

دراسة استراتيجيات التمويه والتوقفات البراغماتية كأشكال للصمت في الخطاب  
السياسي الاجنبي

“An Investigation of Pauses and Concealment Strategies as Forms  
of Silence in Foreign Political Discourse: A Pragmatic Study”

Meaad Mhmood Bker

ميعاد محمود بكر

Ministry of Education

وزارة التربية

Dr. Omar Ali Illyas

أ.م.د. عمر علي الياس

Assistant Professor

أستاذ مساعد

University of Mosul- College /  
of Education for Humanities

جامعة الموصل / كلية التربية للعلوم

Science / Department of

الإنسانية / قسم اللغة الانكليزية

English

[mehad.24ehp114@student.uomosul.edu.iq](mailto:mehad.24ehp114@student.uomosul.edu.iq)

[omarillyass@uomosul.edu.iq](mailto:omarillyass@uomosul.edu.iq)

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوقف البراغماتي، استراتيجية التمويه، العمليات الإدراكية،

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### المستخلص

تُكرس هذه الدراسة لتوضيح كيف أن الصمت، في بعض الحالات، يتجاوز مجرد الافتقار إلى الكلمات. ولا شك أن للصمت معانٍ لا تُحصى تبعاً للسياق. وتتوافق التفسيرات المعتمدة على السياق للتوقفات واستراتيجيات التمويه مع حقيقة أن الصمت أمرٌ ذاتي، ويمكن استخدامه كوسيلة لنقل رسالة بنفس الطريقة التي يستخدمها الكلام. ولتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة، تم اتباع توليفة من النموذجين النظريين لجاورسكي (١٩٩٣) وجوهينسن (١٩٧٤). وهكذا، تبني هذه الدراسة نموذجها الانتقائي من خلال دمج وظائف النماذج المذكورة أعلاه للتحقيق في وظائف ونوايا استراتيجيات التوقفات والتمويه في خطابات سياسية مختارة. ويُسلط التحليل الضوء على توقفات أوباما في النقاش السياسي، والتمويه المقصود للدكتورة ميركل كاستراتيجيتين من حيث العرق والجنس. وأخيراً، تُقدم النتائج رؤى قيمة حول استخدام اللحظات الصامتة كأداة لنقل معنى، يتأثر بالنية الفردية والثقافة والسياق، في الخطاب السياسي الخارجي.

في الخطاب السياسي، تُستخدم فترات التوقف بشكلٍ استراتيجي للتأكيد على المواضيع الحساسة المتعلقة بالعرق، كما هو الحال في استخدام أوباما لفترات التوقف الإضافية، عندما يُدير نقاشاتٍ حول خدمة الأقليات بضبطٍ وحذر، مُدرِّكًا الحساسيات المُحيطة بهذه القضية. الصمت، في بعض الحالات، يعمل كآلية حماية في الخطاب السياسي، كما هو الحال في لحظات الصمت المُقصودة للدكتورة ميركل، والتي تُجسّد كيف يُستخدم التمويه كاستراتيجية بلاغية. مع ذلك، تُساهم هذه الدراسة في الخطاب الأكاديمي من خلال تقديم الصمت ككيانٍ قوي يُشكّل رسائل سياسية، ويُمكنه أن يُضيف معنىً خفيًا لا يُمكن للدلالات اللفظية إضافته من خلال التفاعلات السياسية .

### Abstract

This study is devoted to show how silence, in certain cases, is more than lack of words. Doubtless to say, silence might have myriad meanings depending on the context. Context dependent interpretations of pauses and concealment strategies correspond to the fact that silence is subjective and it can be employed as a vehicle that conveys a message in the same way that speech does.

To achieve the aim of this study, a synthesis of Jaworski's (1993) and Johennsen's (1974) theoretic models are followed. Thus, this study constructs its eclectic model by merging the functions of the above mentioned models to investigate the pauses and concealment strategies' functions and intentions in selected political discourses. The analysis highlights Obama's pauses in political debate and Dr. Merkel' intended concealment as strategies in term of ethnicity and gender.

Finally, the findings provide valuable insights into the use of silent moments as a tool to convey a meaning, that is influenced by individual intention, culture and context, in foreign political discourse. In political discourse, pauses are employed strategically to emphasize on sensitive topics that are related to ethnicity as in Obama's utilizing of filler pauses, when he navigates discussions about serving minorities with restraint and caution, recognizing the sensitivities involved in this issue. Silence, in certain cases, functions as protective mechanism in political discourse as in intended silent moments of Dr.

Merkel which exemplifies how concealment serves as a rhetorical strategy. However, the current study contributes to the academic discourse in presenting silence as a powerful entity that forms political messages, and it can add a hidden meaning that verbal clue cannot add through political interactions.

### **The Problem of the Study**

In the realm of politics, silence can serve as an important and underexplored communicative tool. Silence's comprehension in communication would show that it is not a mere absence of words. In certain cases, silence's forms as pauses and concealment are utilized as a vehicle to deliver certain intentional messages. Misinterpretation of these messages would result in many communication breakdowns that might instigate dramatic consequences particularly in political settings and foreign affairs. Moreover, despite of their significant impacts on communication, unfortunately, pauses and concealment strategies are underrated, and underexplored.

#### **1. Aims of the Study**

The current study has the following aims:

- 1- Investigating the pauses and concealment strategies as forms of silence in political discourse.
- 2- Investigating the impact of gender and ethnicity in the interpretation of silence in political discourse.
- 3- Providing deep insights into the conceptual framework of silence.

#### **2. Research Questions**

To achieve the aims of this study, the following questions are proposed:

- 1- What are the pauses and concealment strategies that can be utilized as forms of silence by politician figures in foreign political debates and speeches?
- 2- What is the impact of demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity on the way that individual utilizes silence in political discourse?

## 4. Pauses

Pauses can be defined in different ways according to their functions and types. Pause /pɔ:z/ refers to a temporary stop in action, sound, speech (The Oxford Preference Dictionary,1986: 616). Igras-Cybulska defines pauses as a mirror of cognitive processes and traces of cognitive activities. In situational and social contexts, pauses are affected by different factors such as, the speaker's habits and his personality, and his preparation for the speech task, (Igras-Cybulska, 2016:2).

### 4.1 Types of Pauses

Types of pauses are various among people, they depend on speech style of each speaker, cultures, preparation for oral tasks and his experience. These types are divided into:

**1-Acoustic pauses:** which can be divided into three subtypes such as:

**a. Silent pauses:** these pauses are regions of signal with no voice activities. Professional language users utilize purposely stylistic forms which are considered irregular intentional pauses.

**b. Filled pause:** they are called pseudo words that do not affect speech meaning, and they are considered a language-specific (Igras-Cybulska,2016:1). For instance, Danielle Duez defines this type of pauses as the occurrence of a French language hesitation like eh, oe, eu, n (Duez,1982:14). Where in English the most common pauses um and uh. These pauses reflect hesitation, unintentional disfluencies, and uncertainty. These hesitation markers allow the speaker to choose the right words and organize his thoughts without losing the floor in the dialogue.

**c. Breath pauses:** these types are used in physiological conditions. In speech production the value is 10 to 12, and in resting the value of breath per minute is 12 to 20. Respiration activity causes natural pauses which are regular.

**2-Syntactic pauses:** they are presented as punctuation marks in speech transcripts (Igras-Cybulska,2016:1-2).

## 4.2 Confusion of Pauses Tenor

Pauses duration it is correlated with social attributes of speakers (such as age, ethnicity, region, and gender) and it depends on linguistic task. Stress during an interaction determines the length of pauses (Igras-Cybulska,2016:2).

The differences in the perception and evaluation of pauses may lead to conflict, for instance, the interlocutors may think that the pauses, other leave for them, are not long enough to take the next turn without being rude, whereas other party may think that long pauses may create awkward silence. However, misjudging speaker's use of pauses can take place in different contexts and many levels (Tannen,1986:29) "*Such differences are not a matter of some people expecting long pauses and others expecting short ones.*"

In this conversational case that refers to temporal structure of speech, most Western cultures and Anglo-American culture value fighting to seize the floor or faster talk and more talk than slower talk and less talk (Scolln,198٧). Therefore, pauses are avoided through interaction with others, because silent moments in discourse indicates lack of mutual rapport between speakers. Speech tempo silence are crucial in achieving interlocutors' success in getting their point across, for example, Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki were running for president of Poland. Press compared the success and effectiveness of their campaigns, the author of the article contrasted Tadeusz's and Lech's discourse styles. Lech Walesa's style marked by absence of pauses, fast tempo, and varied intonation, his style was evaluated positively and more effective than Tadeusz's style which is in turn marked by long pauses and described as monotonous. '*Walesa raises his voice, shouts, suddenly slows down, laughs and pulls a face. He does not hesitate for a second, and even interrupts questions which are too long, while sometimes says frankly to somebody from his entourage "I'm lost."*..... *If only the prime minister [Mazowiecki] knew that he should speak to the microphone and to the people, not to himself! He talks quietly, slowly, monotonously, with multi second pauses*'. (Leski,1990:3). This example shows that in political context, fast speech, constant shifting in different speech styles and loudness are more valued than speaking monotonously, slowly and quietly.

This type of silence is utilized by politicians who appear in the media for two purposes. Firstly, when they want to conceal something and when they have nothing relevant to say. Walesa's speech style gives his audiences an impression that he is very knowledgeable or he has a control upon the situation.

Danielle Duez proves that in political speech, silent pauses are one of the most prominent features. He states that the duration of silent pauses is longer; the time of these pauses is 50% which is longer and greater in political speech than other type of speech such as casual interview or political interview since these types belong to spontaneous speech, while the political speeches belong to elaborated speech that is intended to convince the audience (Duez,1982:11). Crown and Feldstein examine the relationship between the pauses tenor and self-attributed personality variables. They point out to "*longer pauses tend to be produced by individuals who can be described as distrustful, easily upset, worrying, shy, suspicious, troubled, fussy, and driven, but also self-sufficient and resourceful*" Crown and Feldstein claim that the speaker's and listener's characteristics influence the pauses' length in interpersonal interactions. Listener who elicits longer pauses are considered "*precise, skeptical, self-reliant, but also somewhat careless about social rules*" (Crown & Feldstein,1985:38). When the listener seizes the floor, in switching pauses, the speakers who choose to employ longer pauses and speak slowly appear as "*aloof, rigid, and undependable*" in opposite to the talkative, cheerful and warm-hearted conversation partners (Crown & Feldstein,1985:39).

## 5. Concealment strategy

In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1974:174) conceal /kən'si:l/ means hide and keep secret. According to King, the speaker may speak with making a noise but he still silent if he avoids a certain issue (King,2013:14). Zerubavel adds: "*Almost paradoxically, silence is often covered up by sound, and what is called small talk, nervous chatter are different forms of noise*" (Zerubavel,2006:52).

Concealment is a form of silence which is considered wordy. Schroter defines concealment as a subtype of silence that is distinguished from silence in two aspects: 1- the concealment that takes place with words, 2- the concealment that takes place without words (Schroter,2013:17). Verbal communication, in some cases, can have concealing functions, as Bellebaum states that if someone hides something, that does not mean he should to be silent, and if someone keeps silence, he does not necessarily hide something. For Bellebaum, many words in some cases are required to keep a secret (Bellebaum, 1992). In media appearance, Jaworski argues that politicians prefer words over silence *“when they have nothing relevant to say and when they want to conceal something, in cases like these, the effect is excessive verbiage or gibberish”* (Jaworski,11993:7). Concerning duration and intensity, concealment just like a silence, it may be prolonged if it is extended over various communicative events. In relation to intensity, people are different in their ability in keeping something, if they hold their tongues and become silent as a grave or if they are discreet (Schroter,2013:18).

### 5.1 The Forms of Concealment

When the political figure intends to hide some facts, he will do that either implicitly by avoiding the question that is put to him, or he will offer some excuses, for example ‘here, I cannot go into more details’. The concealment has two forms:

- 1- **Explicit concealment:** when the political figures do not announce any fact about X (Galasinski,2000:67).
- 2- **Implicit concealment (wordy silence):** when the political figures refuse to talk about some cases or evading to reveal anything about X, they will do that by talking about Z, that can be viewed in political debates (Bull, 2003). Implicit concealment has another way of covering up with using lies, thus there is an intention to conceal X, but the expectation is to reveal X.

## 6. The Data of the Study

In this study, two samples are to be analyzed; the first one is dedicated to analyze the Obama- Romney political debate (2012), and the second is analyzing intended silent moments of Dr. Merkel.

### 6.1. Obama- Romney Debate (2012)

Date: October 3, 2012

Location: University of Denver

The political debates between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney during the 2012 U.S. presidential election focuses on domestic policy, healthcare and economy. Romney is prepared and more engaged than Obama. He polishes his answers and undergoes serious media training to the point that makes his voice soft and more leonine than Obama. As a result, Romney for once, he looks like a president, not like a candidate.

Obama prepares for the debate in different way, he seems to rely more on repeated formulas with using filler pauses frequently. He projects himself as humble not as a perfect president and he looks less like a president, and more like a candidate.

#### 6.1.1. Speech Transcript

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

--..... there are a lot of points I want to make tonight, but ..... the most important one ..... is that .....20 years ago.

Obama (00:1:31)

--..... Four years ago, we went through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, millions of jobs were lost, the auto industry was on the brink of collapse. .... The financial system had frozen up, and because of the resilience and the determination of the American people, we've begun to fight our way back.

Over the last 30 months, we've seen 5 million jobs in the private sector created..... The auto industry has come roaring back and housing has begun to rise.

Obama (00:2:7)



### Obama & Romney political debate (2012)

MR. ROMNEY:

--..... This is obviously a very tender topic. I've had the occasion over the last couple of years of meeting people across the country. I was in Dayton, Ohio, and a woman grabbed my arm, and she said, I've been out of work since May. Can you help me?

Romney (00:3:52)

PRESIDENT OBAMA:

--Well, ..... four years ago when I was running for office I was traveling around and having those same conversations that Governor Romney talks about..... If they had a pre-existing condition they might not be able to get coverage at all. If they did have coverage, insurance companies might impose an arbitrary limit, ..... and so as a consequence, they're paying their premiums, somebody gets really sick, lo and behold they don't have enough money to pay the bills because the insurance companies say that ..... they have hit the limit. Obama (00:10:48)

--..... the irony is that we've seen this model work really well..... in Massachusetts, because..... Governor Romney did a good thing, working with Democrats in the state to set up what is essentially the identical model. And as a consequence, people are covered there. It hasn't destroyed jobs. Obama (00:12:55)

### **6.1.2. Analysis**

There are notable pauses specially, on the part of Obama, during the discussions. Many political commentators, including those from CNN Politics, view the performance of Romney as superior to that of Obama.

In CNN reporting, Romney seizes the story, the political commentators note that 67% of viewers believe that he will win, since his answers are confident, direct and black-and-white. They are contrasting sharply with Obama's that seem lengthy, winding, hesitant responses that including filler pauses frequently, and the imbalance of the performances immediately showed up. Chris Christie, New Jersey Governor, expected that this debate would change the campaign's narrative, which it did, since Romney energized his base (CNN Politics, 2012). The moments of silence play an important role in the dynamics of the discussion and analyzing these moments through the lens of Jaworski's (1993) and Johannesen's (1974) functions of silence will provide insight into their communicative impact.

#### **6.1.2.1. Jaworski's Functions of Silence**

1-Turn-taking management or Interaction Management:

Silence can serve as a form of regulation the flow of conversation, allowing viewers to interpret the moments of silence. For instance, both candidates use silence strategically to control the flow of conversation, when Romney makes claims about the Obama administration's foreign policy, Obama's silences often suggest a tactical decision to allow



Romney to speak freely, thereby inviting him to potential missteps **Obama's disapproval**

2- Disagreement and Agreement:

This function relates to the use of silence to reject the statement or the idea. There are instances where Obama remained silent after Romney makes assertions that Obama finds them inaccurate.

#### **6.1.2.2. Johannesen's Functions of Silence**

1-The person is carefully thinking exactly what to say next.

The function of silence here to allow participants to gather their thoughts and consider their responses. In this debate, Obama often pauses after a contentious exchange, signaling and emphasizing the weight of his arguments.

2-The individual's silence reflects sharing insights or mood and empathic exchange with others.

During the debate, silence follows key statements, heightening their importance. For instance, when Romney makes strong claims about the economy, Obama's silence refers to his weighing the validity of those claims before responding.

3- The person is emotionally overcome.

Obama's silence often carries emotional weight, specially, when he discusses sensitive topics such as, personal stories and race. That will convey empathy, allowing more space for the audience to react with him.

### **6.1.3. The Impact of Ethnicity**

As the first African American president, Obama's ethnicity plays a significant role in forming his candidacy. Historically speaking, the black community plays an important role in American politics, culture and the economy. African American people make up about 13.4% of the total population. Therefore, Black community makes up an important percentage of the population in the United States. Obama's silence reflects both his understanding of the complexities of race and his multicultural upbringing in America. He often navigated discussions about race with restraint and caution, recognizing the sensitivities involved in this issue. His presence in the debate is not just about policies but also about breaking racial barriers in American politics.

The debate of 2012 between Barak Obama and Mitt Romney includes many discussions, where ethnic and racial implications are often implicit. For example, Obama's Affordable Care Act is framed not only as healthcare reform but also to serve the underserved minorities. So, he uses many filler pauses with caution during discussing these topics.

### **6.2. Collected Silence of Dr. Merkel**

Dr. Angela Merkel, who is the leader of the Christian Democratic Union, is re-elected as the first female German chancellor (Shroter,2013:131) on Sept. 27, 2009 election in Germany after her election in 2005. Her leadership faces a range of criticisms from various commentators who argue that Merkel's reluctance to engage within certain topics is seen as a pragmatic means of focus on stability and reflects a calculated gendered rhetorical strategy which is associated with the first female chancellor in German.

### 6.2.1 Dr. Merkel's strategy

Some commentators refer to Merkel's silence as a strategic stance and a means of communication. This indicates that her silence is not stem from lack of words, but she employs silence intentionally as a tool to accomplish an end or goal.



#### Dr. Merkel's silence

Merkel's upbringing in the GDR, German Democratic Public, and in such environment where being too outspoken or vocal about opposition might involve risks. Merkel's background and her experience indicate her cautious communicative style that leads to economic speech, she employs silence strategically as a communicative caution to protect her party from danger, and to make the dosed speech more effective with avoiding to step into thin ice (Schroter,2013:127). Merkel is nicknamed "Uckermark Sphinx" by Die Zeit (14.01.2010) which draws a comparison between the Merkel's background from the rural Northeastern German province, the region of the Uckermark and the Sphinx's historical root.

The following quotations explore the dual nature of Dr. Merkel's strategy, which is seen as a double-edged sword, regarding positivity and negativity of silence in the context of her leadership:

### 6.2.1.1 Positive insights

Silence is a powerful communicator which conveys messages that words cannot. Dr. Merkel's style has been described by friends as a clever tactic, and as it is stated in article from FAZ online '*she is silent so very neatly*' (Schroter,2013:113).

-- "*Angela Merkel seems to have chosen "iron silence while poisoned arrows buzz around her"* (FAZ, 5.3.2009).

-- "*Never has a politician used consensus in such an aggressive way as Angela Merkel. Her seemingly peaceful demeanor, which shocks even political opponents, could bring her a comfortable election victory in the end*". (Welt online, 9.8.2009)

### 6.2.1.2 Negative insights

On the flip side, silence can cause misinterpretations, in various instances where a certain response is expected (Schroter,2013:118).

-- "*Only a minority demands a conservative attitude from Merkel. Many would be grateful for any sort of attitude. The absence of it is at the heart of the irritation within the CDU*". (SZ, 15.1.2010)

-- "*The chancellor often prefers to say nothing rather than taking a position: She keeps silent in no-win situations. But now she is leaving the decisive question open, is silent and thereby risks damaging the German-Polish relations which she claims to protect*". (SZ, 18.02.2009). Fetzer and Weizman confirm:

-- "*that politicians do not have the right to remain silent, and should they decide to do so, this is generally used against them by portraying them as uncooperative, if not insincere. Moreover, they are viewed as not fulfilling their obligation of informing the public and the electorate in any appropriate manner*" (Fetzer and Weizman,2006:145).

### 6.2.2. Analysis

Dr. Merkel's silences, as various quotations suggest, are deliberate choice and self-determined rather than imposed (Schroter,2013:132). As Glenn states "*when silence is our choice, we can use it purposefully and effectively.*" (Glenn, 2004:13).

On the other hand, some commentators refer to Dr. Merkel's silence as a sign of her weak leadership, because she does not inform the government or the party about her plans since she does not have any plan any more! Brummett points out to the silence "*In politics, unlike more intimate communication, talk performs unique functions, and its denial predictably and reliably means mystery, uncertainty, passivity.*" (Brummett,1980:291). So, in Brummett's terms, Merkel's mystification can be perceived as passivity. Examining Dr. Merkel's concealment in certain discussions through the perspectives of Jaworski (1993) and Johannesen (1974) will highlight its communicative significance.

### 6.2.2.1. Jaworski's Functions of Silence

#### 1. Uncertainty and Hesitation

In a political landscape which is fraught with challenges, silence may reflect a lack of clarity in addressing complex issues. Die Zeit refers to Merkel's silence in an article that it may lead to uncertainty, which is determined by Brummett (1980) as a probable effect of silence in politics.

--"*Angela Merkel once said of silence that it was a form of communication which could furthermore trigger various interpretations. Indeed, since silence is one of her most important instruments of power. This has seldom become as obvious as in the last few days and seldom so much to the detriment of the chancellor.*" (SZ, 18.02.2009).

#### 2. Topic Avoidance or Evasion:

Dr. Merkel's silence serves as a strategic tool for topic avoidance which allows her to sidestep controversial issues that may provoke backlash. For instance, in Feb. 2, 2015, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán criticized Dr. Merkel's immigration policies and her silence during a campaign rally in Budapest. Dr. Merkel often evades discussing some sensitive issues, especially those related to the refugee crisis with its implication on Europe and Germany.

## Merkel's shameful silence



### Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán greets German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Budapest in 2015

*“Dear Angela Merkel, “Your shameful silence about Hungary is now rapidly undermining that respect. We are well aware that it is, for many reasons, politically expedient for you to ignore what is happening in Hungary. But the survival of democracy and the safety of European Jews should never be treated as a mere matter of political expediency. This silence makes you complicit. Your inaction has effectively made you an*



*ally to anti-democratic and anti-Semitic forces.”* **BUDAPEST, Feb. 2, 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and German Chancellor Dr. Merkel**

#### 6.2.2.2. Johannesen’s Functions of Silence

1. The person avoids discussion of a sensitive or controversial issues:

This function is corresponded to Jaworski’s one which is topic evasion. Merkel’s silence acts as a protective mechanism, by not engaging directly, when facing sensitive issues.

2. The person is carefully thinking exactly what to say next:

George Packer (2014) talks about Merkel’s longtime political associate who says “*She is a master of listening. In a conversation, she speaks twenty per cent, you speak eighty per cent. She gives everybody the feeling that ‘I want to hear what you have to say,’ but the truth is that her judgment is made within three minutes, and sometimes she thinks another eighteen minutes are wasted time. She is like a computer*”.

### 6.2.3. The Impact of Gender

According to Glenn, silence, or in another word, silencing is considered as a lamentable essence of femininity, stupidity, passivity, emptiness, or obedience (Glenn,2004:2). So, in a given Merkel's political position is not reasonable to hypothesize that her silence results from silencing process. That means, her silence cannot be a sign of passivity. On the contrary, as illustrated by (Schroter,2013:132) there is an evidences suggesting that Merkel has an ability to silence others as an intentional effect and exercise of power which contrasts the traditional female stereotype (Glenn, 2004:31). Silence is seen as a powerful means of dominating others: "*where self-exposure is required, it is the silent listener who judges, and who thereby exerts power over the one who speaks.*" (Gal,1989:1). Seemingly, Merkel exploits this power in the 2009 campaign. Holms comments on the linguistic gender stereotype as an engagement of men and an avoidance of women in open confrontations (Holms,2006:140). Merkel's strategy enables her to avoid reinforcing feminine stereotypes as talkative excessively or to avoid the possible perception of being aggressive in open confrontation. Women's and minority's silence can be seen as rhetorical strategy as it is proposed by Glenn (2004). Her stance pertains to the traditional gender stereotype of woman who avoids conflict, competition and open confrontations (Schroter,2013:133). Welt online comments on the gender aspect, and this is the only comment regarding this observation:

-- "*Campaigning entails confrontation. The concept comes from a time when confrontation over political ideas was predominantly an affair for men. Four years later Angela Merkel has fundamentally changed the essence of political confrontation. Merkel has pushed the CDU into the post-heroic era.*" (Welt online, 9.8.2009). The silence of Dr. Merkel in different situations is examined through the lens of proposed models by Jaworski and Johannesen, which refer the multifaceted nature of silence in discourse.

## 7. Conclusion:

This study aims to show how the interplay of silence and speech highlights the complexity of political communication, illustrating that what is not said can be as impactful and purposeful as the spoken words. The analysis reveals the multifaceted role of pauses and concealment in political interactions between Obama vs. Romney as well as Dr. Merkel's leadership, and these silent moments not only shapes perceptions of the political figures but also serve as a tool for managing political discourse. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of intentional and communicative silent moments in foreign political debates, offering valuable insights into the silence's functions through Jaworski's (1993) and Johannesen's (1974) lenses.

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