristics applied to an abstract object, i.e. “I mean, we’ve been badly hurt by Mexico”. In this case, both Mexico and USA acquire the status of a human body by the use of an emotional mode of argumentation through the use of the adverb “badly” and the verb

“hurt”. Also, it expresses *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments by means of saying “both on the border and with taking all of our jobs or a big percentage of our jobs”, in which negative traits and generalizations are reflected in the Mexican semiosphere.

In this case, one can identify a violent and discriminatory discourse against the Mexican migrant population. As Goffman points out, there are signs whether in a physical or symbolic way, that help categorize and create an approach that allows us to deal with others without special attention or thought: that is to say, a category as well as personal and structural traits, which constitute a “social identity”. It is by means of discourse that this social identity is identified as dominant or subaltern (Goffman, 1963, p.12). Frequently, one can note that the difference that sustains the sub-alternity of the other is explained by some concepts that concern the symbolic capital: ethnicity, sex, social status and body (Bourdieu, 2003), as in the case of Mexican migrants of Mexico when candidate Trump devalues them in the above quotes.

On the other hand, the quote expresses full responsibility for the dismissal of secretary Videgaray from the Mexican cabinet, without mentioning his name explicitly: “look at the aftermath today where the people that arranged the trip in Mexico have been forced out of government”. In this case, the semiotic boundary is united by the action of secretary Videgaray acting as a translatable filter within both the Mexican and the US political semiosphere. Nevertheless, this action was not fully translated into the Mexican political semiosphere and, in general, within the Mexican national semiosis, as he was asked to leave the federal cabinet. One can point that the organization of Trump’s visit by secretary Videgaray was aligned along the translatable filters of the US political semiosphere, particularly the US electoral semiosis. Additionally, some theorists have pointed out that there are several ways to impose power. One is through violence, and the other one is through the indoctrination or ideologization of that or those under domination, which ultimately involves using deception (Serret, 2006, p. 69).

3. Moment of explosion in the USA: More votes for candidate Trump

Immediately after visiting Mexico, US presidential candidate Trump headed to Phoenix, Arizona, where he gave an immigration speech on September 1, 2016. This event provided a momentum in his political campaign with the opportunity to win more votes towards the US presidency election. One can say that in politics “electoral competition is seen as a battle” (Lakoff, 2016). Thus, the importance of being ahead of the next political candidate in the polls and also of high priority issues in the agenda, are perceived as a crucial electoral step. For purposes of this paper, this immigration speech constitutes a third moment of explosion in the continuous-discontinuous semiotic processes. Stakes for Trump’s political candidacy were high, as well as the same can be said for other candidates. Based on a transcription provided by the Federal News Service, *The New York Times* published the immigration speech on September 2, 2016, some fragments relevant to the third moment of explosion follow:

TRUMP: “We will build a great wall along the southern border. (APPLAUSE)

AUDIENCE: Build the wall! Build the wall! Build the wall!

TRUMP: And Mexico will pay for the wall. (APPLAUSE). One hundred percent. They don’t know it yet, but they’re going to pay for it. And they’re great people and great leaders but they’re going to pay for the wall. On day one, we will begin working on an impenetrable, physical, tall, power, beautiful southern border wall. (APPLAUSE) (*The New York Times*, Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech, September 2, 2016).

In the US – Mexico semiotic border, Mexicans are outside the semiotic mechanisms of the US cultural semiosphere represented by candidate Trump in 2016. In this case, the semiosphere creates a “chaotic” and homogeneizing external sphere, in which the semiotic border is unable to translate coding. These statements contain generalizations applied to a whole country, in which the train of argumentation leads to disqualifying fallacies, such as *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments, discursive strategies which appeal to audience emotions in this immigration speech. Example are the following: “Mexicans are rapists”, “Mexicans are drug traffickers” (*The New York Times*, Sep 2, 2016), “Mexico will pay for the wall. 100%. They don’t know it yet.” (*The New York Times*, Sep 2, 2016). These types of arguments convey a certain level of power and emotion, through emotional and visceral modes of argumentation, which in some cases make evident a right-wing ideology. Candidate Trump set a discriminatory and hatred speech about Mexican migrants with negative generalizations since the beginning of his political campaign in the race to the US presidency in 2015: “Mexico does not send us the best, it sends people who have problems, they bring drugs, they are criminals, they are rapists, and some, I imagine, are good people” (Carreño Figueras, *Donald Trump: Mexico no es nuestro amigo*, 2015). The rhetoric of *ad populum* and *ad hominem* fallacies generalizes Mexicans as criminals and rapists as a recurring theme.

Populist discourse is ideology driven in that it poses all negative traits to Others (i.e. Mexicans, women, foreigners), in this case, all that are not within the US semiosphere. Other studies have approached this cultural phenomenon of populist discourse in other political semiospheres, such as in Romanian parliamentary elections (Negrea-Busuioc, 2016). As a political candidate Trump brought with him his media celebrity status (i.e. The Apprentice), to attract potential voters, through entertaining, performance (Hall, Goldstein, Ingram, 2016), the use of an emotional and intensifying discourse, with anti-migration views as shown above. Candidate Trump acted as bilingual actor in the semiotic border of two semiospheres, the American traditional politics, on one hand, and on the other, the Star celebrity system and the general population. His image as a millionaire and businessman are characteristic of the male hegemonic power which makes it easy for him to do what he wants in his electoral campaign, using a racist, xenophobic, sexist or violent discourse, with which he gets more media coverage more than other Republican Party rivals in the race to the White House.

According to some studies, sexist and discriminatory expressions of language such as derogatory speech and seeing others as inferiors are “a sample of the linguistic sexism that we have inherited and that invades us all, because of a patriarchal cultural crust” (García Meseguer, 1994, p 21). In a sense, one can note thus that the above quotes in this moment of explosion are part of a distinct and derived patriarchal cultural values embedded in the US political semiosphere. And it does so from the moment we are born, language is so present in our lives that without it we could not communicate, and it is also a fundamental tool by means of which human beings transmit information and interpret our world, thoughts, ideas and perceptions so which we must take into account how we use it so as not to hurt with our words and discriminate against others. One also knows that language is cultural and learned, and therefore, is embedded in semiotic processes as Lotman has pointed out. By modifying our language one can simultaneously modify stereotypes that harm both women and men. That is to say in politics as in everyday life a review of how we express ourselves is needed in equal conditions and generate a language of peace and coexistence.

Conclusion

The visit on August 31, 2016 of US president candidate Donald Trump to Mexico caused a swirl of semiosis in communication in the semiospheres of Mexico and US politics. The invitation was extended by Mexican president Peña Nieto to candidates, Hilary Clinton, from the Democratic Party, and to Donald Trump, representing the Republican Party. A totally disruptive event in the history of the political bilateral relationship in both countries, this cultural phenomenon offered the opportunity for interpretation within the continuous discontinuous semiotic processes, in which unpredictability took place in this semiotic text as three moments of explosion: 1. Candidate Trump's visit to Mexico on August 31, 2016; 2. Mexican president Peña Nieto's dismissal of secretary Videgaray; 3. Candidate Trump's rally in Phoenix, Arizona, on September 1, 2016, after several hours of visiting Mexico.

As a way to approach this semiotic text, this paper articulates Lotman's ideas (1996; 1999; 2000; 2013) on unpredictability, semiosphere, boundary, border, and explosion through an (un)predictability operative model (Zárate & Zambrano, 2018). This semiotic cultural text and political discourse are also approached from the perspective of argumentation theory, in particular in regard to a language that incorporates rhetorical devices, such as *ad populum* and *ad hominem* arguments, metaphors, as well as pragmatic strategies, such as intensifiers and attenuators to appeal to audience emotions. This study applies an operative model of argumentation (OMA) (Zárate, 2012; 2015; 2019), which articulates Toulmin's model (Toulmin, Rieke, Janik 1979), and Gilbert's (1997). For purposes of this paper, the emphasis is on the emotional and visceral modes of argumentation.

As a presidential candidate running in the race for the White House, Trump brought with him to the US election campaign, his status as a media star celebrity (i.e. The Apprentice). In this sense, one may point out that Trump as a candidate acted as a bilingual actor in the semiotic border of two semiospheres, the American traditional politics, on one hand, and on the other, the Star celebrity system and the general population. His image as a millionaire and businessman are characteristic of the male hegemonic power which, in a sense, gave him the opportunity to use an emotional and intensifying discourse, with anti-migration views to appeal at large to American conservative sectors and gain their sympathies, in comparison to other presidential candidates, such as Hillary Clinton.

The Mexican government had no way of predicting US elections, in a fact where one can say with Lotman that unpredictability is always present in the continuum of semiotic processes. Perhaps the only mistake of the advisers of Mexican president Pena Nieto was their arrogance of believing that candidate Hillary Clinton would be the obvious winner in the US presidential race, because she was a well-known figure in recent years in US politics. One can add that in this case, gender played a significant role. Trump, as a male candidate, used a misogynistic and discriminatory discourse to gain an electoral audience in a very polarized American society, in which in some sectors still prevailed strong patriarchal views that consider women as incompetent for the highest office (Estrada, 2012). Political advisers to the Mexican presidency dismissed the signs of tiredness of a speech of more of the same, and that conversely talk about issues such as migration, free trade, the expulsion of migrants and the "border wall" have been successful phrases for their novelty in the speech of a personality so authoritarian and irreverent, characteristics of a *Pater Families* and essence projected itself in the personality of Trump. In the recent history of the two countries, what it had prevailed at least publicly, was the rhetoric of respect and good neighborhood.

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