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| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

A Critical Analysis of Harris's and Trump's Discourse in the U.S. Presidential Election - 2024

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| **ABSTRACT**

The present study aims to critically analyze Harris's and Trump's discourse in the 2024 U.S. presidential election. The study focuses on the sole Harris-Trump debate as well as each of their nomination acceptance speeches. The study adopts Fairclough's (1989) CDA three-dimensional model with the purpose of determining how the candidates' backgrounds and personal experiences contributed to their word choices and exploring the effect of utilizing different modes of sentence (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) on the candidates' rhetorical style. Using a qualitative research design, the data gathered from official transcripts were described, interpreted, and explained. The findings presented instances of the candidates' word choices that reflected their personal experiences as well as unveiled their ideologies. The findings also revealed that candidates' employment of different modes of sentence incorporated with persuasive rhetorical devices served to create a unique rhetorical style in their discourse. This study contributes to the field of linguistic research by demonstrating some ideologically driven linguistic techniques and their employment in political communication.

1. Introduction

Language and communication are the primary entities of human interaction in which humans can share their ideas and feelings with others. Among the many different forms of communication, political communication is considered the most powerful. It is operated in a wide range of situations, from speeches in small political gatherings to presidential election rallies and debates.

Presidential candidates, like politicians in general, strive to make their speeches powerful, convincing, and motivating. Presidential candidates deploy a variety of linguistic strategies and discourse devices incorporated with persuasion techniques in their speeches in order to spell out their program agendas and gain public support (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2010). Additionally, presidential candidates' speeches seek to influence voters' attitudes and behaviors toward adopting particular perspectives on certain issues in order to differentiate themselves from their opponents (Moore, 2009).

Presidential debates are also another form of political communication and are specifically deemed to be an integral part of the U.S. presidential election process. Candidates' rhetoric and general performance in these debates play a crucial role in determining who is going to win the election. In this vein and based on Aristotle's rhetorical theory, for a politician to be effective and persuasive, his/her text and talk must be built on three appeals, which evoke emotions through *pathos*, create credibility through *ethos*, and present logical arguments through *logos* (Wróbel,2015).

According to Wodak (2013), a comprehensive understanding of how political communication operates in social and political realities requires careful examination of its discourse in terms of language, structure, and context utilizing well-established theoretical frameworks and methodologies of (critical) discourse analysis.
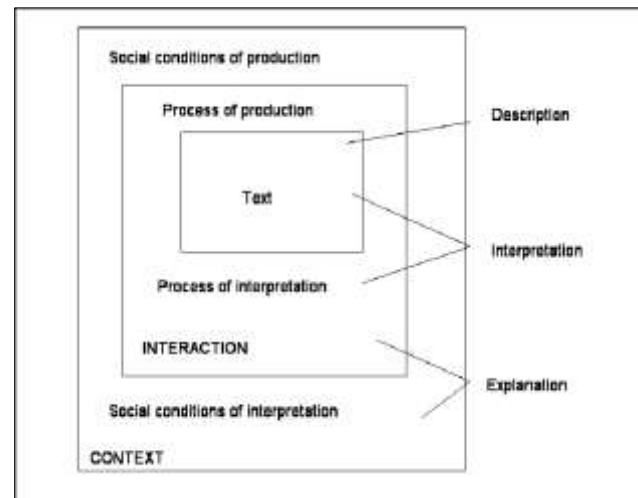
Discourse analysis (DA) plays an essential role in linguistic research. DA is a powerful mechanism for exploring how language functions in communication, as it examines the connection between language and society. However, critical discourse analysis (CDA) takes this exploration further beyond describing language use to analyzing power, ideology, and social inequalities.

Linguists (e.g., Fairclough, 1989) have described CDA as a multidisciplinary approach since it invites various methods and theories from different fields and disciplines, including social sciences, sociology, political psychology, and linguistics. Wodak (2013) asserts that CDA is not a particular theory per se, but rather a school that conflates various approaches. Despite the diverse approaches in CDA, with each representing different models and methods of research, all are premised on key principles that define and distinguish CDA. A selection of these principles is summed up by Wodak and Fairclough (1997, pp. 271-279) in the following way: "CDA addresses social problems"; "power relations are discursive"; "discourse constitutes society and culture"; "discourse does ideological work"; "discourse is historical"; "the link between text and society is mediated"; "discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory"; and "discourse is a form of social action."

Fairclough (1989) proposed the three-dimensional model, which has become widely used for analyzing discourse and understanding its socio-political implications. His model examines discourse at the levels of text, discursive practice (interactions), and socio-political context through three interrelated stages of analysis:

1. Description: This stage requires focusing on three categories of linguistic features: vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure.
2. Interpretation: This stage has to do with the formal features of the text that are considered "cues which activate elements of interpreters' MR[1]." (Fairclough, 1989, p. 141).
3. Explanation: The objective of this stage is to show discourse as a form of social practice. That is, discourse shapes social structures, and in turn, social structures are shaped by it (Fairclough, 1989).

Figure 1: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

(Fairclough, 1989, p. 25)

Political discourse (PD) is considered the core focus of CDA. Studying the candidates' speeches and debates during presidential elections through the lens of CDA is of high importance, as it examines how candidates frame social issues, influence public opinion, and persuade using language, which ultimately reveals the connection between implied language, negotiated power, and hidden ideologies. Accordingly, this study aims to critically analyze the discourse of the 2024 U.S. presidential candidates, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at fulfilling the following objectives:

- To examine the effect of a candidate's background and personal experiences on their word choice.
- To analyze the impact of modes of sentence (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) on the rhetorical style of a candidate's discourse.

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[1] MR stands for "members resources, which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts." (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24)

3. Literature Review
The use of CDA approaches to analyze PD has attracted many researchers over the years. An earlier study by Aschale (2013) analyzes a sample of four speeches of Obama's discourse in the Middle East and North Africa. The research follows the schematic representation of Fairclough's 2002 framework, which encompasses four parts, including discourse structure analysis, interactional analysis, interdiscursive analysis, and linguistic/semiotic analysis. The findings present the use of certain vocabulary over many other options, serving the role of language being decisive and manipulative through uncovering accounts of ideology that were concealed behind Obama's positive words of support, and cooperation.

Another study by Sipra & Rashid (2013) analyzes the first part of Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" based on Fairclough's framework. The study investigates the use of textual/stylistic strategies in representing the socio-political relationship between the White and the Black community in America. The analysis reveals that the application of the Constant Theme Pattern approach in King's speech assisted in creating a coherent and cohesive discourse that was clear enough to emphasize the importance of shaking off chains of slavery and discrimination.

In a comparable study, Siregar (2021) applies Dijk's CDA theory that considers the macro, micro, and super structures throughout the analysis of Biden's elected presidential speech. The findings indicate that the overriding theme of Biden's speech is one of gratitude for being elected president in 2020. The discourse elements analyzed are semantics, syntactic, stylistics, and rhetoric by which the researcher presents Biden's feeling of disappointment toward the issue of discrimination that were in the prior presidency. The dominant pronouns utilized including I, ME, MY, AND MYSELF, give his words authority and leadership.

A related study by Syed et al. (2021) presents an analysis of the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau's speech regarding the terrorist attack on a Muslim family in Ontario's London utilizing Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The results show that the speech's vocabulary choice, metaphor, sentence structure, pronouns, and modality are strategically crafted to project the image of an unbiased Canada, committed to unity and equality. At the discursive and social practice level, Trudeau poses himself as an ally for the Muslim community, totally denying the violent ideologies of Islamophobia and radicalism.

Similarly, the research of Hiển & Linh (2022) follows Fairclough's ten-question model to analyze the press statements of the U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris during her visit to Vietnam in 2021. The findings highlight that the use of overwording and metaphor is to emphasize the partnership and strong bilateral ties between the United States and Vietnam. Pronouns, modal verbs, adverbs, and tense are among the grammatical features utilized to underline Biden administration's goals of maintaining a positive power balance in the Indo-Pacific region in parallel with the intention of expanding U.S. engagement and cooperation.

A study by Awawdeh (2023) attempts to explore the hidden ideologies and possible ramifications of Trump's use of specific lexical items, pronouns, comparative/ superlative forms, and modal structures in his speeches during the coronavirus pandemic. The analysis follows Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model. Among ideas underlined are those of national unity, and American superiority. The use of the pronouns I and WE in Trump's remarks also illustrates egoism and self-glorification.

While previous studies have examined various features in politicians' discourse, few have addressed the impact of politicians' backgrounds on their lexical choices. Furthermore, minimal research has given detailed attention to sentence modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) and their impact on a politician's discourse rhetorical style. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill the gap by critically analyzing the 2024 U.S. presidential candidates' discourse in terms of candidates' backgrounds and its impact on their choice of words, as well as examining the candidates' employment of various modes of sentence and thus its role in shaping a unique rhetorical style.

4. Methodology
4.1 Data Collection

The 2024 U.S. presidential election had massive historical importance. The language candidates used represented their diametrically opposite perspectives on myriad national and global issues, which had a lasting impact on the vote.

The present study adopts a qualitative research design, which mainly depends on text and visual data with less reliance on numerical data or variable measurement (Creswell, 2009). The study is guided by purposive sampling. The selected sample is comprised of the single televised debate between Trump and Harris on September 10 and two speeches-the nomination acceptance speech for each candidate after their party's national convention- Trump's on July 18 and Harris's on August 22**.**

4.2 Data Analysis

For the sake of fulfilling the research objectives, the study adopted Fairclough's (1989) CDA three-dimensional model, which required applying the three stages of analysis mentioned earlier. Only one example specified the application of each stage due to space limitations.

The following linguistic features were considered the study's instruments the researcher drew upon throughout the course of text analysis:

1.   Word Choice

There are many aspects related to text vocabulary that assign value relations- experiential, relational and expressive-and imply hidden meanings. Some of these aspects are positive/negative words, rewording/overwording, repetition, meaning relations (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy), metaphor, etc. (Fairclough, 1989; Henriksen, L. et al., 2004).

2. Modes of Sentence (declarative, grammatical structure, imperative)

The grammatical feature of sentence modes in textual analysis is built on two factors. The first is the position of the subject in a sentence from a giver of information, as in a declarative sentence, to an inquirer or a commander who asks something of the addressee, as in questions and imperatives. The second is concerned with speech acts that are grammatically encoded in sentence elements. Speech act values vary from ordering, requesting, promising, threatening, warning, and so on, which highly influence the meanings that discourse participants elicit and interpret. Speech acts will not function appropriately in political rhetoric unless incorporated with powerful persuasive devices. These serve as a means of power, ideology, and identity construction in political discourse.

5.   Results and Discussion

5.1 Results and Discussion Pertinent to Research Question One

Question one: *How does the U.S. presidential candidate's background contribute to their choice of words in discourse?*

Examples of Harris's and Trump's word choices that speak to their backgrounds and lived social experiences were selected and explained. These choices were classified and placed under three main categories: age, ethnic identity, and work history.

5.1.1 Age

Upon analyzing each candidate's discourse, it was observed that Kamala Harris, 60, attempted to take advantage of age over her older opponent, Trump, who is considered the oldest nominee to run for presidency at the age of 78. Accordingly, most of the formal features described and explained down below were of Harris.

- **Description stage (textual analysis level):** To begin, the utilization of **synonymous** and **antonymous** vocabulary was evident. She **repeated** the word "new" five times in the debate, most often **collocated with** the words "plan," "generation," and "way." Additionally, as part of her policy agenda, she repeatedly employed **near-synonymous vocabulary** to the word "new," like "young (families)" and "small (businesses)." As in:
- *And what I do offer is a **new** generation of leadership for our country.*
- *We can chart a **new** way forward.* **(Repeated slogan)**
- *We know that **young families** need support to raise their children.*
- *My plan is to give a $50,000 tax deduction to start-up **small businesses,** knowing they are part of the backbone of America's economy.*

In contrast, she utilized **antonymous words** to "new," like "old" and "tired," to describe Trump and his administration, as can be seen in the following examples:

- *It is important that we (the American people)... turn the page on this same **old tired** rhetoric.*
- *The American people are exhausted with the same **old tired** playbook.*
- *My opponent,... his (Trump's) plan is to ... provide a tax cut for **billionaires** and **big corporations**.*

The utilization of synonymy and antonymy was also noticeable in Harris's discourse by which she intended to display a futuristic view that calls for a new forward. She utilized the words "future", and "forward" versus "past" and "back; backward" in reference to her plan and Trump's, respectively. Additionally, Harris's campaign slogans "We Are Not Going Back," and "A New Way

Forward" have been repeated numerous times during the debate and in her speech with an attempt to achieve the same intention, as in:

- *It is important that we move* ***forward.***

- *So I think you've heard tonight two very different visions for our country. One that is focused on the* ***future*** *and the other that is focused on the* ***past****. And an attempt to take us* ***backward****.* ***But we're not going back.***

Moreover, Harris's constant use of "former" sixteen times in the debate, often collocated with "president" in reference to Trump or his previous presidency period (2017-2021), proceeded to emphasize that no chance for Trump to win a second term and that presidency is hers. The following is an example:

- *Project 2025 that the* ***former president*** *intends on implementing if he were elected again*.

- ***His former*** *national security adviser has said he is dangerous and unfit.* ***His former*** *secretary of defense has said the nation, the republic would never survive another Trump term.*

- **Interpretation stage (discursive practice level):** This stage draws upon the role of text formal features (cues) in interpreting the text meanings, as well as how the audience might receive the message. Accordingly, it was clear that Harris relied on referencing the age gap between her and Trump without directly addressing it. In both discourses —the debate and her nomination acceptance speech— she attempted to describe her well-prepared futuristic plan against the outdated one of her rival by utilizing various vocabulary aspects such as synonymy/antonymy, repetition, and collocation. She utilized "new" to "old," "young" to "tired," "future" to "past," "forward" to "backward," "middle class" to "billionaires," and "small businesses" to "big corporations." She positively associated words of her side with "generation," "way," and "forward," as in her slogan, *A New Way Forward*, which motivates the audience to vote by evoking positive thoughts and feelings among them.

- **Explanation stage (social practice level):** This stage is concerned with the socio-political context and power relations that determine discourse and are reinforced by it. Therefore, and upon analyzing Harris's discourse, it was noted that she explicitly presented that her policies support young families and their small businesses. However, the implicit meaning Harris intended to convey is that she is younger in age in comparison to her rival and hence has time to change the course, unlike those who came before and made their billions, leaving no space for young and small dreamers. Additionally, she aimed at indicating the end of Trump's presidential era and the need for a new one to lead. Framing her opponent, Trump, as "old" and "tired," assisted in picturing her as the Americans' lifesaver whose democratic plans and policies are to bring unity after division and growth after decline.

Another example that reflected the age factor is Trump's use of the phrase "Run-Spot-Run" during the debate to describe Harris's plan, as he said:

- *She copied Biden's plan. And it's like four sentences, like* ***run-Spot-run.*** *Four sentences that are just oh.*

- *Because they saw how incompetent* ***she and her boss*** *are.*

The phrase "Run-Spot-Run" could be referenced from a 1940s kid's book written by William S. Gray. The book retained its popularity for decades through the characters Dick and Jane. The researcher assumes that any American of Trump's age must at least have once heard this phrase.

The book series of *Dick and Jane* applies the technique of teaching kids how to read by focusing on simple, short sentences. Not only did Trump want to describe Harris's plan as simple and weak, though; he intended to liken Harris and Biden to Dick and

Jane, the book characters. Such usage implies that Harris is incapable, unable to stand on her own, and reliant on Biden's plan, most notably when used "her boss" twice during the debate to support his accusation. Therefore, this simile served as an indirect accusation of Harris as incompetent, lacking self-reliance, and that the previous administration and past policies will remain with no upcoming or future change.

5.1.2 Ethnic Identity

The 49th U.S. Vice President, Kamala Harris, and the first African Asian American to serve in this position, has always been proud of being a child of immigrant parents. In her nomination acceptance speech, Harris quoted the phrase "a nation of immigrants" from her Democratic fellows Presidents Obama and, prior to him, John F. Kennedy, who was the author of the book "A Nation of Immigrants" in 1963. The book spotlights immigrants' achievements in the United States and their significant roles in shaping its society. Borrowing this quote is an attempt by Harris to highlight with pride her belonging to the United States, a country whose people are diverse in color, race, and ethnicity. To support this belief, Harris employed meaning relations to her choice of words, namely **synonymy** and **antonymy**, as in:

- *I **believe** very strongly that the American people want a president who understands the importance of **bringing** us **together** … And I pledge to you to be a president for **all Americans**.*
- *Knowing that regardless of people's color or the language their grandmother speaks we **all** have the **same** dreams and aspirations and want a president who invests in those, not in **hate and division**.*

However, the New Yorker, Donald Trump, and the 45th president of the United States—recently the 47th—has been known for his anti-immigrant positions. In his discourse, Trump intended to utilize bigoted and demeaning language on the issue of immigration. For instance, in the debate, he described immigrants as "alien," "criminals," "dangerous," "terrorists," and "drug dealers," who came from "prisons," "jails," "mental institutions," and "insane asylums," using the verbs "taking over (building and towns)," "going in violently", "destroying," and more specifically, the deliberate use of "pouring into" many times during the debate.

- *But when you look at what she's done to our country and when you look at these millions and millions of people that are **pouring into** our country.*
- *What they have done to our country by allowing these millions and millions of people to **come into** our country.*
- *They're criminals…And that's bad for our economy too. These are the people that she and Biden **let into** our country.*

To illustrate, the phrasal verb "pour into," which, when used of people, means to throng and enter into a place in great numbers and all at once, had been used many times by Trump, as stated earlier. Such a particular choice of the verb "pour into" from among the options Trump himself utilized in reference to the previous administration's policies toward immigration, "come into" and "let into," was a way of depicting immigration as happening at a high volume, and in a rapid and uncontrolled way. Noting that, the verb "come into" carries a slightly positive meaning in which it means entering a place safely. Thus, varying the verb use assisted Trump in accusing Biden's administration of admitting and allowing large numbers of illegals to "come into" the states. Therefore, the metaphorical expression "*pouring into our country*" served to make the abstract notion of immigration more concrete, hence more dangerous and threatening, by spreading fear among the American Nation and disseminating a call for immediate action, as in the following example:

- ***they're taking jobs*** *that are occupied right now by African Americans and Hispanics and also unions … **We have to get them out fast.***

5.1.3 Career and Work History

This part is an attempt to reveal the effect of the candidate's career-like experiences and work history on their choice of words. This part begins with a discussion of three utterances in which Trump used lexical items that are considered a reflection of being a businessperson, a wrestling fan, and a television personality.

First, being a billionaire, a business owner, and a president of his family's real estate corporation at a young age all contribute to the way Trump speaks. Thus, it can be inferred that money shaped Trump's language use. During the debate, Trump reiterated

money-related words, such as "million(s)," twenty-five times, "billion(s)," sixteen times, almost in every discussed issue, such as:

- **On Economy**: *China paid him (Biden)* ***millions*** *of dollars.* -
- **On Ukraine War**: *Have gone into Ukraine and killed* ***millions*** *of people when you add it up.*
- **On COVID:** *And the pandemic was, not since 1917 where 100* ***million*** *people died*.
- **On Tariffs:** *They paid* ***billions*** *and* ***billions***, ***hundreds of billions*** *of dollars when I said either you pay up or we're not going to protect you anymore.*
- **On 2020 US presidential election results:** *I got almost 75* ***million*** *votes.*

Everyone has their own exaggeration numbers to refer to when they speak such as (I called you hundred times today!). However Trump's exaggeration numbers are big. They are not only millions, but: *millions of millions and hundreds of billions.*

Second, Trump's strong ambition to become locally and internationally recognized started in the late 1990s. Building skyscrapers and owning resorts, hotels, casinos, and golf courses were not enough for achieving fame. However, becoming a television personality was the path Trump took to reach his goal. During the debate, Trump utilized the lexeme "fire" nine times in one utterance. This recalls Trump's rude catchphrase "You are fired" that he used in the reality TV show ***The Apprentice.*** This excerpt is from the debate:

- *I'm a different kind of a person. I* ***fired*** *most of those people. Not so graciously. They did bad things or a bad job. I* ***fired*** *them. They never* ***fired*** *one person. They didn't* ***fire*** *anybody having to do with Afghanistan and the Taliban... They should have* ***fired*** *all those generals,...So when somebody does a bad job I* ***fire*** *them. And you take a guy like Esper. He was no good, I* ***fired*** *him. So he writes a book. Another one writes a book. Because with me they can write books. With nobody else can they. But they have done such a poor job. And they never* ***fire*** *anybody. Look at the economy. Look at the inflation. They didn't* ***fire*** *any of their economists.*

The repetition of the word "fired" was an attempt to remind voters of Trump's potential ability to make decisions and to choose the right people for the right positions; otherwise, they "are fired."

Third, Trump's fandom of the wrestling sport echoes in the way he speaks. Like professional wrestlers, Trump endeavors to picture himself as unbeatable, powerful, and incomparable. The example below was excerpted from the debate in which the lexeme "afraid" mirrors this depiction:

- *They said why is the whole world blowing up? ....They were* ***afraid of him*** *(Trump). China was* ***afraid***. *And I don't like to use the word* ***afraid*** *but I'm just quoting him. China was* ***afraid of him***. *North Korea was* ***afraid of him***. *Look at what's going on with North Korea, by the way. He said Russia was* ***afraid of him.***

On the other hand, Harris's work history as an attorney and a prosecutor shaped the lens through which she sees the world, thus her words. In her discourse, she used many court-related words. These appear in the given Word cloud.

Moreover, it was noticeable the frequent usage of the expression "Let's be clear." The present study interpreted such use as a subconscious reflection of what she used to practice in the courtroom: clarity and accountability. Looking at it differently, this phrase was an indirect attempt to shed light on Trump's ambiguity and falsification, as in the example below:

- ***Let's be clear*** *that the Trump administration resulted in a trade deficit*. (Debate, 2024)
- ***Let's be clear*** *about how we got here*. (Harris, 2024)

Figure 2: Word Cloud: Court- related words used by Harris

In addition, Harris apparently referred to her opponent by his full name as *Donald Trump* thirty-two times during the debate. Doing so, Harris practiced being a prosecutor who accuses the defendant by saying their full name in court supported with evidence presentation to prove the defendant's guilt. As in:

- Let's talk about what **Donald Trump** left us. **Donald Trump** <u>left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression</u>. **Donald Trump** <u>left us the worst public health epidemic in a century</u>. **Donald Trump** <u>left us the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War</u>. And what we have done is clean up **Donald Trump***'s* <u>mess</u>.

5.2 Results and Discussion Pertinent to Research Question Two

Question Two: What effect does the use of different modes of sentence—declarative, grammatical question, and imperative—have on a candidate's rhetorical style?

The study assumes that the grammatical feature of sentence modes appears vividly in the sole Harris- Trump debate, as it provides a dynamic setting and a richer context that allows candidates to spontaneously answer the moderator's questions, explain their perspectives, and defend their positions. Unlike speeches that are often prepared ahead.

Upon analyzing Harris's and Trump's discourse, it was ascertained that both candidates employed different rhetoric techniques in the declaratives, grammatical questions, and imperatives utilized. Rhetorical devices served to create a persuasive, if not manipulative, discourse.

5.2.1 Modes of Sentence: Donald Trump

Immigration is the issue that concerns Trump the most, thus justifies all his linguistic means. Most of the instances cited on this section are of Trump's rhetoric on the issue of immigration, in which he employed various rhetorical devices in his modes of sentence: declarative, grammatical question, and imperative.

First, on declaratives, Trump applied **anaphora** by which he repeated a sequence of words at the beginning of successive clauses, as apparent in the following:

- **They're** *(immigrants) coming in and* **they're** *taking jobs....* **They're** *taking over the towns.* **They're** *taking over buildings.* **They're** *going in violently....* And **they're** *destroying our country.* **They're** *dangerous.* **They're** *at the highest level of criminality....* **They're** *eating the dogs...* **they're** *eating the cats...* **they're** *eating the pets of the people that live there.*
- **They** *(Harris and Biden)* **allowed** *terrorists.* **They allowed** *common street criminals.* **They allowed** *people to come in... into our country.*

Anaphora has a profound persuasive impact on recipients. This rhetorical technique aims at captivating the audience and directing their thoughts to accept the speaker's perspectives. Trump leaned on using anaphora via repeating "they're" forty-six times in the debate, most repeatedly at the beginning of multiple clauses in succeeding utterances injected with a negative description of immigration. This strategic repetition aimed at visualizing immigrants as cannibals who "*are eating the pets of the people that live there,*" thus reinforcing in the audience's minds the threat and danger of immigration. Anaphora served to naturalize anti-immigration and assert it as common sense. Additionally, the **metaphor** "*They're destroying the fabric of our country by what they've done*"—in reference to the previous administration's policies that allowed immigration to the States— assisted in drawing an analogy between fabric and the deep underlying structure of American society.

Second, Trump made use of grammatical questions in many instances during the debate. Trump's endeavor to create a populist speech that reaches the voters' hearts and minds was apparent in the employment of **rhetorical questions** and **hypophora**.

Rhetorical questions are hypothetical questions the speaker poses in order to engage the audience in the topic raised, hence appealing to their emotions. While no immediate answer is expected from a rhetorical question, it is considered a powerful tool that provokes the audience's thoughts thus gains their consent upon the speaker's ideology.

- *I ask,* **what about all the people (immigrants) that are pouring into our country and killing people (Americans)?** *....* , **when are they going to be prosecuted** — **when are these people from countries all over the world**, *not just South America, they're coming in from all over the world,.... They went into Seattle, they took over a big percentage of the city of Seattle.* **When are those people going to be prosecuted?**

Trump's use of rhetorical questions functioned as a tool for making his views sound like common sense. Additionally, this technique served to reinforce his ideology of anti-immigration. As ideological framing is the core concern of CDA, the deliberate use of the verb "pour into" while describing immigration, as discussed earlier in this study, portrayed immigration as a massive threat to the state's security. Presenting this in a rhetorical question supported Trump's hatred ideology toward immigration and addressed its danger as obvious and unquestionable.

Another rhetorical device that takes the form of a grammatical question is hypophora. Hypophora is when the speaker raises a question and then answers it directly. This was observable in Trump's discourse:

- ***Can you imagine a system where a person in an election doesn't have standing?*** <u>*The President of the United States doesn't have standing? That's how we lost.*</u>
- *Viktor Orban, one of the most respected men — they call him a strong man.... They said* **why is the whole world blowing up? Three years ago it wasn't!?** *He said because* <u>*you need Trump back as president. They were afraid of him.*</u>
- *They respect your president. Okay? They respect me. They don't respect Biden.* **How would you respect him? Why? For what reason?** <u>*He hasn't even made a phone call in two years to Putin. Hasn't spoken to anybody.*</u> *They don't even try and get it.*

These questions attempted to achieve the same purpose of engaging the minds of voters in the process of choosing the candidate who deserves to be the president. The examples provided implied two main features of Trump: self-adulation on one hand and the disparagement of others on the other.

Third, a closer analysis of Trump's discourse during the debate revealed that the use of direct imperatives was weak, except for his slogan "*Make America Great Again*." However, the use of indirect imperatives that imply hinting commands was noticeable. As in:

- *We (the American people)* **have to** *get them (immigrants) out. We* **have to** *get them out fast.*
- *We* **need** *two things. We* **need** *walls. We* **need** *— and we* **have to have** *it. We* **have to have** *borders. And we* **have to have** *good elections.*

Trump designed his language in a way that weaves a thematic linkage between America's greatness, immigration, and economy —issues matter the most for the American people. With the power of "We," indirect imperatives are more effective, agitating the audience and encouraging them to take action against immigrants.

5.2.2   Modes of Sentence: Kamala Harris

First, and in regard to Harris's employment of rhetorical devices in her declarative sentences, it was noted that she used **antonymy** to assert and illustrate certain points. The following exemplifies this:

- *The true measure of the leader is the leader who actually understands that strength is not in* **beating people down**, *it's in* **lifting people up**.

- *We have so much more* **in common** *than what* **separates us**.

- *Donald Trump's plan would* **make** *the economy* **worse**. *Mine would* **strengthen** *the economy.*

- *his policies and his ideas about what should be the backs of* **middle-class people** *paying for tax cuts for* **billionaires**.

To make her voice heard and thus her presidency agenda, **amplification** was a rhetorical device Harris employed in her talk. Amplification was evident in the following examples:

- The values *I bring to the importance of home ownership**... is a value** that I bring to my work to say we are going to work with the private sector and home builders to increase 3 million homes, ... by the end of my first term... . My focus then, on protecting women and children from violent crime,* **is based on a value that is** *deeply grounded in the importance of standing up for those who are most vulnerable.*

*- **The true measure of the leader** is **the leader** who actually understands that strength is not in beating people down, it's in lifting people up.*

Second, a comprehensive review of Harris's debate transcript uncovered the use of imperatives, more precisely the use of the imperative verb "let's," a prefix that was added at the beginning to many of her sentences. It is not considered a verbal tic, but it serves the function of bringing the audience's attention and hence pointing to the importance of what is to be said. The examples below indicate this:

- **let's** <u>talk</u> about this with COVID..
- **Let's** <u>remember</u> Charlottesville,..
- **Let's** <u>turn</u> the page on this. **Let's** <u>not go back</u>...
- **Let's** <u>chart</u> a course for the future and not go backwards to the past. **(Slogan)**

Additionally, imperatives were utilized as warnings as in the use of "understand":

- **Understand** what that means. A survivor of a crime, ...does not have the right to make a decision about what happens to their body next.

- **Understand**, if Donald Trump were to be re-elected, he will sign a national abortion ban. **Understand** in his Project 2025 there would be a national abortion ban. **(Repeated twice)**

Third, it was observed that there was almost an absence of direct grammatical questions in Harris's discourse. However, Harris implied questioning and denying mode in her imperative sentences. Varying her voice tone was a technique she utilized to appeal to the voters' emotions by which she mandates recalling the past and its failures besides a call for making the right choice.

- *You **remember** what that was like?*
- ***Remember** when an insurance company could deny if a child had asthma, if someone was a breast cancer survivor, if a grandparent had diabetes?*
- *Pregnant women ... being denied care in an emergency room because the health care providers are afraid they might go to jail and she's bleeding out in a car in the parking lot? **She didn't want that. Her husband didn't want that. A 12 or 13-year-old survivor of incest being forced to carry a pregnancy to term? They don't want that.***

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the study's analyses and the previous discussion, it was observed that presidential candidates' lived experiences were apparent in the way they talk and mirror their backgrounds. Such social factors namely age, ethnic identity, and work history, were exploited by candidates to gain power over their opponents and hence win the vote. This was also evident on candidates' employment of a unique rhetorical style by the use of different sentence modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) in their talk. Each candidate strived to deploy sentence modes that are incorporated with various rhetorical devices in a way that makes their discourse more convincing, mobilizing and influential, for the sake of winning the Oval Office. Future research is recommended to linguistically explore the presidential candidates' discourse from the perspective of gender inequality and the role of social media in the presidential elections.

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