| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Ideological Accommodation in Electoral Discourse: How Liberalism and Populism Reconciled in American Elections 2024?

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| **ABSTRACT**

The study investigates the use of accommodation strategies that candidates use in electoral discourse to approximate and converge to the Other's ideology. The context is the American elections in 2024, held between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The two candidates represent the two prominent ideologies that predominate the American political context—Populism and Liberalism. The analysis focused on the topics of freedom, abortion and sexual identities. The analysis of the accommodation strategies in the discourse of the two candidates showed salient evidence that the two candidates employed approximation strategies to adjust their ideologies to appeal to the largest section of voters either by evading extreme ideological views or adopting some counter-ideology views.

1. Introduction

This study examines how political actors adjust their ideological views to accommodate the largest section of voters. They use accommodation strategies and sub-strategies to construct ideological views that appear to be modified from and are less conflicting than their previous views. Section 1.1 reviews the relevant notions and theories of the Accommodation Theory and ideology.

1.1 Ideology and Political Discourse

The term "ideology" is used to signify the study of ideas (Freeden, 2007; Van Dijk, 2006). Van Dijk (2006) defines ideologies as belief systems, socially "shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors" (p. 2). He contends that "ideologies consist of social representations that define the social identity of a group" (p. 2). Van Dijk (2007) argues that ideologies are shared so widely that they become part of the generally "accepted attitudes of an entire community, as obvious beliefs or opinion, or common sense," such as social or human rights, including many forms of gender equality (p. 21).

  These ideologies are more influential when expressed in political discourse. Van Dijk (2006) argues that political discourse is controlled by one or more underlying ideologies through specific social attitudes, and "more personal mental models of concrete events, and finally by context models of the communicative situation, on the other hand" (p. 216). Political actors instrumentalize their discourse to construct representations of their identities and ideologies and designate relations with various political and social entities (Alqahtani, 2024; Alqahtani &Alaboud, in press). Cameron (2007) emphasizes the close relationship that often exists between ideological beliefs about language and, more overtly political allegiances. Moreover, Van

Dijk (2006) argues that "depending on context, any variable structure of discourse may be ideologically 'marked.'" According to Van Dijk, specific intonation, preference for specific topics, and stress in the expression of a word or phrase may express ideologies such as sexism or racism.

   This study examines ideological accommodations. How do candidates adjust their ideologies to approximate other's ideologies? This study focuses on two major ideologies that control American politics, populism and liberalism, represented by two major political parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, respectively. The following section describes the principles and discursive features of each ideology.

1.1.1 Liberalism: Freedom of Individuals

Human rights form the backbone of liberal democracy (Hirschberger & Voges, 2024). Thus, liberalism refers to the rights of individuals and identity groups, including minorities (Fairclough & Scholz, 2020). Phelan and Dawes (2018) contend that liberals typically consider individual liberty as a natural human state, a sacred principle that precedes any regime or government because individual rights are absolute.

   In liberal discourse "choice" and individual "rights" are emphasized particularly in political discourse (Sherington & Campbell, 2004). Freeden (2013) asserts that liberalism rests upon an ideology that permits pursuit of sustaining values, "liberty as a reflective choice; inclusiveness; impartiality; and respecting the individual pursuit of basic individual goods or needs" (p. 239).

   Similar to any political theory or ideology, liberalism possesses nonnegotiable principles, "an attachment to basic human rights; the primacy of liberty; the sanctity of constitutional arrangements; and, for some, the insistence on respect for redistributive social justice" (Freeden, 2013, p. 236). However, Freeden argues that the toleration principle within liberalism sends out mixed messages about the nonnegotiability of some of its principles such as market choices or the death penalty that display surprising flexibility.

1.1.2 Populism: The Voice of the People

Populism is often classified as (neo)conservative (Hirschberger & Voges, 2024). Mudde (2004) defines populism as "an ideology that divides society into 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (p. 543). Mudde criticizes populism for not possessing the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency as liberalism. Mudde argues that populism is moralistic rather than programmatic because the discourse of the populist is centered around the "distinction between 'the elite' and 'the people', not the empirical difference in behaviour or attitudes" (p. 544).

   Hirschberger and Voges (2024) summarize the characteristics of populist ideology as the following (p. 19):

   - Their rhetoric claims to express the "true will of the people." Legitimate criticism of their own positions, statements and actions is often presented as discrimination or even oppression (for example in the form of alleged political correctness or "cancel culture."
   - Populists like to present themselves as the only resistance against a domestic political "establishment" or a "globalist elite" that is allegedly corrupt, incompetent, and treacherous.
   - Populists often categorically deny integrity to political competitors, and sow hatred and distrust in institutions that they do not control. Populists are often extremely flexible regarding issues not directly related to their drive to obtain and maintain power or their radical convictions. They reinterpret, instrumentalize, and distort these issues to serve their own agendas and suit their own interests.

   Ekström et al. (2018) held a more positive view of populism. They indicated that the reason for the rising popularity of populism in elections is that populist politicians "appeal to the people by claiming the moral high ground, subverting and undermining the establishment, and producing identity performances that signify closeness to 'the people'", as opposed to the perceived distance of political elites (p.10). Montgomery (cited in Ekström et al., 2018) posited that Donald Trump's success in the 2016 election could be attributed to his discursive style, that is, Trump used a manner of speaking that "ventriloquises a directness of speech–replete with pithy resonances and sometimes humorous overstatements" (p. 3).

   As a conservative party, a major issue that poses a challenge to populist politicians is sexuality and gender choice, as masculinity is crucial for the success of populist right-wing politicians (Linders et al., 2022, p. 654). Sauer (cited in Linders et al., 2022) defines right-wing populism as "a gendered movement, which fosters masculinist identity politics at the intersection of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality" (p. 657).

The principles of each dilemma have recently become decisive factors in the voting process. For example, sexual identities influence political attitudes (Swank, 2018) in different elections. Linders et al. (2022) argue that gendered nationalism, largely determined by beliefs about masculinity choice, is pivotal in understanding the reasons for voting for Donald Trump in 2016. However, the majority of LGBTQ groups voted for the liberal Democrats in 2016 (Swank, 2018), as the party always demonstrated unconditional support for this group, whereas populists have indicated a less tolerant position.

A major argument in the study is that candidates in the 2024 American elections were aware that some of their ideological views may not appeal to a section of voters, based on what happened in previous elections. Therefore, in 2024, the candidates adjusted their ideologies to accommodate the ideology of the largest section of voters. The following section discusses the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and how political actors implement this process in their pursuit of appealing to voters.

1.2 The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

In sociolinguistics, interlocutors initiate communication to achieve their social goals. Interlocutors introduce different speech styles to this process. Therefore, interlocutors need to adjust their communicative style to approximate others' styles to achieve successful communication and reduce social distance. This process of approximation is accounted for by the accommodation theory. Accommodation theory suggests that individuals adapt their communication behaviors to accommodate or align with the speech patterns, norms, and expectations of their interlocutors (Gallois et al., 2005).

Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is an interpersonal method that explains how individuals "engage in interactional adjustments with others, as well as recipients' inferences, attributions, and evaluations of, and responses to, them" (Giles et al., 2023). The theory was developed from the speech accommodation theory (SAT), which focuses on linguistic behavior. CAT has developed to include both linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors. The central idea of the theory is that speakers adjust (or accommodate) their speech styles "to create and maintain positive personal and social identities" (Gallois et al., 2005, p. 123).

According to Giles et al. (1991), accommodation can be realized through three chief strategies: convergence, divergence, and maintenance, expanded later to include non-accommodation, over-accommodation, and under-accommodation.

Convergence refers to how individuals strategically adapt to each other's linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors to reduce social distance and eliminate social differences (Giles et al., 1991). Divergence (including non-accommodation and over-accommodation) refers to the strategies by which individuals emphasize the verbal as well as nonverbal differences in the process of communication (Giles et al., 1991), that is, interlocutors may opt not to accommodate and instead diverge from other interlocutors, increasing the social distance. Maintenance (under-accommodation) refers to the strategy in which a person persists in using his or her original style, regardless of the communication behavior of the interlocutor (Gallois et al., 2005, p. 123).

Giles et al. (1991) proposed five discursive sub-strategies to achieve accommodation: approximation, interpretability, interpersonal control, discourse management, emotional expression.

Approximation is a core part of this theory (Giles et al., 2023). Approximation strategies refer to how interlocutors adjust their communicative behavior in response to the other "and can be found in convergence across a range of lexical, phonetic, and morphological features, amongst many others" (Gallois et al., 2005, p. 134); other strategies include:

- Interpretability strategies are adjustments made to promote message comprehension, such as considering the receiver's lack of language proficiency or social knowledge.
- Discourse management strategies consider the partner's social and conversational needs, such as topic selection and facial management.
- Interpersonal control strategies discursively focus on existing role relations and relate particularly to language.
- Emotional expression strategies involve responding to the other's cognized or reported emotional and relational needs (See also Dragojevic et al., 2016).

Two types of accommodation have been identified in the literature: linguistic accommodation (referring to actual speech behavior) and psychological accommodation (referring to speakers' motivations and intentions to converge or diverge) (Thakerar et al. cited in Gallois et al., 2005, p. 126).

This study aims to bridge this gap in the literature. No previous studies have addressed ideological accommodation. However, considering the nature of this study, which examines electoral discourse in noninteractive contexts (i.e., campaign speeches) and

how language is used to adjust ideology, the focus will be on the approximation strategy and how it is employed in convergence.

1.2.1 Accommodation Theory and Political Discourse

Batool and Shakur (2023) contend that while the theoretical and academic significance of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) strategies is well established, limited studies have been conducted using CAT in political communication, exploring the identification and analysis of these strategies in the speeches of world leaders. This section reviews the recent studies on accommodation in a political context.

It is noteworthy that most scholars analyzed convergence strategies from almost one perspective, that is, as a politeness strategy of claiming common ground by using inclusive or intimate language, and divergence as a distancing strategy. For example, Muhid (2024) provides a view of convergence and divergence that aligns with Van Djik's theory of the We-They dichotomy. Muhid analyzes convergence as using inclusive language and divergence as exclusive. He uses the former as a strategy for constructing positive representations of a specific entity and divergence as equivalent to negative representations. Similarly, Rahadigama et al. (2023) examined how Biden used accommodation strategies in his acceptance and victory speech in 2022. They determined that Biden employed convergence strategies such as intimate addressing and inclusive pronouns when he required the audience's endorsement, whereas he used divergence strategies to focus on his own achievements. Similarly, Terna-Abah (2024) examines how politicians in Nigeria employ strategies to converge with their new political parties and diverge and distance themselves from their former political parties. Terna-Abah insincerely criticizes the politicians' exploitation of language. She argues that "politicians use speech to prove their complete allegiance to their current political parties but as soon as they defect to another political party, they immediately, distance themselves from their former political parties using the same speech" (p. 62).

Moreover, nonverbal accommodation has been explored in political discourse. Batool and Shakur (2023) examined Imran Khan's accommodation behavior in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. They determined that Khan employed verbal as well as nonverbal accommodation strategies to construct a positive representation of Muslims and a negative representation of Islamophobia.

As indicated in the above review, the essential meaning of convergence that targets assimilating the addressee's linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior has not yet been explored. Instead, fiction is based only on inclusive-exclusive language and politeness strategies. Inclusiveness and intimate address forms are both politeness strategies. Convergence is an expression of politeness strategy per se. However, it functions in different dimensions in addition to politeness strategies. Convergence means adapting one's speech to the speech style of the addressee, not using general polite strategies that are separated from the addressee's style. Therefore, more studies should examine the real convergence strategies that politicians employ in their discourses.

1.3 Why Ideological Accommodation?

The argument here springs from Fairclough's view (see Fairclough & Scholz, 2020) of populism and liberalism. He argues that "Yet when such (Populist) politicians speak for the people, they are effectively speaking against large 'liberal' sections of 'the people', as well as assigning blame to particular sections, not only 'the elites' but also in some cases sections whose rights have been a matter of controversy, such as immigrants" (p. 118). This indicates that when the candidate attacks the opponent's ideology, he or she actually attacks the ideology of the section of people who also embrace the opponent's ideology, which will unequivocally cost these attackers to lose these sections of voters. Candidates appear to be aware of this dilemma, and therefore use strategies to accommodate the Other's ideology.

1.3.1 Strategies and Sub-strategies of Ideological Accommodation

This study proposes the term "ideological accommodation." Accommodating ideology through convergence is realized in this analysis through the strategy of ideological approximation. I propose that this strategy is realized through the sub-strategies of trimming, evasiveness, and assimilation.

In trimming or evasiveness, the speaker evades the extreme views of their ideology that may clash with the ideology of the majority of the "others," focusing on the aspects that are less confrontational. This is similar to the leveling process, in which the edges of an object are trimmed to make it fit. The rationale is that the candidate performs an approximation process in which he

or she converges toward a common ideological norm, eliminating extreme differences to appeal to the largest section of voters, particularly to attract voters of the opposite ideology. This process enables candidates to deter their opponents from exploiting ideological differences for electoral benefit.

However, assimilation is a strategy by which a politician assumes ideological aspects that are not common to their own ideological views. If trimming is abandoned, this strategy assumes aspects of the other's ideology. The following analysis provides salient evidence that the two politicians selected for this study employed these strategies to appeal to the "other" electorates.

2.   Methods of Analysis

This study critically analyzes the accommodation strategies that political actors employ in their electoral discourse to approximate the ideologies of the "other" in their attempts to appeal to the widest section of voters. In particular, it analyzes the electoral discourse of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump in the 2024 elections. I argue that for ideological accommodation, the two candidates used the strategy of approximation expressed in two chief sub-strategies, trimming or evasiveness and ideological assimilation (see Section 1.3).

The analysis is conducted in three dimensions:

1.   How do candidates construct their ideology to influence the electorate's decision?
2.   How do candidates construct negative representations of the opponent's ideological views?
3.   How do candidates implement ideological accommodation strategies and sub-strategies to adjust their ideologies and appeal to the largest section of voters?

Thus, this study not only explores ideological representations in candidates' electoral discourse, but also, more importantly, how these candidates modify their ideologies to accommodate the other's ideology to achieve electoral goals.

The critique of these strategies and sub-strategies of accommodation in discourse is informed by Van Dijk's principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (2006), which assume that ideologies are expressed and acquired by spoken or written communicative interaction through a number of discursive structures and strategies. The analysis is conducted at the macro- and micro-levels to examine candidates' ideologies as constructed through their linguistic choices in constructing topics of freedom, abortion, and sexual identities.

2.1 Ideologies and Political Discourse

 Several frameworks have been proposed to analyze ideological representations in political discourse. Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) and Van Dijk's (2006, 2009) models remain the most popular and widely applied models for examining ideology in political discourse (Yang, 2023). Van Dijk (2006) assumed that "ideological discourse is generally organized by a general strategy of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other-presentation (derogation)" (p. 126). In this strategy, the ingroup's good deeds are emphasized and the bad actions de-emphasized, while the "others" bad actions are emphasized, and their good deeds are mitigated, neglected, denied or forgotten.

2.1.1 Van Dijk's Analytical Framework of Ideology in Discourse

The analysis of candidates' use of ideological accommodation strategies implements Van Dijk's elements of CDA, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Van Dijk's Elements of CDA
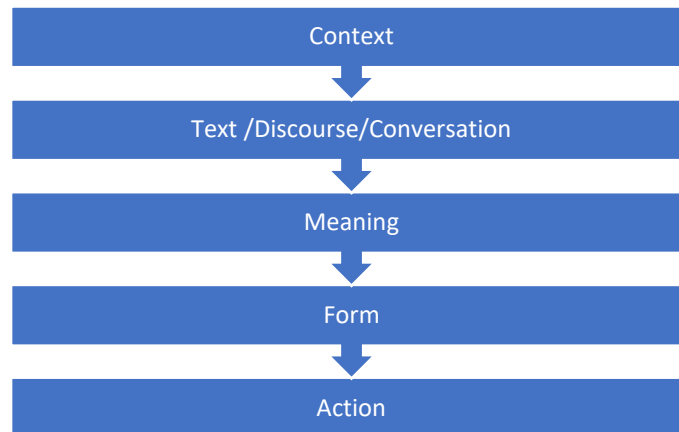
Context plays a pivotal role in analyzing political discourse. The emphasis on *context* is "essential to the understanding of political discourse." Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) emphasized the role of context by arguing that outside political contexts, the discourse of politicians or any other "political actors" is not "political." Van Dijk (2006) defines context as the "representations of communicative event and its participants as members of categories or groups" (p.125) as they flow in discourse through strategies of Us-Them dichotomy. In Van Dijk's CDA model, "discourses code for underlying ideologies in levels of Forms, Meanings and Actions, such as lexicon, syntax, sound structures, formats, rhetorical structures, and interactional structures" (p. 126).

2.2 Contextualization of the Analyzed Discourse

Van Dijk's (2006) first macro element in the analysis of ideology is context. The context of the speech (communicative) event under analysis is the 2024 American election. This electoral context is characterized by two features. It is inherently an anti-discourse, based on ideological confrontations. However, two major incidents occurred before the Harris-Trump presidential rally. First, the 2024 Harris-Trump elections were marked by an unprecedented event in the history of American elections. The opponent, who was running for presidency and held many rallies, resigned and nominated his partisan colleague to run for presidency. After running several rallies and debates against Trump, Democratic nominee Joe Biden nominated his vice president and partisan colleague Kamala Harris. This unexpected change influenced the electoral discourse of both candidates (Trump and Harris). Trump's aggressive language against liberalism increased fiercely when running against Harris more than it was against Biden. With Biden, Trump mentioned liberalism in neutral or positive contexts in three instances in the latest debate. In the Harris-Trump elections, the tone of ideological hate dominated both opponents' speeches. There was a notable focus on topics such as abortion, which had not been addressed before Harris's nomination. Surprisingly, despite this clash between the opponents' ideological views, Trump and Harris accommodated aspects of the opponent's (that represents the "others" electorates) ideology to appeal to the other's supporters. The analysis demonstrates how Trump's discourse notably changed ideologically after Harris's nomination.

The analysis focuses only on the concept of freedom as discussed in terms of people's freedom, reproductive rights, and sexual orientation. The analysis explores how each candidate constructs his/her ideology on these topics and the accommodation strategies they employ to approximate the "other's" ideology. Table 1 lists the speeches selected for this study and the amount of time spent by each speaker.

Table 1: Speeches, amount of time spent, and number of words spoken by each speaker

Harris	Date and Place	Raleigh, North Carolina	Delaware	Wisconsin Milwaukee	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority	Atlanta	Texas	Washington	Total
			July 23			July 30	October 25	October	
				July 23				30	
					July 24				

		August 16							
	Word count	1,905	2,247	1,509	1,637	1,737	2,982	3,120	16,054
	Time spent in hours	00:19:00	00:19:00	00:19:00	00:14:00	00:20:15	00:27:14	00:29:24	2:28:14
Trump	Date and Place	Ohio April 17	Philadelphia June 23	North Carolina July 24	Pennsylvania July 31	Pennsylvania September 24	Nevada October 31		Total
	Word count	13,686	1,1980	13,386	14,205	15,536	12,306		56,054
	Time spent in hours	1:30:00	1:23:30	1:32:20	1:20:00	1:40:00	1:14:00		8:39:00

Table 1 indicates that Trump spent much more time talking to the audience than Harris. This could be attributed to the fact that Harris was not a candidate for the elections and was unexpectedly nominated, which may have influenced her performance.

2.3 Ideological Accommodation in Harris and Trump's Electoral Discourse

The two candidates expressed the underpinnings of their ideologies in their speeches. For example, liberal Harris repeated the term "freedom/freedoms" highly frequently in all her speeches using the elite style. However, Trump used colloquial and authoritarian styles, describing liberal Harris as a corrupted elite.

2.3.1 Approximating the Ideology of Freedom

Both candidates instrumentalized the concept of freedom in their campaign speeches to attract voters and enhance their image as defenders and protectors of freedom, construing the opponent as a threat to freedom, either in ideology or practice. However, considering the principles of populism and liberalism, the concept of *freedom* is expected to appear more frequently in liberal discourse (see Section 1.1).

 Table 2 presents the frequency of the term *freedom* in Trump's and Harris's 2024 electoral discourse.

Table 2: Frequency of Word *Free/Freedom* in Harris and Trump's Electoral Speeches, 2024

Harris	Date and place	Raleigh, North Carolina August 16	Delaware July 23	Wisconsin Milwaukee July 23	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority July 24	Atlanta July 30	Texas October 25	Washington October 30	Total
	Freq.	7	11	9	15	16	18	12	70

Freq. Per 100 words	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	7 %	1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%
Trump	Date and Place	Ohio April 17	Philadelphia June 23	North Carolina July 24	Pennsylvania July 31	Pennsylvania September 24	Nevada October 31	Total
	Freq.	4	12	10	8	9 free only	8 free only	51
	Freq. Per 100 words	0.03%	0.1%	0.01%	0.06%	0.06%	0.07%	0.01%

Unsurprisingly, the term *free/freedom* occurred more frequently in Harris's discourse than in Trump's. Harris, as an extreme liberal, emphasized the concept of freedom in all her speeches as a manifestation of the core of her ideology. The word occurred in her speeches in the same context as she reiterated the exact lines from her first speech. Thus, Harris distinguished herself as a liberal president. It can be argued that Harris was the first runner for presidency to focus her campaign speeches on the concept of freedom. However, it is noteworthy that Harris reiterated the word *freedom/freedoms* in several contexts when discussing topics such as abortion and economy. Trump also devoted part of his speech to discussing freedom. However, unlike Harris, Trump never used the plural form of *freedom* in his speeches. In reiterating the terms "free" and "freedom", Trump stresses the fact that he also believes in freedom. In random investigation of several speeches and a debate delivered by Trump in 2016, it can be argued that although Trump ran against another Democrat, Hillary Clinton, Trump's emphasis on the notion of freedom was notably lower in his discourses back then than in his campaign speeches against Harris in 2024. In his electoral discourse in 2016, Trump rarely used the term *freedom* and only in a few instances he mentioned freedom; he only referred to freedom of worship/economy and speech, a Republican principle. For example, Trump, in his speech in Manchester and Oskaloosa in 2016, never used the word *freedom*; only the word *free* was used to describe the economy. The term disappeared completely from his 2016 victory speech, whereas it was mentioned twice in his 2024 victory speech. Comparing Trump's closing statements in all his encounters in the 2016 elections and also those before Harris's nomination in 2024, it can be argued that after Harris's nomination, Trump used the word "freedom" more frequently than he or other Republicans did in all previous presidential bids. The underlying assumption is that only in 2024, particularly after Harris's nomination, did Trump notably implement the word *freedom* (beyond the common notion 'freedom of speech') highly frequently in his speeches. This provides salient evidence that political actors converge to the ideological norms shared by the "other" for electoral benefits.

2.4 Discursive Analysis

Harris reiterated the word "freedoms" in every policy that she addressed. Consider EX.1 from her speech in North Carolina:

EX1: North Carolina, August 16

1. Ours is a fight for the future. And ours is a fight for freedom. Across our nation, we are
2. witnessing a full-on assault on hard-fought, hard-won freedoms and rights: the freedom
3. to vote, the freedom to be safe from gun violence, the freedom to live without fear of
4. bigotry and hate, the freedom to love who you love openly and with pride, the freedom
5. to learn and acknowledge our true and full history, and the freedom of a woman to
6. make decisions about her own body and not have her government telling her what to
7. do. (Applause.) And in the face of these attacks, we must continue to stand together in
8. defense of freedom. We who believe in the sacred freedom to vote will make sure, then,
9. that every American has the ability to cast their ballot and have it counted. We who
10. believe that every person in our nation should be free from gun violence will finally pass
11. universal background checks, red flag laws, and an assault weapons ban. We who
12. believe that every person in our nation should be free from bigotry, discrimination, and
13. hate will continue to fight for equality and justice for all.
14. And we who believe in reproductive freedom will fight for a woman's right to choose,

15. because one does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the
16. government should not be telling her what to do. You know, when he was president,
17. Donald Trump, the former president, hand-picked three members of the United States
18. Supreme Court because he intended for them to overturn Roe v. Wade — the United
19. States Supreme Court previously the court of Thurgood and RBG. And as he intended,
20. they did. Well, let me tell you something. When I am president of the United States and
21. when Congress passes a law to restore those freedoms, I will sign it into law.

EX.2. From Atlanta, July 30

22. Ours is a fight for the future and for freedom. And I don't have to tell folks in Atlanta that
23. generations of Americans before us led the fight for freedom. And now the baton is in
24. our hands each and every one of us.

In lines 1-21 in EX.1, Harris exploits the term *freedom/freedoms* with every policy she proposes (e.g., licensing guns, health care, education). Harris emphasized the plural form "freedoms" to emphasize her liberal ideology (see Section 1.1).

   As a characteristic of electoral discourse, Harris constructs her ideology of freedom(s) within a We-They/Us-Them dichotomy, construing herself patriotically as the guardian of people's freedoms and the opponent as the enemy of and threat to people's freedom(s). In creating this opposition, Harris distances her opponent from freedom, positioning herself and the people together as protectors of freedom. She identifies herself with people in successive affiliations (*our/we* against *they/them* or *he/his*). Not only does Harris distance Trump from the people—the electorates—but also from the preceding generations. Typical of elites' discourse, Harris uses the elite rhetoric in which she uses the word *freedom* in metaphorical language such as "the baton is in our hands" and "sacred freedom" in lines 23 and 24 in EX.2. In the latter example, Harris appears to evoke emotions by exaggerating the negative representations of the opponents and the Republicans. The freedom to vote is an inherent right guaranteed to every American citizen by the Constitution under any ruling party or ideology. However, Harris speaks of the freedom to vote as if this right would be ripped off the people under Trump's rule as a strategy to construe Trump's ideology as an enemy of freedom.

Similarly, Trump exploited the term to deconstruct the image that Harris and Biden constantly disseminated about him as a threat to freedoms. I argue that Trump's emphasis on this word in 2024 can be considered as a strategic accommodation of aspects of liberal ideology. Trump used the term more frequently than before and he used a relevant term that he did not use before in his discourse, describing his type of freedom as "the real freedom." Consider the context in which Trump uses the term:

EX.3: North Carolina, July 24

1. (..) chart it showed how great we did on immigration my last week my last week in
2. office we had the lowest number of illegal aliens that we ever had coming across our
3. board I was very proud of the chart you see it go like this and then it goes like a
4. Skyrocket but forget that I like it for other reasons too I will sleep with that chart for the
5. rest of my life but if you want the greatest economy in history again and freedom if you
6. want freedom real freedom because we're going we're going in a very bad Direction
7. then you must vote for a gentleman named perhaps you've heard of him Donald J
8. Trump perhaps you got to get out then there Kamala Harris's California socialism would
9. kill the American dream forever you know you don't hear about the American dream
10. anymore we're going to bring back the American dream for our children under Trump
11. Vance Administration

Trump appears to assimilate Harris's constant use of the term (reproductive) freedom by using the term "real freedom" to foreground this notion in his ideology. By emphasizing the word "real," he convinces the audience that he also believes in their freedom but the correct "version" of freedom. Although Trump did not explain clearly what he means by "real freedom," he associates real freedom with economy in line 5, (EX.3). In lines 5-6, Trump stresses the term "real" freedom to imply that what Harris calls for is not real freedom. Trump appears to hint that real freedom benefits people, such as a free economy and not sexual orientation or abortion.

His use of "real" freedom is not explained, but it appears he opposes the type of freedom that Harris is defending particularly abortion and sexual freedom. He implies that his freedom constructs a society, not deconstruct it. Populists believe in freedom of economy and speech rather than freedom of gender choice and abortion. However, Trump does not explicitly specify the meaning of "real freedom". He associates *freedom* with "great economy". This can be understood from the contextual sequence in which he justifies this freedom by stating, "because we are going into a bad direction" and "against Harris's socialism." Using these linguistic choices, I argue that Trump tends to exploit the term "real freedom" as a strategy to assimilate the liberal ideology of freedom that Harris has used in all her speeches and cast away the negative ideas that Harris and Biden have been disseminating regarding Trump's war on freedoms. This argument is supported by another use of the word in ambiguous contexts as in EX.4:

EX.4: Philadelphia, June 23

1. The problem is, if you don't interject every once in a while… I'm only talking about
2. one or two times during an entire speech. These speeches go on for two hours. One or
3. two. Franklin, give me one or two words. And if you interject, if you don't, you don't
4. get the emphasis, but it's okay. So far, I did one today, Faith and Freedom, and I was
5. really good. I didn't interject. Could have been better if I used a couple of bad words.

Trump's use of *freedom* in (EX.4) in this context appears irrelevant to any previous or subsequent context. The word *freedom* appears to be "pushed" into the context to merely emphasize the notion and construct an image of a freedom fighter. The context here is Trump's defense against the criticism leveled at his foul language and how necessary it is to emphasize an idea through foul language. He then points out that he had reduced his foul language to only one word. The phrase "faith and freedom" is an interceptive phrase in the sentence that does not affect the sentence if it is deleted. Arguably, Trump seems to overuse the word *freedom* here to sound more liberal without any contextual justification of the use of the word.

Moreover, Trump not only uses the word *freedom* more frequently than in any of his previous bids, but also approximates the language that is atypical to Trump's simple language, which is similar to the elites' (liberal) language. Consider EX.5:

EX.5.: Philadelphia, June 23

1. The American dream, you don't hear about that, will be thriving again for
2. citizens of every race, religion, color and creed. Law and justice will reign
3. all throughout our land. Freedom will be restored. The flame of liberty will
4. be burning bright (….)
5. I'm being indicted for you, and never forget our enemies want to take away my freedom
6. Because I will never let them take away your freedom. That's what this is all about. They
7. want to silence me because I will never let them silence you. In the end, they're not after
8. me, they're after you. I just happen to be standing in the way. Okay?

In lines 3-4 (EX.5), Trump not only assimilates the ideology of freedom to liberals, but also uses language that assimilates elite discourse about freedom. He expresses an unusual discursive identity by using a metaphor (the flame of liberty) to exaggerate his fight for freedom. Moreover, he construes himself patriotically as a fighter and savior, using the first-person pronoun to personalize his stance. He uses language of polarization, by constructing two poles, where he and the people stand on one pole, and their enemies (the Democrats) on the other.

However, accommodation strategies are more evident in the two candidates' speeches when addressing the topics of abortion and sexual orientation.

2.3.2 Reproductive Freedom and Abortion

Abortion appeared as a pivotal topic in the 2024 elections, particularly after Harris's nomination. Harris almost established her campaign on this topic. Trump criticized Harris for focusing on this issue. LeVine (2024) pointed out that "Democrats are campaigning heavily on the issue of abortion seeking to build on their success in recent elections with women and other voters."

Trump devoted a considerable part of all his speeches opposing and warning against Harris's liberal policies for abortion. While constructing his ideology on abortion, Trump adjusts his position from extreme opposition in his previous campaigns to moderate acceptance of the issue to approximate the ideology of the "other" electorates as in EX. 6:

EX.6:   North Carolina, July 24

1.   (..) she wants to take away your second Amendment which we need lying Kamala is
2.   also a total radical on a word called IM do you know this right a word called
3.   what abortion she's a radical crazy person when you compare my position on
4.   abortion to that of Kamala Harris my position is eight points higher in the polls and that's
5.   because she is so radical she wants abortions in the eighth and 9th month of pregnancy
6.   that's fine with her right up until birth and even after birth the execution of a baby cuz
7.   that's not abortion that's the execution of a baby you remember the governor you
8.   remember the former Governor the current governor is excellent the former governor of
9.   Virginia uh he said yes we may have the baby and then we decide with the mother what
10. to do with the baby this is after the baby is born now she support and she support that she
11. supports taxpayer funds to pay for abortion for any reason whatsoever she even voted
12. against legislation that would require medical providers to give care to babies born alive
13. after an attempted abortion think of that one whereas our position is that abortion is now
14. back to the States you know for 52 years they've wanted to bring its Row V way they
15. wanted to bring it back to the States it wasn't about how many weeks and how many
16. everybody wanted it every legal scholar every Democrat every Republican liberals
17. conservatives they wanted it brought back to the States and because we had a very brave
18. six people on the Supreme Court of the United States so they were very brave after 52
19. years they allowed it but everybody wanted it and they were brave to do it and now it's
20. up to the will of the people in each state and it's happening in Ohio they voted and
21. frankly it came out to be more of a liberal policy but they voted and it's it's getting back
22. in Kansas you saw what happened there somewhat of a liberal policy Texas goes and
23. Alabama goes and other states but it's all being voted on by the states it's back in the
24. hands of the people and the state returns the age-old question to where it belongs and it
25. belongs with the people and it belongs over time and you see what's happening and you
26. see how it's working out like Ronald Reagan very importantly. I support. I happen to
27. support. You have to go with your heart but I happen to support the three exceptions rape
28. insist and the life of the mother. I think that's the way but follow your heart but you also
29. have to remember you have to get elected you have to remember because we have
30. elections and elections are about a lot of other things too that are very important but you
31. have to get elected but Ronald Reagan was for that I was for that the three exceptions.

In EX.6, Trump uses the populist typical discourse against liberals, describing their ideology as "crazy," "lying," and "radical." He constructs his ideology against Harris's through an I-They (She) dichotomy, in which he ascribes positive attributes to his position and negative attributes to Harris's. He supports his argument against Harris's ideology by avoiding his explicit, straightforward anti-view of abortion, which he announced on many occasions before running against Harris. Instead, he focuses on attacking liberal views that are not likely to be supported by most voters, such as abortion in the 8th or 9th month. Harris and Democrats constantly refuted these claims. He exaggerates his claims by representing Harris as a killer, accusing her of supporting the killing of the baby after being born or opposing the provision of healthcare to born babies. In the 2024 elections, Trump evaded his previous extreme position of completely rejecting abortion and only foregrounded a balanced view. In lines 23 and 24, Trump appears to avoid the explicit rejection of abortion by leaving it to the will of the people, which is one of the core principles of populism (see Section 1.1). He supported his balanced stance by reminding the audience of his approval of abortion in emergencies. He tends to represent a less radical, anti-abortion ideology. Notably, in lines 25-28 Trump's utterances appear unrelated to the notable false starts. This indicates the pressure Trump was experiencing to adjust his position. He does not mention his drastic stance on abortion, which he expressed in the early months of the campaign. Second, he foregrounds his acceptance of abortion, with three exceptions. He also used an assimilation strategy by endorsing Reagan's view of supporting the three exceptions although his original stance was different from that of the previous bids. Trump ends his view on abortion by implying that he must adjust his stance on abortion for electoral purposes. In lines 29-31, Trump implies that he must give up

some strict ideologies to acknowledge the ideology of the key group of voters, which aligns with McCammon's view (April 2024) of Trump's changing position on abortion:

"But by saying that he [Trump] will instead leave the issue to the states, which is essentially the status quo at this moment, Trump appears to be trying to avoid strengthening Democrats' ability to rally their voters around abortion rights in November."

In 2016, Trump expressed an extreme position against abortion and the need for punishment for women who attempt abortion. Consider his speech in his campaign for the 2016 elections extracted from McCammon (April 2024).

SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

1. TRUMP: I am officially running...
(APPLAUSE)

2. TRUMP: ...For president of the United States.
3. SHAPIRO: By then, his position on abortion had completely transformed. This is Trump
4. during an MSNBC town hall moderated by Chris Matthews during the campaign.
(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

5. CHRIS MATTHEWS: How do you ban abortion? How do you actually do it?
6. TRUMP: Well, you know, you'll go back to a position like they had where people will
7. perhaps go to illegal places.
8. MATTHEWS: Yeah.
9. TRUMP: But you have to ban it.
10. MATTHEWS: Do you believe in...
11. TRUMP: No.
12. MATTHEWS: Do you believe in punishment for abortion, yes or no, as a principle?
13. TRUMP: The answer is that there has to be some form of punishment.
14. MATTHEWS: For the woman.
15. TRUMP: Yeah. There has to be some form.
16. TRUMP: About half the country still supported a legal right to abortion at that point, but
17. a key group of voters overwhelmingly opposed it - white evangelical Christians.
(And Trump needed their support. He got it after making statements like this in the third

and final 2016 presidential debate, moderated by then-Fox News anchor Chris Wallace).

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

18. CHRIS WALLACE: Do you want to see the court overturn Roe v. Wade?
19. TRUMP: Well, if we put another two or perhaps three justices on, that's really what's
20. going to be - that will happen. And that'll happen automatically.

The extract from McCammon (2024) clearly supports the argument that Trump used ideological accommodation strategies to appeal to the largest section of voters in his 2024 election. In all his speeches in 2024 when running against Harris, whom he calls "the most radical liberal in America," Trump changed his language when addressing abortion. He evaded speaking of the extreme choices on abortion, trimming his ideological views from punishment and ban to acceptance. He concentrated on the position that is likely to be supported by the largest section of women, that is, abortion in the last months of pregnancy or when the baby is born. Trump's statement in Line 17 provides salient evidence that politicians approximate the other's ideologies for electoral purposes. Trump acknowledged that to win the Evangelistic key voters in 2016, he had to change his position on abortion, which was radical and appealed to the voters back then.

Harris, on the other hand, constructed her ideology on abortion making it almost the only topic that received the most emphasis in all of her campaign speeches. Harris is the only Democrat who devoted her speech to this issue. As noted above, Harris used the elite discourse by referring to abortion in all her speeches as "reproductive freedom(s)." Harris merely reiterated the same lines in every speech about freedom for women "to choose what to do with their bodies." This type of evasive language is a salient manifestation of ideological approximation as in EX.7.

EX.7 Washington, October 30

1. And we are not going back, because ours is a fight for the future and it is a fight for
2. freedom, like the fundamental freedom of a woman to be able to make decisions about
3. her own body and not have her government tell her what to do. And we remember how
4. we got here. Donald Trump, when he was president, hand-selected three members of
5. the United States Supreme Court with the intention that they would do just as they did
6. and overturn the protections of Roe v. Wade. And now, in America, one in three women
7. in America lives in a state with a Trump abortion ban, many with no exceptions even for
8. rape and incest, which is immoral immoral. And, look, Donald Trump is not done. He
9. would ban abortion nationwide — yes, even here in Pennsylvania, if he were successful.
10. He would restrict access to birth control, put IVF treatments at risk, and force states to
11. monitor women's pregnancies. Just google Project 2025. Read the plans for yourself.
12. And let us agree: One does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to
13. agree the government shouldn't be telling people what to do not the government not
14. the government. If she chooses, she will talk with her priest, her pastor, her rabbi, her
15. imam, but not the government or Donald Trump telling people what to do. And I I
16. pledge to you, when Congress passes a bill to restore reproductive freedom, as president
17. of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law. I will proudly sign it into law.

In EX.7, Harris employs the strategies and sub-strategies of ideological accommodation. She tends to alleviate the opposition to her ideology of abortion by employing strategies of ideological accommodation: trimming/evasiveness, and assimilation. She describes abortion as the "fundamental freedom." In most of her speeches, Harris uses the term "reproductive freedom" to refer to the issue of abortion. This elite use of the word enables Harris to construct positive representations of her ideology on abortion using the elite term "reproductive" and associating it with "freedom," and simultaneously avoiding the negative associations of the word "abortion." In a few speeches, Harris completely avoided using the word "abortion" (e.g., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority). Harris evades explicit statement of her extreme ideological views in which she states a woman has the right to undergo abortion under any circumstances by using generic language as "to do what they want with their bodies," evading using the word "babies" in the sentence. Another approximation strategy is similar to Trump's when she explicates Trump's real position on abortion by exaggerating negative representations of the ideological views. She accuses Trump of banning abortion under any circumstances, despite Trump's emphasis on Reagan's view of the three exceptions including rape, incest, etc. Using this strategy, Harris deflects attention from the core of her ideology, which provides the woman the right to lose the baby anytime, to focus only on cases that are likely to be supported by the majority (i.e., rape and incest). Harris strengthens her stance by warning people against Trump's project, which completely bans abortion.

Notably, she also adjusts her ideology by using religious language to appeal to Christian ideology and other religions that prohibit abortion, although as a radical liberal, she is known for secular ideology. Arguably, this implementation of religious lexicons (i.e., beliefs, faith, priests, pastors, imams, and rabbi) can be considered as a counterstrategy against Trump's constant invocation of Christian Evangelists' opposition to Harris's view on abortion and the ideology of freedom (see all Trump's speeches). Lines 14-15 are the only parts of her speeches where she uses religious terms in her ideology. Harris does not usually use religious expressions or religious references in her speeches except a few times in the typical closing statements "God bless America" and in one speech "God knows" and "They do God's job." This view aligns with DeRose's comments (October 2024) on these particular lines and Harris's use of religious language as, "(..) I think that really reflects her understanding that religions don't speak with one voice about religion and that religious people, in fact, have abortions." Harris constructs a religious identity to accommodate religious ideology as a strategy to imply that abortion does not conflict with religion. Thus, through this accommodation strategy, Harris evades expressing extreme views of her ideology while simultaneously appealing to religious voters that form a key group of voters.

2.3.3 Freedom of Sexual Orientation and Gender Choice

Sexuality is another intense topic upon which Harris and Trump confronted each other during their electoral campaigns. In liberalism, sexual freedom is supported and consecrated (see Section 1.1). Individuals are allowed to select their gender from childhood. People can identify themselves with any sexual identity. This has raised intense controversy in American society, as some schools have been accused of forcing children to change their sexual identity without parental permission. Liberalism has been accused of dividing society and deforming the social fabric by legitimizing and supporting gender transformation,

particularly among children. This controversy has put the two candidates in a dilemma of either rejecting or supporting this ideology.

The two candidates adjusted their ideologies of sexual freedom to evade extreme views, which may have cost them more voters. Trump constructed his ideology against gender freedom as a populist in all his rally speeches, while he, simultaneously, adjusted his ideology in the 2024 presidential elections after running against Harris.

Before running against Harris, Trump was strict about his stance on sexuality. He devoted several minutes in many speeches to demonstrating his opposition to LGBTQ people (e.g., in the 2016 elections, this issue was not debated or discussed by Hillary or Trump). Compare Trump's language in (EX.7) in 2023, before running against Harris, with his language in 2024 in (EX.8):

EX.8: Trump at Moms for Liberty 2023.

1.   you would have thought that as a politician can you believe I'm a politician I can't get over it
2.   I never thought I'd say but you know as a politician that I'm always saying I will give you back
3.   Parental rights parental rights you think you'd have parental rights it's unbelievable what
4.   they do to your children what they want to do they want to take your children away from
5.   you and in many cases mutilate your child and not even get your approval I will also take
6.   historic action to defeat the toxic poison of gender ideology to restore the Timeless truth
7.   that God created two genders male and female on day one I will sign an executive order
8.   instructing every Federal agency to Cease the promotion of sex or gender transition at any
9.   age they're not going to do it anymore I will declare that any hospital or health care provider
10.   that participates in the chemical or physical mutilation of a minor youth no longer meets
11.   federal health and safety standards they will be terminated from receiving federal funds
12.   effective immediately okay what do we do that's politically correct the biggest things in
13.   many cases they're not politically correct but that one men participating in women's world
14.   should I ask for a couple of little examples the swimmer from the University of Pennsylvania
15.   won the National Championship great after setting school records for women's times in the
16.   50 meter free the 100 meter 200 meter 500 meter thousand meter and 1650 meter in New
17.   Zealand the transgender weight lifter shattered four National records things to qualify for
18.   the women's Olympic team beating the second place finish here by 42 pounds that's a lot
19.   you know when you think that the weightlifting record stood for 18 years and they'd put a
20.   quarter of an ounce here and a quarter events at the end of the Barbara and they'd go in
21.   there and this guy comes along have you lifted before no not really..

EX.9: Philadelphia, 2024 (Also see all the speeches in Table 1)

1.   And on day one, I will sign a new executive order to cut federal funding
2.   for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity, and any
3.   other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content onto our children.
4.   And I will not give one penny to any school that has a vaccine mandate or
5.   a mask mandate. And I will keep men out of women's sports on day one.
6.   Signed. How embarrassing is it to say that? There's some things that are…
7.   You can understand. You always like (….) But how embarrassing it is to
8.   say we will keep men out of women's sports? Who would want men to
9.   play women's sports? And yet for them, for all these people, including the
10.   fake news media, for whatever reason, it's a big deal. Who would want it?
11.   Did you ever look at the weightlifting records? Records that stood for 18
12.   years, and a guy comes up? "Have you lifted before? No, I haven't." When I
13.   say a guy, a person who transitioned. "Have you lifted before? No, I
14.   haven't. Really? (…) No, it's so crazy. And it's so horrible for women. It's so
15.   embarrassing for women. I will fully uphold our Second Amendment.

In both speeches, Trump clearly constructed his anti-LGBTQ ideology. However, in his speeches before Harris's candidacy, he used more aggressive language, describing LGBTQ as "toxic poison of gender ideology," "the chemical or physical mutilation," "gender insanity," and "the timeless truth" (i.e., two genders). He uses war lexicon in talking about sexuality freedom in "take historic action to defeat the toxic (..)." In this context, Trump maintains the same discursive identity in any speech event when addressing any opposition, whether physical or nonphysical (i.e., virus, ideology), using war language (see, Alqahtani, 2024; Alqhtani & Alaboud, in press; Sclafani, 2017). However, although Trump reiterates almost the same lines in 2024 in EX.9 about cutting funds from schools that push transgender and sexual content on children and banning transgendered people from participating in women's sports, it appears as if some lines had been trimmed from Trump's speeches in all his campaign speeches in 2024 since running against Harris. Trump avoided speaking of the "two genders" that "God created" or banning gender transition "at any age." Instead, he focused on extreme cases of gay ideology, particularly the transgendered women participating in women's sports and forcing children to transform their gender, cases that are very likely to be supported not only by most Americans but also by gay-rights supporters or transgendered people per se. This is a manifestation of how Trump tends to approximate the other's ideology by trimming the extreme views of his ideology that are expected to be opposed by a section of (pro)gay voters. Thus, instead of explicitly attacking and fully rejecting gay ideology and gender transformation, as he did before 2024, he focuses on views that are shared by most Americans. American society is not as divided on banning children's exposure to sexuality as it is on changing one's gender in adult groups. Therefore, Trump focused on the issue that received considerable agreement to construct his ideology, that is, children's exposure to sexualization. Similarly, the issue of transgendered women competing in women's sports has received opposition from most Americans (see Lavietes, 2023), including transgendered influencers. Trump adjusted his stance on gay rights by restricting his opposition to only two issues on which most Americans were united. More surprisingly, Trump's speeches in 2020 against Biden, for example his speech in Nevada, 2020, had no mention of gender or women's sports although it was an issue back then. Hubbard (2024) traces Trump's inconsistent and changing position on LBGTQ issues since1990s, stating that Trump "has been inconsistent on the issue during his time in the public eye, and his administration rolled back protections for LGBTQ people — especially transgender individuals."

Similarly, before the elections, Harris was a strong defender of the LGBTQ group in public speeches. For example, she demonstrated her support by selecting a former high school teacher and coach, Tim Walz, as her running mate. Harris called Americans to check the book bans to see how many of them are against LGBTQ (Kane, 2024; Moore, 2024). However, despite her fierce defense of the rights of the LGBTQ group, Harris notably made no reference to this group or their rights explicitly in any of her presidential campaign speeches. Instead, she reiterated the phrase "the freedom to love openly in pride" in most of her speeches (see line 4 in EX.1 above).

A comparison between her position in 2023 and that in 2024 indicates a clear avoidance of referring to the LGBTQ group that she was supporting and raising in every tour, a year ago. This supports the argument that she condensed her support of LGBTQ groups into the phrase "freedom to love openly in pride," regardless of the fact that she did not mention that phrase in a couple of her speeches.

Similar to her choices of *reproductive freedom*, Harris relies on rhetoric or elite discourse, rather than simple and direct language. Harris uses the word "pride" that symbolizes the LGBTQ group. Harris does not give more than this line on sexual identity. She also completely ignored this issue and phrases in her speeches in Delaware and North Carolina. Therefore, her lexical choices clearly indicate evasion of explicit statement of what this "love openly or love with pride" means. Arguably, she relies on people's understanding of her liberal background and support for these groups to understand the implied meaning of "love in pride." This evasive strategy can be interpreted within the accommodation theory as a trimming strategy, in which Harris trims the aspects of her ideology that may conflict with the ideology of key voters. Harris avoids explicit support for gay groups and instead uses generic language that implicitly points at the issue, despite the pledges she made when she was vice president (see Hubbard, 2024). People with no background knowledge of Harris's stance on gay rights may not interpret the "freedom of love openly and love in pride" in this context as pro-LGBTQ. It appears that she tends to evade Trump's exploitation of this issue to muster conservative voters against her, as a large section of American society and politics remain against these rights (see ACLU, 2024). She does not pledge to defend the rights of this group explicitly, as she does with the right to have abortion.

The above analysis demonstrated how political actors adjust their ideological views to accommodate the ideology of the "other" voter who may be embracing the opponent's ideology in several topics.

3. Conclusion

The analysis provided salient evidence that the candidates running for American presidency in 2024, Trump and Harris, approximated the other's ideologies pertaining freedom, abortion rights, and freedom for sexual orientation to strategically appeal to a significant segment of voters. The accommodation strategies included approximation sub-strategies, such as evasiveness and assimilation. Previous political bids of the two candidates expressed drastic versions of their ideologies. Each candidate demonstrated awareness of the controversial aspects of their ideology that may confront the ideology of many voters. Both exploited the word *freedom*, arguably, more than their counterparts in previous presidential campaigns. Harris exhibited a typical liberal identity by emphasizing the concept of freedom very frequently. However, arguably, her emphasis lacked depth, presumably, because of her political experience as a leader. She did not explain how she was going to protect these freedoms, except when talking about abortion, which she referred to constantly as *reproductive freedom*. However, Harris did not reproduce a discourse that defended women's rights except for the right to have an abortion. Women's rights to equal payment and protection from oppressions of sexual abuse were not addressed in any of her speeches.

Trump, on the other hand, demonstrated clear ideological adjustments on topics related to abortion and sexual orientation. He appeared to realize the effect of this topic on female voters, particularly those who supported Harris. He tended to change his ideological views on this issue depending on the opponent's ideology. When opponents did not campaign on this issue, Trump exhibited a drastic view of abortion, suggesting a law to punish pregnant women. In his 2024 campaign speeches, Trump clearly stated his need for ideological approximation pertaining to abortion to win elections. His stance on abortion and sexual orientation was adjusted after running against Harris in the 2024 elections. This aligns with McCammon's (2024) argument that: "[Former] President Trump appears to be trying to soften his image on reproductive rights as he campaigns for president. Several of Trump's recent comments on abortion and the procedure IVF are raising concerns among some abortion rights opponents who've supported him." This also supports Fairclough and Fairclough's view (2012) that individuals may change their identities in certain ways or begin acting in new ways, based on beliefs about what their perception of the world is and "goals of achieving different states of affairs" (p. 84). The results of this study also align with the conclusions of Muhid (2024) and Rahadigama et al. (2023) that politicians adjust their language to match the linguistic norms of their audiences. The results are also in accordance with Terna-Abah (2024), who concluded that politicians exploit language to express political positions.

Moreover, the current study is hoped to have contributed to enriching a new topic in CDA regarding ideological accommodation, as it may be a pioneer in exploring ideological accommodation in political discourse. In line with the arguments of Batool and Shakur's (2023) conclusions, this study confirms the adaptability and usefulness of the Accommodation Theory in the field of political discourse. However, this study highlights the need to develop a theory that accounts for ideological accommodation in various genres of political discourse. As such, this study proposes two sub-strategies for convergence or approximation: trimming/evasiveness and assimilation. The need for such subcategorization stems from the fact that the theories provide a general framework for the linguistic analysis of accommodation, including broad strategies of convergence, divergence, and over-communication. Ideological convergence has not been explored in the literature. Therefore, as this study may be the first to analyze ideological accommodation in political discourse using CAT, I found it imperative to configure a scheme that analyzes the sub-strategies by which candidates express ideological convergence or approximation.

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