US VOTES 2016 KAREN LEONG
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Body Language Analysis of the Second US Presidential Debate

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As the Influence and Body Language expert analysing the first US presidential debate on Channel News Asia, I was asked by many to share my analysis on the second one too. Here are my views on how both Trump and Clinton's body language impacted their message.I noticed the debate can be divided into 3 clear Acts; each demarcating major turning points for each.

1) ACT ONE – Trump managed to deflect attention from the sexist comments scandal with uncharacteristic calmness (Trump 1 – Clinton 0)

-The candidates did not shake hands at the start; a simple but important pleasantry that denotes proper civil behaviour. **Trump** immediately went to stand behind his chair with his shoulders shrugged. This showed defensiveness – like a man who needed a barrier between him and a furious jury. However, when Trump spoke, he deviated from his standard aggressive postures. Using no hand gestures, he spoke with a lower pitch, and a slower pace - all this reinforced his key message of being apologetic and still respectful of women. He was even unexpectedly cordial with the Martha, the moderator before a rebuttal, "Am I allowed to respond to her comment?" Though his constant sniffling indicated he was under some stress, by being uncharacteristically calm, he managed to triumph in act one.

Clinton began with her signature open body postures supporting her message of unity. However, she was smiling too exuberantly (eyes wrinkled up, showing a full set of teeth), while listening to Triumph's allegations on Bill Clinton's impeachment and having to pay a $850K fine to one of his alleged victims - Paula Jones (who was present during the debate). This inappropriately timed smile made her come across as unsympathetic and supported Trump's message (that Clinton did attack the victims viciously). She had the same untimely smile at least twice more – when listening to questions on ISIS and her favouring her wealthy friends.

2) ACT TWO – Clinton's more credible language (Trump 0 – Clinton 1)

I counted **Trump** saying "to be honest with you", "I'll be honest" and "honestly" at least 6 times throughout the debate. Ironically, this

subconsciously tends to register that the speaker is hiding something. (Both also said "believe me" once each too – which also has the same effect.) Secondly, Trump folded his arms when asked about what he would do about Syria and Aleppo's humanitarian crisis, and that this running mate was prepared to use military force. This signals some conflict, which he reinforced by saying he disagreed with Pence's views.

Clinton's eyes tend to look down whenever she begins to speak – indicating some uncertainty as she gathers her thoughts. Conversely she looks straight at the audience when she delivered prepared soundbites. However, Clinton spoke more precisely, without using vague words (like Trump's over-use of "actually") and this made her seem more credible.

3) ACT THREE - Trump getting personal with Clinton vs Clinton being a people's president (Trump 0 – Clinton 1)

Trump reverted to his rapid power hand gestures for most part of the debate. However, by signalling 'L' signs (loser?), pointing fingers at the audience and Clinton, he appeared to be admonishing and divisive, especially when sensitive topics like islamophobia came up. He was also often captured pouting and standing seemingly closely behind Clinton while she spoke. At one point, he was captured hunched over, pointing fingers at her while she was seated, which made him seem overly aggressive and personal.

Clinton focused on connecting with people. Firstly, she tends to repeat the names of people in the audience when replying, and her body turns to face them. Secondly, she put her hand on her heart at

least thrice in the final 30 minutes, indicating a more sincere appeal. Thirdly, even when attacking Trump, she mostly faced the audience, addressing him in third person, tilting her head towards him, while keeping her eyes on the questioner. It indicates "we are in this together, against Trump". Overall, this was congruent with her message of being a President for all Americans.

In conclusion, based purely on non-verbal language, Clinton wins Trump 2-1, across the 3 acts. As we are nearing the crucial last stages of the debate, it is ever more critical to have **congruent** body language, to be deemed as a **credible** candidate. I am looking forward to the final presidential debate on 20th October 2016 from 8.50am SGT when I will be commenting again on Channel News Asia.

What are your thoughts?

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