THE "CLIMATO-SCEPTIQUE" AND THE "CLIMATO-HYPOCRITE". A SPEECH-ACT BASED ANALYSIS OF DERISIVE OTHER-REPRESENTATION IN THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE OF 2022

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Abstract: Based on Teun van Dijk's (1998) hypothesis that political discourse is always a form of action, this paper presents a speech-act based analysis of five extracts selected from the French presidential debate between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen on April 20, 2022, and focuses on the derisive other-representation employed by the protagonists to disqualify each other in front of the audience. In the analysis, I examine these "actions" in discourse via several particularities of ridiculing, as practice in interaction, and the conditions for the occurrence in the context of the presidential debate as a discursive genre. Presidential debates are a sub-genre of political (>presidential) discourse (Chilton 2004; Ilie 2018). Technically, they are highly adversarial types of interactions in which the participants are mainly preoccupied with delegitimising the opponent while exerting a politically favourable influence on the audience. The "serious" nature of these events imposes multiple discursive regulations; in other words, the participants are not permitted to insult their opponent in a straightforward manner, thus being compelled to resort to various rhetorical devices to enable them to fight an effective battle of words (Jankélévich 1964). These devices often form part of the spectrum of negative humour, such as irony and sarcasm, which are popular in the genre for softening the offensiveness of any insult, and which exempt the attacker from aggressiveness and enable them to create an impression of wittiness in front of the audience. The five examples chosen for analysis all highlight derisive references to the opponent, "acting" to disqualify of the target via diverse mechanisms, and reveal less obvious nuances of the (always negative) intended meaning that is conveyed. The analysis was conducted using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, adopted the principles of language as dialogue proposed by Edda Weigand (2010), and discourse as a recontextualised social practice as proposed by van Leeuwen (2008), while also considering the principles of political discourse analysis presented by van Dijk (1998), Chilton (2004) and Ilie (2018), which is primarily seen as positive self-representation and negative other-representation. This analysis forms part of the larger project in my PhD thesis, entitled Ridiculing Strategies in Presidential Discourse (in progress), which focuses on the forms, functions and effects of ridiculing expressions used by candidates for the presidency in recent pre-election debates in the USA, France and Romania.
Keywords: dialogic speech acts, political discourse, derisive other-representation;

1. Introduction

In addition to arguing in favour of governmental plans proposed for the welfare of the country and the population, and discussing political projects, past achievements, background and present contexts, as well as historical and

ideological remarks, much of what we call presidential discourse in the pre-election phase is concerned with the negative representation of the opponents in the competition for office. Pre-election debates, as a sub-genre of presidential discourse, provide an opportunity for the candidates to do their best to convince the audience to vote in their favour to the detriment of the opponent. Nonetheless, given the organisational strictness of the event, candidates need to suit their discourses to the requirements of the presidential ethos and acceptable social norms, and cannot launch direct, offensive attacks at the opponent, despite this being the intention. Negative other-representation is an issue that needs to be handled carefully from a discursive point of view. Candidates resort to sophisticated rhetoric in order to delegitimise the opponent and legitimise the self in front of the audience, with the grand stake of winning or losing the position of chief of state for the ensuing year. Each individual detail of their speeches has usually been well prepared in advance, including moments of ridicule or other instances of fresh talk (Goffman 1981), which are intended to create the impression of a natural, spontaneous attitude and behaviour. Presidential debates have become a type of ritual, highly awaited and entertaining events that are followed by millions of people on each occasion.

In France, elections take place in two rounds, namely a primary round in which all the eligible candidates compete for the public's votes, and a secondary round in which, should nobody receive more than half of all the votes in the primary round, the two main contenders face each other in a final electoral confrontation, preceded without exception by the famous *entre-deux-tours* debate, which is the most important political event prior to presidential elections in France.

The debate preceding the presidential election of 2022 took place on April 20 between the pro-European and current president of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the far-right extremist, second-time candidate, Marine Le Pen. This was the second time that the two politicians had confronted each other live in the entre-deux-tours debate, five years after the last election, which took place in 2017. Compared to the first encounter, which the press characterised as a complete disaster, with an extremely aggressive and combative Le Pen, Macron was faced with a surprisingly calm, tame, unstable, unconvincing, even occasionally dull counter candidate, who appeared to put all possible effort into not repeating the mistakes she had made five years previously. According to analysts[1], her deliberate strategy of peacefulness contributed to the delivery of an even worse, more unbalanced debate than the one in 2017. "The most unbalanced presidential debate in history" presented Macron predominantly in a place from which he could hold his opponent in a position of "accused" person "to blame", who "no longer believed in any potential victory", while he pointed out contradictions and inconsistencies in his opponent's programme throughout the debate, with almost no resistance or reaction from Le Pen.

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[1] Victor Ferry, rhetorical analyst: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_Ny2tm7tnk&t=9s&ab_channel=VictorFerry

The somewhat uninspiring nature of the French 2022 debate configured the overall dispute as a refrained exchange of softened ad hominem attacks disguised as ridiculing expressions and derisive references to the opponent, invariably intended to damage the image of the other while boosting the image of the self in front of the audience.

This paper presents a closer examination of five extracts from the aforementioned debate with the aim of describing and explaining the discursive construction and functioning of ridicule and derision in the genre from the point of view of *language as dialogue* (Weigand 2010) and *discourse as recontextualisation of social practice* (van Leeuwen 2008).

In the following sections, I describe several notions in detail, namely political (>presidential) discourse, presidential debate, ridicule, derisive other-representation and the like from a theoretical and methodological perspective, followed by a brief analysis of five extracts from the debate, the preliminary results and the conclusions.

2. Theory
2.1. Presidential debates

In this analysis, I approach presidential debates as a sub-genre of presidential discourse (Chilton 2004; Ilie 2018), which in itself is a sub-category of political discourse, together with parliamentary discourse, the discourse of local officials, political activists and so forth. Political discourse is understood in the sense presented by Teun van Dijk in his 1998 article, *What is Political Discourse Analysis?*, in which political discourse is treated as political action that is conducted amongst the politicians, the audience and the political event. Political discourse is characterised by directionality and polarisation. It consists of *selected lexical items* that are intended to emphasise or deemphasise political attitudes and opinions, to gain support, to manipulate public opinion, and to manufacture political consent or legitimate political power (van Dijk 1998: 25). Effective discourse in political contexts may well foreground *preferred structures and strategies* that are functional in terms of the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts (van Dijk 1998: 25).

Polarisation takes the form of a typical, positive evaluation of *us* and *our* deeds, while *they, them* and *their* actions are evaluated negatively (van Dijk 1998: 25). The standpoint of *our* group is always represented as altruistic, and that of the political opponent, or *them*, as egoistic. The basic representation formula of the overall principle is *positive self-representation and negative other-representation*.

As a sub-genre of presidential discourse, the media constructs presidential debates as public events involving live, face-to-face interactions between the final candidates for the presidency. Despite having a specific organisational framework with a clear-cut visual representation of actors, a standard question-answer + discussion type of format, strict rules regarding speech timing, turn-taking and the like, such debates almost always become aggressive, polarised confrontations. The conventionalised nature of such events is reflected in the equally conventionalised

nature of discourse, which imposes discursive limitations on the participants' adversarial, hostile expressions towards each other, and are constrained by appropriateness conditions throughout (Fetzer 2016: 254), namely the restrictive norms of ethos, the overall seriousness of the event, the requirements of politeness and the generally high standard of the interactions. Being bound by these "constraints and affordances" imposed in the form of necessary limitations of the degree of freedom allowed (Mey 2002: 214, quoted in Vasilescu 2016), speakers often express themselves through covert verbalisation by employing figurative language. Many propositions are not verbalised overtly, but are communicated via "presupposition, implicature or presumptions" (Chilton 2004: 138), as well as by various types of rhetorical figures of speech.

2.2. Derisive representation

By derisive representation, I refer to live instances of ridiculing in the form of targeted references addressed to the opponent, and as intentional, tendentious and attitude-loaded *acts* of producing laughter in the presidential debate in question. Ridiculing is an effective way of conveying a negative intended meaning (disqualification of the opponent) with little or no trace being found within the literal meaning of the utterance. In the live verbal confrontation facilitated by presidential debates, attacks on the opponent are ideally launched with the considerable exemption of any public opprobrium, and with the assistance of formulae to accomplish derisive other-representation. While the intended meaning is invariably negative (*supra*), the literal meaning can be positive, negative, neutral or non-existent, as ridiculing can also be conveyed via conversational implicatures that do not include the uttering of words, such as symbolically turning one's back on the interlocutor, ostensibly taking over the other's line in order to expose unuttered aspects and so forth.

Through derision, namely ridiculing, speakers achieve what Goffman (1981: 12) called "mitigated responsibility". Ridiculing, as a manifestation of negative/malevolent humour, is employed in all debates; therefore, it will be argued that it plays a central and necessary role in presidential debates as a genre. Ridiculing can be manifested by using figures of speech such as irony and sarcasm, while a ridiculing connotation can be achieved via rhetorical figures and questions.

For the scope of this study, and given the fact that ridiculing is exclusively directed at the opponent, I mainly examine the *representation of agency*, which refers to the way in which social actors and their actions are discussed within the dialogic interaction. In this regard, I adopted the framework proposed by Theo van Leeuwen in his 2008 *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*, in which the author viewed discourse as recontextualised social practice, and understood discourse as social cognition rather than linguistic production by defining it in Foucault's (1977) sense of "socially constructed knowledge of some social practice developed in specific contexts" (Foucault 1977 quoted in van Leeuwen 2008: 6) instead of a stretch of speech, writing or a text.

With regard to the participants in asocial action, van Leeuwen (2008) mentioned the *exclusion* and the *inclusion of agency* in the representation. The exclusion of the participants can be accomplished either through the *suppression of agency*, which is also referred to as radical exclusion or complete agent deletion, as a practice representing something that is not to be further examined or contested, or through *backgrounding of agency*, or deemphasis, in which the agent is not deleted from the text entirely, but is distanced from the audience via various mechanisms. The inclusion of the participants is manifested through numerous mechanisms, amongst which some of the most frequently encountered in the present corpus were activation/passivation, personalisation/ impersonalisation, which recur in various other discursive procedures such as determination/ indetermination, genericisation/ specification, abstraction/ objectivation, association/ dissociation, differentiation/ indifferentiation, categorisation/ nomination, individualisation/ assimilation, functionalisation and so on, as tools for *representing* the opponent in order to achieve certain rhetorical effects, such as distancing, delegitimation and the like.

3. Method

In this section, I present the methodological framework that was designed and adapted for the speech-act based analysis of the derisive other-representation in the French presidential debate on April 2022. The examination of the derisive other-representation will be conducted by prioritising two major aspects of discourse, namely *what is done* through language via a close examination of the pragmatics of speech acts, and *how it is done*, approaching the rhetorical aspect of discourse as *ars bene dicendi* (Nash 1989, quoted in Charteris-Black 2011: 7), with the aim of attaining certain discursive goals.

3.1. Language as dialogue

An analysis of any aspect of verbal interaction should be based mainly on the componential analysis of speech acts (Haverkate 1990). The pragmatic analysis of derisive other-representation through ridiculing expressions will be conducted based on the framework of *language as dialogic interaction*, developed by Edda Weigand (2010), via the examination of goal-oriented speech acts (Ilie 2018) and the analysis of which speech acts are preferred in formulations.

In the approach of language as dialogic interaction, speech acts are invariably dialogic; that is, they are directed at someone, otherwise they would not be expressed. Dialogically oriented speech acts are interrelated as initiative acts and reactive acts in a minimal sequence, as a conventional pattern of action and reaction (Weigand 2010: 21), and every reaction can become initiative and trigger another reaction before the final reaction closes the sequence (Weigand 2010: 113), thus generating a type of reactive chain within the same sequence in the verbal exchange. Action and reaction function on the basis of rational and conventional expectancy which, being a principle of probability, can be violated in performance (Weigand 2010: 207). I will first discuss Weigand's approach to speech acts as

interrelated initiative and reactive acts in the minimal sequence of action and reaction.

Weigand's (2010) taxonomy of speech acts begins with four types of dialogically directed action types: These are actions that *create*, *change*, *express* or *ask questions about the world*, corresponding to the four main categories of speech acts on which she based her taxonomy. Speech acts that create the world are DECLARATIVE, those that change the world are DIRECTIVE, those that express the world are REPRESENTATIVE and those that ask questions about the world are EXPLORATIVE. These basic types of actions make *dialogic claims* through the initiative act, which is taken up by the reactive act through a specific response as a *reaction*.

In the DECLARATIVE speech act, a follow-up reaction is not necessary because the essence of this type is that it makes and fulfils a claim to volition, the confirmation or agreement of which is presupposed. In other words, a specific state of affairs is created in the world via this type of speech act through specific speech-act verbs, such as to baptise, to christen, to thank, to regret, to congratulate and so forth. The rational or conventional response to this type of speech act is *confirmation*, which can be cooperative (positive, affirmative) or non-cooperative (negative). The DECLARATIVE speech act often occurs as a reactive speech act in DIRECTIVE or EXPLORATIVE initiatives. Weigand's taxonomy does not include Searle's (1969, 1975) COMMISSIVES (such as promises) and EXPRESSIVES (such as oaths), but includes their corresponding speech acts in the category of DECLARATIVES. Particular examples of these types of speech acts in the present corpus are PROVOCATION, INSULT and the like.

EXPLORATIVES, or speech acts that ask questions about the world, and DIRECTIVES, or those that change the world, both make a claim to volition. The distinction between them is based on the object of volition, which in the former type is directed towards knowledge [+Knowledge] and elicits a *response* as a reaction, while it is not directed towards knowledge in the latter type, but towards practical actions on the part of the interlocutor [-Knowledge], and elicits *consent* as a reaction which, of course, can be cooperative or non-cooperative depending on the interlocutor's intentions. EXPLORATIVE speech acts, which express the human need to be informed, can take the form of didactic questions, can be aimed at reliability or can take a directive form to claim knowledge that is needed for action. DIRECTIVES make their claim to volition though acts of ORDER (characterised by the potentiality of sanctions), REQUESTS (based on mutual cooperation, with no sanctions) or PLEAS (based on acts of kindness and helpfulness). An example of a PLEA would be an invitation. There are also possible ways of strengthening the claim to volition through various speech-act verbs, such as insist, order, offer, threat and so on.

The final category of speech acts in Weigand's (2010) taxonomy is defined by the REPRESENTATIVE speech acts, or those which express the world. These are acts that make a claim to truth (the speaker's truth) and elicit *acceptance* as a reaction. REPRESENTATIVES are based on the mental state or beliefs of the speaker

and express what they hold to be true. Depending on the precise object of the claim, REPRESENTATIVES are subdivided into two categories: those that make a *simple claim to truth*, or talk about *what is*, and those that make a *modal claim to truth*, talking about *what would*, *could* or *should be*. REPRESENTATIVE speech acts making simple claims about truth can take the form of ASSERTIVES, in which the truth is not evident and needs proof if required, which can take the form of PREDICTIONS, ADVICE or WARNING, and which elicits *acceptance* as a reaction. IDENTIFIERS, which are based on definitions, can manifest as reactions following EXPLORATIVES or near-initiatives in lessons. INFORMATIVES, which are characterised by a [+News] component, can be provided reactively in response following EXPLORATIVES and elicit a *comment* as a reaction; CONSTATIVES make a claim to truth that appears to be obvious and elicit *confirmation* or *belief* as a reaction, while EMOTIVES, which are emotion-laden constatives, elicit *empathy* as reaction. All of the elicited reactions can be delivered cooperatively or non-cooperatively depending on the interlocutor's intentions. REPRESENTATIVE speech acts making modal claims to truth are subdivided into three subtypes according to modality: speech acts talking about *what would be* take the form of CONDITIONALS and elicit *acceptance* or *belief* as a reaction; those positing *what could be* take the form of DELIBERATIVES and elicit *acceptance* as a reaction, and those talking about *what should be* are further divided according to the matter of desire, thus taking the form of DESIDERATIVES that elicit *acceptance* or *belief* as a reaction, or to the matter of norm, taking the form of NORMATIVES that elicit *acceptance* as a reaction. Weigand illustrated how a reaction of *acceptance* could be positive or negative via an example of reproach: [+acceptance (reproach-apology)]; [-acceptance (reproach-justification)]. Depending on the interpretation, speech acts can be integrated into one category or into a different one. Weigand provided the example of PROPOSALS in this regard; in her approach, these are designed as DELIBERATIVES despite their traditional association with DIRECTIVES. The rationale for this classification is the intended reaction to a proposal, namely acceptance, which changes them into indirect DIRECTIVE claims.

3.2. Data analysis

This sub-section presents an analysis of five extracts that were selected from the April 2022 French entre-deux-tours between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen[2] (henceforth EM and MLP). This was the second time the two finalists had confronted each other in a pre-election debate, and took place five years after the presidential election of 2017. While the press characterised their first encounter as having reached a milestone as the most antagonistic and verbally violent such debate in the country's history, the second was a disappointment from this point of view, and was a somewhat unpleasant surprise for the public in the sense that it was excessively characterised by

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[2] Macron – Le Pen debate 2022: franceinfo - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6g0u6yrDGc

"rhetorical poverty" and lacked "pugnacity"[3], thus turning the event into a dull, monotonous and uncombative discussion.

The extracts are displayed in pragmatic transcription, highlighting the linguistic and extra-linguistic functioning of ridiculing in discursive interaction, indicating constitutive aspects such as intonation departing from normal patterns, exaggerated stress/pitch prominence, changes in intensity or tempo, kinesic markers, hesitations, fillers or even contextual elements (Attardo 2000). The transcription conventions have been adapted from the model proposed by John W. Du Bois et al. (1993) and are summarised as follows:

X -	carriage return	\	falling intonation
--	truncated intonation unit	_	level pitch movement
X-	word unuttered	^	accented word
[ ]	overlapping speech	'	secondary accent
(.)	pause	(!)	booster
(,)	continuing	<MRC MRC>	marcato
(?)	appeal	<F F>	forte
/	rising intonation	((RESEARCHER'S COMMENT))	

(1) Macron – Le Pen, April 2022 [1 :02 :26 – 1 :02 :57]

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MLP : /Pardon (,) euh- (,) \M. Macron/ (,) mais- mais- je
      rappelle que vous êtes le /président qui a créé<MRC 600
      milliards d'euros MRC> de dette supplémentaire en 5
      ans/ (,) dont \deux tiers/ [qui]
EM :                   [avec-]
MLP : n'ont /rien a voir avec le COVID\
EM : /Mais c'est /totalement faux Madame Le Pen \
((disapproving headshake))[…] Mais- Mais beaucoup [c'est de
la sécurité sociale]
MLP :        [quand vous me dites]
EM : [et de la collectivité locale]
MLP : [quand vous me dites] que vous allez
EM : [Madame Le Pen] (,)
MLP : [non mais-]
EM : [\aye-aye-aye-]
MLP : [non /mais d'accord\]
EM : (.) /Mais arrêtez de tout confondre/ (,) c'est pas
^possible-
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In this extract, ridiculing occurs as a reactive chain of expressions uttered by EM to expose MLP's previous statement as being confusing and untrue, and to

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[3] According to rhetoric analysts on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_Ny2tm7tnk&t=7s&ab_channel=VictorFerry ;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArBTyHagYys&t=36s&ab_channel=FabienOlicard

express his personal disapproval of it. The reactive sequence is composed of three expressions that are intended to disqualify MLP through the attachment of ridiculing connotations via a rhetorical figure of sound ("aye-aye-aye"), followed by a sarcastic overstatement ("mais arrêtez de tout confondre") and an instance of echoic irony, "c'est pas possible", pointing towards social norms and expectations. All three expressions are performed via indirect DECLARATIVE speech acts that are intended to INSULT in the form of a direct DIRECTIVE in the form of an ORDER and a direct ASSERTIVE. MLP and her actions are represented as abstract and generalised through these ridiculing expressions, particularly the sarcastic overstatement marked by the presence of the indefinite "tout".

   (2) Macron – Le Pen, April 2022 [1: 06: 50 - 1 :08 :39]

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MLP:  La /plus grosse baisse (,) ca a été ^évidemment la
      suppression (,) de l'info- (,) de l'impôt- sur les
      grandes fortunes-
EM:   C'est la taxe [d'habitation Madame Le Pen]
MLP:             [et ça a été la baisse] et ça a été la
      baisse/
EM:   C'est la /taxe [d'habitation/ Madame Le Pen-]
MLP:             [et ça a été la baisse] (,) et ça a
      été la baisse de la flatte taxe (.)
EM:   C'est la /taxed'habitation/ de /très [très loin-
      Madame Le Pen\]
MLP:                             [la taxed'habi-]
MLP:  La taxed'habitation [que les francais]
EM:                   [-mais vous ^pouves pas-]
MLP:  [sont contraints- (.) de payer/
EM:   [Mais vous pouvez pas dire des contrevérités-]
MLP:  [par la hausse de la-] de la taxe foncière\]
EM:   /Madame Le Pen\ (,) les chiffres sont- aye (,) /mais
      que /tout le monde aille regarder/ les chiffres-
      (.)mais vous /pouvez\ pas/ dire des /contrevérités\
      (.) c'est la taxed'habitationz (,) \mais de /très
      loin- […] /non (.) on les compte /pas dans les chiffres
      du chômage (,) ne faites pas/ (.) c'est pas/ /Gérard
      Majax- ce soir  Madame Le Pen\
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This sequence displays ridiculing as a reactive act, expressed through a hybrid expression of the pretence of breaking news combined with a sarcastic allusion: "c'est pas Gérard Majax ce soir, Madame Le Pen". The reaction was triggered (initiated) by an accusation that MLP directed at EM, "la plus grosse baisse" – "la suppression de l'impôt sur les grandes fortunes", representing the rich people metonymically through their wealth via that which van Leeuwen (2008) called single determination. The accusation involved a tax cut that EM allegedly enforced

to favour the rich people in France to the detriment of the middle and lower classes (an accusation of elitism and favouritism that MLP had directed at EM in the previous election in 2017 and even prior to that). In an attempt to refute the accusation and argue against it, EM explained what the tax-cut consisted of, stating that sustaining it actually referred to the habitation tax, which is a residence tax that owners of properties only pay if they also inhabit the space in question, and is not a duty exemption for the wealthy as MLP claimed. Through his reaction, he accused MLP of telling "counter-truths". He ended the sequence with an ad hominem attack delivered through ridiculing in the form of an ironical pretence of breaking news, in addition to a sarcastic allusion. The pretence of breaking news refers to the fact that the debate was not a magic show performed by the famous French illusionist, Gérard Majax, thus implying that, through her rhetorical techniques, MLP created illusions about the reality of the taxes (in question), which EM pretended to expose as being devious. The ridiculing act takes the form of a direct ASSERTIVE, but actually consists of an indirect DECLARATIVE intended to INSULT. From the point of view of representation, the insult is realised through over determination.

(3) Macron – Le Pen, April 2022 [1 :28 :02 – 1 :28 :31]

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MLP : Je ne suis absolument^pas climato-sceptique/ (,) euh__
      en aucun cas_ (,) euh_ mais vous/ (,) vous êtes un peu/
      climato-hypocrite\ (.) D'ailleurs/ c'est peut-être pour
      ça\ que les gens ne croient pas (.) à votre volonté de
      régler tous^ces problèmes là\ […]
EM :  /Mais bien sûr (,)c'est pour ça/ que je propose le
      leasing-
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This extract touches on one of the most controversial themes approached by the moderators in the debate, and highlights the irreconcilable positions of the candidates on the issues of climate change and energy. Echoing previous statements made by her opponent, MLP employs a direct quotation to delegitimise and ridicule EM in a game of words. She makes ostensive use of his own words; EM had labelled MLP as a "climato-scéptique", and MLP turns EM's words against him to attack and disqualify him by labelling him a "climato-hypocrite". Through direct ASSERTIVES, MLP delivers indirect PROVOCATIONS and INSULTS in the form of indirect DECLARATIVES, thus representing him in a derisive way through nominalisation/agentialisation. In this case, derision is the initiative and is responded to through an instance of ironical agreement.

(4) Macron – Le Pen, April 2022 [1 :36 :12]

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MLP : /Juste une chose/ (,) quand même\ (,) parce que quand
      j'entends parler de concertations avec les pêcheurs/
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        moi\ je les ai tous/ rencontrés- (,) ils sont tous<MRC
        -vvvvent/ MRC>debout\ (,) evidemment/
EM:     Je l'ai /faite [moi même\] (.)
MLP:                   [car ca va ruiner-]
EM:                                    [aux guides-]
MLP:                                        [-la filière de la pêche]
EM:     Demandez leur (!)
MLP:    ^euh /trois mille- (,) je crois que vous voulez en
        /mettre partout/ ((encompassing broad arms gesture))
        (,) sur toutes les /côtes (,) /sauf en face\ du
        Touquet/ (.) ^euh ^euh
EM:     ((grave)) ^Madame [Le Pen]\ (.)
MLP:                    [parcequ'il] faut quandmême pas non
        plus- euh-
EM:     ((grave)) /Madame [Le Pen]\ (.)
MLP:    ^euh ^euh (,)      [pousser/]
EM:     ((grave)) ^Madame [Le Pen]\ (.)
MLP:                    [et je tiens] vous dire
EM:     ((grave)) ^Madame [Le Pen]\ (.)
MLP:                    [et à dire] à ceux qui nous
        écoutent/-
EM:     /Madame [Le Pen (!)]
MLP:    Oui/ oui/[c'est la réalité] (!)]
EM:              [Nooon- (,)] /mais arretez\
MLP:    Je suis désolée de vous le dire/ <MRC Tous (!) MRC>
EM:     Nooon- mais-
MLP:    <MRC Tous MRC>ont été actés/ sauf en face du Touquet\
        bon\
EM:     Mais vous- mais vous rigolez/ ou quoi\
MLP:    Le <MRC démantèlement des éoliennes MRC>
EM :    /Mais y a ^aucune qui a [été actée-]
MLP :                   [le <MRC démantèlement<MRC>-]
EM :    La planification/ [a pas commencée-]
MLP :              [Non/ non\ /y a déjà-] il y en /a cinquante
        qui sont ^déjà- ^euh
EM :    Mais [arrêtez de-]
MLP :     [en- en- en-] /envoie de-
EM :      [mais arretez\]
MLP :     [vous savez/ tres bien\]
Lea :   Marine Le Pen (,) vous avez la parole\
MLP :   Le <MRC démantèlement des éoliennes MRC> et [que-]
EM :                                       [ca c'est
        du ^complôtisme]
MLP :   au moment de leur installation, auprès- /noon (,) c'est
        le ^hasard- auprès-
EM :    /Non (,) vous /dites n'importe quoi- donc/
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This sequence displays ridiculing realised as both initiative and reactive acts. As mentioned previously in (3), the French finalists in the 2022 election had notably different opinions concerning the environment and new energy policies. When advocating against off-shore wind farms along the coasts of France, MLP accused EM of planning to install turbines everywhere except one place, Le Touquet, a resort on a north-western beach in the region of Pas-de-Calais where the Macron family owned a weekend residence. This is an ad hominem attack delivered via a sarcastic allusion (with a double utterance for enhanced offensive effect). EM responded by employing a figure of dialogic sarcasm ("ça c'est du complôtisme"), echoing one of the accusations that MLP had aimed at him earlier in the debate, which he dismissed as invalid at the time but now validates didactically. Both attacks take the direct form of ASSERTIVES to refer indirectly to DECLARATIVE acts of INSULT. In terms of design strategies, both speakers use agentialisation to refer to the (blameworthy) actions of their opponents.

(5) Macron – Le Pen, April 2022 [2 :17 :40 – 2:17:55]

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EM :  /mais beaucoup^plus disciplinée/ qu'il y a cinq ans-
      (,) [Madame Le Pen]\
MLP :   [Oui/] c'est^vrai- (.) Ecoutez/ (,) on voit/ qu'on
      vieillit- ((laughter))
EM:   c'est- je- je crois que c'est effectué/ je serai très
      respectueux à votre égard- ((MLP Laughing)) (.) vous/
      ça ne se voit pas/ (,) moi/j'ai^peur que ça se
      voit^beaucoup\ Madame-
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I included this last excerpt as an example of the extremely rare occurrence of positive/affiliative humour in presidential debates. In this sequence, the finalists in the 2022 French presidential election deviate from the official discussion for a moment to share an intimate, even vulnerable exchange of impressions of their overall performances, thus pointing towards human nature and its unstoppable effects on a person's attitude, temper and even physical appearance. The tone of the sequence is joyful, and is filled with overt self-laughter and genuine mirth. It is the sole instance of this kind that I have encountered in the data extracted from the debates and speeches examined as a corpus for the analysis constituting my doctoral thesis.

Almost at the end of a somewhat surprisingly, or even disappointingly uncombative debate, EM puts his thoughts into words and refers to MLP as being "much more disciplined" than she was five years ago when she shocked both her interlocutor and the audience with her extremely aggressive and offensive attitude towards her debate opponent. This remark was meant to highlight the startling contrast between his opponent's extreme behaviour during their last debate and her mild, tame behaviour in the present debate,

which was exactly the opposite. Throughout the debate, MLP was calm, gentle and mostly unreactive, an attitude that came as a complete surprise given her well-known combative personality and ethos of arrogance and "pugnacity", as the press often remarked. Thus, this contrast in her attitude gave rise to a moment of humour in which EM's remark about MLP's "discipline" was taken up unapologetically with self-laughter and symbolically "blamed" on her having become older in the past five years. In a gentlemanly, courteous and felicitous intervention, EM assured her that age was not an issue for her, but assuming it with certainty for himself. MLP's joyful and unoffended self-laughter confirmed EM's initial remark, which then became probably the first and wide-spread impression of the entire debate, designating it as weak, uninteresting and annoyingly dull.

4. Conclusions

The generalised heterogeneity of actual (real as opposed to theoretical) verbal interaction has led the theoretical discussion towards approaches of *mixed*, *overlapping* or *multi-layered speech acts*. In actual verbal interactions, there is hardly a "one-to-one correspondence between spoken utterances and enacted speech acts" (Ilie 2018: 99), as "speech acts can overlap, depending on the intended meaning" (Weigand 2010: 150), which itself can be composed of a primary explicit illocutionary act and a secondary implicit illocutionary act, ultimately enabling the expression of more than one illocutionary act simultaneously. Furthermore, speech acts are not always explicit or direct. "What happens in locution" can be expressed implicitly, through indirect speech acts, which can only be understood via inferences derived from the literal meaning (Weigand 2010).

The corpus analysis revealed multiple instances of such mixed, overlapping or multi-layered speech acts. For example, the latter category, with an additional pragmatic layer of pretence, could probably be ranked as a trademark ridiculing strategy for Macron. Moreover, given the specific nature of the discursive genre of presidential debates (and speeches), the corpus analysis indicated the strong presence of *situated speech acts* (Mey 2001) which, in the context of the discursive register being analysed, were mainly strongly accusatory speech acts (Ilie 2018).

Derision, as an indirect manifestation of face-threatening acts, is a complex speech act from a componential point of view due to considering both the initiation and the reaction as constitutive parts of one unit of analysis. In essence, the mechanisms for conveying a negative intended meaning via literal positive, exaggerated negative words or rhetorical figures/questions, determine the acts underpinning the verbal exchange. In general, ridiculing is accomplished via direct ASSERTIVES, ridiculing through sarcasm is performed using DIRECTIVES or CONSTATIVES, and ridiculing connotations through rhetorical questions is achieved via the direct utterance of EXPLORATIVES. All three categories of ridiculing expressions are indirect DECLARATIVES; specifically, INSULTS and PROVOCATIONS.

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