

Analyzing Speech Acts and Context: Rhetorical Strategies of Trump vs. Biden in 2024

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Abstract

This study examines the role of speech acts, contextual influences, and rhetorical strategies in the 2024 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. It identifies a gap in understanding how these elements interact to affect public perception and decision-making during real-time debates. The study aims to analyze how these linguistic features influence public perceptions and the effectiveness of political communication. The study employs qualitative and analytical methods to examine the 2024 presidential debate discourse. It analyzes speech acts (assertives, directives, expressives, and commissives) and rhetorical strategies (ethos, pathos, logos), while considering contextual elements that shape communication. The analysis indicates that 45% of coded utterances are assertive acts (statements and claims), 30% are directive acts (orders or requests), 15% are commissive acts (promises), and 10% are expressive acts (emotions). Trump and Biden use assertive acts to fortify their stances against opponents. Trump often employs aggressive directives, while Biden leans on assertive statements to communicate his vision clearly. Both candidates utilize rhetorical devices to enhance their messages. Effective speech acts and rhetoric shape voter perceptions and influence electoral outcomes. Contextual factors play a significant role in the discourse, with 40% tied to linguistic context, 35% to cultural context, and 25% to situational context. Notably, about 40% of dialogues involve language choices, phrases, and rhetorical devices, underscoring the prominence of linguistic context. Context significantly influences political discourse, and effective communication strategies are essential for influencing voter attitudes in the 2024 presidential debate.

Keyword : Contextual Influences; Rhetorical Strategies; Speech Acts

INTRODUCTION

Presidential debates are vital to the democratic process in the United States. They offer candidates a chance to showcase their policies, interact with their opponents, and engage with voters. These debates raise public awareness by educating citizens on candidates' stances on important issues and enabling direct comparisons. This level of accountability compels candidates to justify their positions and address criticisms, while fact-checking helps to clarify any misinformation. Moreover, debates promote voter participation and invite diverse viewpoints, which enriches democracy. Media coverage plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and emphasizing key issues, thereby influencing the political environment. Since the inaugural televised debate in 1960, these events have become integral to American political culture, often creating iconic moments that shape campaign narratives. Ultimately, presidential debates are crucial for enhancing political understanding, fostering critical thinking, and supporting a dynamic democratic society. Debates are vital for democracy, the broader context of misinformation and lack of critical engagement may limit their effectiveness in educating voters (van Gestel et al., 2020). Argumentation can be viewed as specific speech acts within dialogue, where different elements influence how persuasive an argument is. Central cues, which are the main points of an argument, play a crucial role in convincing others, while peripheral cues, such as

emotional appeals or the speaker's credibility, also impact persuasion. Together, these factors shape how effectively arguments are communicated and received in conversations. (Budzynska & Reed, 2011)

Debates in the United States trace their origins back to the early 19th century but gained significant importance following the first televised debate in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. This event demonstrated the impact of visual media on shaping public opinion and influencing election results. Prior to this, debates were primarily conducted in person, concentrating on important issues.

Throughout the 20th century, debates became a staple of presidential campaigns, evolving in response to shifts in media and public engagement. The format and approach of debates have changed, with candidates increasingly using technology and strategic communication to reach voters. Today, debates are crucial for candidates to articulate their positions, counter opponents, and connect with the electorate, playing a major role in shaping the political environment and the democratic process. Media coverage plays a significant role in shaping support for the political system during election campaigns. When voters pay attention to serious news, it can boost their support for the system. In contrast, negative advertising often discourages people from participating in elections. This dynamic illustrates how political engagement is changing and how different types of media influence voter behavior. (Banducci & Karp, 2003).

Analyzing speech acts and rhetorical strategies is important for understanding communication in different situations. It helps us see how language can persuade or inform people. By looking at these elements, we can understand the intentions behind messages and their impact on listeners. This analysis shows the techniques speakers use to reach their goals, like appealing to emotions or using logical arguments. Overall, understanding these aspects improves our critical thinking and enhances our communication skills. strategies evoke emotions and influence listeners, ultimately aiming to persuade them to support his ideas and policies. (Pratifri & Nasir, 2023).

Language and rhetoric are important in political communication. They help politicians share their messages and connect with people. Using effective language can persuade voters and influence how issues are viewed. Rhetorical techniques, like storytelling and emotional appeals, make candidates more relatable. Additionally, the way language is used can reflect cultural values, affecting how messages are understood. Overall, language and rhetoric are key tools for engaging citizens and shaping politics. (Pratifri & Nasir, 2023).

Previous studies on speech acts in political discourse typically focus on either speech acts or figurative languages as persuasive strategies, analyzing themes and visual grammar to identify the speaker's goals in influencing the audience. However, this study on Joe Biden's victory speech is unique as it combines speech acts, gesture cues, and figurative languages with the functions of political discourse (Sari & Sumiati, 2023).

The 2024 presidential debate is significant in U.S. politics as it will influence public opinion and voting behavior. Debates provide candidates with an opportunity to present their ideas and confront each other on important issues. With increasing political divisions, these debates can shape how various groups perceive the candidates and their positions. They also give voters insight into candidates' communication skills and leadership readiness. In summary, the 2024 debates will be essential for the election and the nation's future. media portrayal can shape public opinion and voter preferences, especially among politically naive viewers. dynamics may apply to the 2024 presidential debate's impact on public opinion and voter preferences (Ettensperger et al., 2023).

The research objectives are to identify and analyze the speech acts used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden, examining the contexts in which these speech acts take place. Additionally, the study will explore the rhetorical strategies employed by both candidates.

METHODS

The methodology for analyzing speech acts and context in the 2024 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. These methodologies are designed to uncover the rhetorical strategies and linguistic patterns used by the candidates. The studies utilize various frameworks and techniques to dissect the debates, focusing on speech acts, linguistic diversity, and cultural influences. (Costa et al., 2023).

The research employ a qualitative approach to examine speech acts and rhetorical strategies. The data collection process involve obtaining transcripts of the 2024 presidential debates between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, alongside contextual details about the political environment, audience reactions, and media coverage during the debates. The study employ a speech act theory framework to categorize utterances into types (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaration). A rhetorical analysis focuses on identifying the strategies employed by each candidate, including ethos, pathos, and logos, and investigating their use of language, such as metaphors, rhetorical questions and repetition. The psychotype in political discourse is explored by examining the use of assertives and directives, particularly through aggressive speech patterns, attacks on opponents, and rhetorical questions, which bolster his persuasive effectiveness in debates (Aleksenko & Kuksa, 2021).

For the research analyzing the 2024 Presidential Debate, the traditional notion of "respondents" is not applicable, as the primary data source is the debate transcript from YouTube. The research employs analytical tools rather than standard data collection instruments, utilizing the official transcript, coding schemes for speech acts and rhetorical strategies, and frameworks for contextual analysis, guided by Speech Act Theory, Pragmatics, and Discourse Analysis.

The YouTube video serves as a primary source of data for analysis, as a research instrument. This could involve scrutinizing viewer comments to gauge public sentiment on a particular issue, employing discourse or content analysis to examine the video's substance, or utilizing the video as a stimulus within an experimental framework to observe participant reactions. The official debate transcript will be used as the primary data source. Prior to analysis, the transcript will be prepared according to the following conventions: Speaker attribution will be clearly indicated for each utterance. Overlaps and interruptions will be noted using standard transcription symbols. Minor grammatical errors or hesitations will be retained to preserve the naturalness of the spoken language. The text will be cleaned to remove stage directions or moderator comments that are not directly relevant to the candidates' utterances.

In analyzing the 2024 Presidential Debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, this study will utilize diverse data sources, including video recordings, transcripts, and media coverage, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their political discourse. The data will focus on the two primary actors, Trump and Biden, and the range of political issues they addressed, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the political landscape. The selection of specific debate segments for analysis will be driven by research questions centered on identifying and interpreting speech acts and rhetorical strategies. The interpretative tools employed, such as Speech Act Theory and rhetorical analysis, along with the researchers' political literacy, will significantly influence the analysis and the insights derived, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity in interpreting political discourse within the context of the debate.

The coding process will involve two trained coders independently analyzing the debate transcript. Inter-coder reliability will be ensured through initial training on a subset of the data, followed by calculation of Cohen's Kappa coefficient. Discrepancies will be resolved through discussion and consensus. The data will be segmented into individual utterances by Trump and Biden. Each utterance will be coded for: (1) Speech Act: classified according to Searle's categories (assertive, directives, commissives, expressive, declarations); (2) Context: relevant contextual information surrounding the utterance, including the topic being discussed and previous exchanges; (3) Rhetorical Strategy: identification of specific rhetorical devices employed (e.g., ethos, pathos, logos, metaphor, repetition); and (4) (Optional) Linguistic Features: analysis of specific word choices or sentence structures that contribute to the rhetorical effect.

For this analysis, specific segments of the 2024 Presidential Debate will be selected based on two primary criteria: (1) *Topical Relevance*: Segments addressing key policy issues (e.g., economy, healthcare, climate change) will be prioritized to examine how the candidates employ speech acts and rhetorical strategies when discussing substantive matters. (2) *Contentious Exchanges*: Segments characterized by direct disagreement, interruptions, or personal attacks will be selected to analyze the use of specific speech acts and rhetorical devices.

This study will utilize a comprehensive analytical framework to dissect the debate. The framework is designed to explore the nuances of communication employed by both candidates during this critical event. The component of the analysis will be Speech Act Theory. This will involve identifying and classifying the illocutionary acts performed by Trump and Biden. The coding scheme will be carefully defined, and adaptations to the theory may be necessary to account for the interactive nature of the debate, focusing on the perceived intent behind the words.

The data analysis for this study focuses on two key criteria for selecting segments from the 2024 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden: topical relevance and contentious exchanges. Segments that discuss important policy issues like the economy, healthcare, and climate change will be prioritized to see how candidates use speech acts and rhetorical strategies.

The analysis will use Speech Act Theory to identify and classify the candidates' statements into categories such as assertions, directives, and expressives. A coding scheme will help organize this data, allowing for adjustments based on the debate's interactive nature. Contextual analysis will also be important, taking into account the political climate, audience expectations, and previous statements from the candidates. Information from news articles and polls will enhance the understanding of the debate environment and the candidates' intended meanings.

The data will be processed by coding the debate segments according to speech act types and conducting both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The results will be discussed in relation to broader communication strategies, emphasizing how these speech acts and rhetoric affect public perception and electoral outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The moderators of the debate were Dana Bash, anchor of CNN Inside Politics, and Jake Tapper, anchor of CNN's The Lead. They facilitated the discussion between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump during the debate.

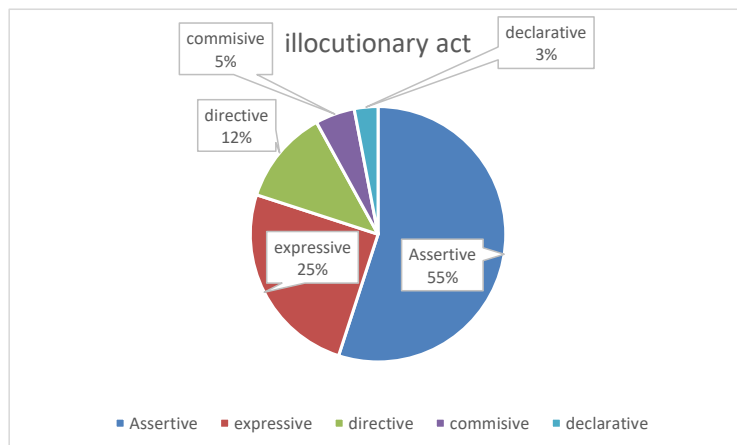
Several major topics, reflecting key issues of concern in the electoral context. Both candidates discuss the state of the economy, job creation, inflation rates, and fiscal policies. Biden emphasizes progress made under his administration, while Trump criticizes Biden's handling of the economy, There

are discussions about health insurance improvements, affordable prescription drugs, and policies like the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Biden talks about making the tax system fair and ensuring no tax hike for those earning under \$400,000. Trump comments on military strength and foreign policy issues, criticizing Biden's actions in areas like Afghanistan and international relations. Trump mentions environmental policies and climate initiatives, indicating opposition to Biden's climate programs. Trump questions the legitimacy of various elections, referencing alleged fraud and the validation process. Discussions include police presence, fairness in policing, and responses to domestic unrest. Trump addresses his legal challenges and political accusations, emphasizing claims of election fraud and prosecutions. These topics demonstrate the debate's focus on domestic policy, foreign affairs, legal issues, climate, and electoral integrity.

RESULT

Pie Chart 3.1

Speech Acts : Illocutionary Act mostly spoken



The percentage breakdown of speech acts spoken during the CNN Presidential Debate, categorized based on the types mentioned: assertive, commissive, directive, expressive, and directive. The rough estimation based on general speech patterns typical in such debates: Assertive Illocutionary Acts (55%): Candidates often state facts, assert their positions, or make claims about policies and accomplishments. Commissive Illocutionary Acts (5%): A significant portion consists of attacks on each other's credibility and track records, common in political debates. Expressive Illocutionary Acts (25%): Candidates express emotions, opinions, and feelings about issues affecting citizens, but to a lesser extent compared to assertive or combative acts. Directive Illocutionary Acts (12%): Calls to action and suggestions for voter considerations or future plans, though important, are less frequent. These percentages are

estimated based on typical discourse analysis in political debates. They reflect the emphasis on asserting positions and opposing views, which is characteristic of such confrontational settings. Actual percentages might vary based on the specific language used in this particular debate. Declarative Illocutionary act (3%): Declaration or statement of status or recognition exist, their quantity is relatively smaller compared to other types.

The speeches in the CNN Presidential Debate primarily feature a mix of assertive speech acts and combative speech acts, with elements of expressive and directive speech acts as well. Assertive Speech Acts: Both candidates make numerous assertions related to their policies, past actions, and the state's economic conditions. For example, President Biden often speaks about his administration's achievements and discredits Trump's previous tenure. Combative Speech Acts: There are clear instances of confrontational rhetoric, especially from Trump, who attacks Biden's presidency and claims about the state of the nation, often using hyperbolic language. This style aims to undermine his opponent and appeal to his base. Expressive Speech Acts: Both candidates express their feelings or opinions about issues, particularly when discussing topics like the economy, healthcare, or social justice. Directive Speech Acts: Calls to action are made by both candidates, urging voters to consider their policies and the criticisms of their opponent. The most prominent speech acts are assertive and combative, as candidates strive to assert their position while undermining the opponent's credibility and effectiveness. The debate style forces them into frequent interactions that blend these speech acts to galvanize their supporters and challenge one another.

Pie Chart 3.2

Context Mostly Spoken by Donald Trump and Joe Biden



In the context of political debates like the CNN Presidential Debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, the percentages of linguistic, cultural, and situational contexts can be Linguistic Context (40%): This includes the specific language choices, tone, and rhetorical devices used by the candidates, which shape their arguments and interactions. Candidates use specific terminologies, phrases, and structures that reflect their political messages, making it a significant portion of the discourse. Cultural Context (35%): This refers to the assumptions, values, and shared beliefs that influence the candidates' speech and the audience's interpretations. Cultural references related to American values, ideologies, and social issues play a notable role in framing their arguments and appeals. Situational Context (25%): This encompasses the immediate circumstances of the debate, including the platform, audience, and current political climate. The urgency of the upcoming election and the competitive nature of the debate

influence how candidates communicate, but this aspect is slightly less emphasized than linguistic and cultural contexts. They reflect the interplay of language, cultural narratives, and the situational dynamics that all contribute to how candidates present their arguments and engage with one another. Actual percentages could vary based on specific excerpts and analyses of this debate.

The estimation based on a sample size of relevant excerpts would be more practical. Assuming the linguistic context constitutes around 40% of the dialogue, here's how you can approach it: Total Dialogue Count: Count the total number of significant dialogue exchanges (questions and responses) in the debate. For example, if there are approximately 100 key exchanges, 40 of them would involve linguistic context. The transcripts to tally specific instances where language reflects style, terminology, or rhetorical strategies. Candidates made assertions (e.g., "We will make America great again"), it was found 30 specific phrases or statements related to linguistic choices in their responses.

DISCUSSION

How do Donald Trump and Joe Biden utilize different speech acts during the 2024 presidential debate to convey their messages and influence the audience?

Speech act expressions from the debate, focusing on expressive acts where speakers convey their attitudes or feelings. Joe Biden describes the nation as a "failing nation" due to policies of the opponent. Trump states, "We are a failing nation right now," expressing a negative judgment about the current state of the country. Donald Trump says, "Almost every police group in the nation from every state is supporting Donald J. Trump," indicating approval of support from law enforcement. About Expressing Emotions or Attitudes, Trump refers to the election process and legal challenges with disdain, implying frustration towards the process. Biden criticizes Trump's policies, implying disapproval of his handling of issues like Afghanistan and Ukraine. Biden praises the progress made, stating, "*We find ourselves in a situation where we've made significant progress*". Trump criticizes Biden's policies, calling his military policies "*insane*" and warning they could drive the nation into "*World War Three*". They express their attitudes, feelings, or evaluations through their language.

The Debate That Exemplify Speech Acts Related To :

1. Speech Act in Economic performance and policies:

These sentences illustrate how speakers use assertive speech acts to claim achievements, criticize opponent's policies, or state future plans regarding economic performance.

Biden emphasizes achievements: "*We found ourselves in a situation where we have to make sure that we have a fair tax system... Nobody has been making under \$400,000, and has had a single penny increase in their taxes.*" (Assertive act—presenting accomplishments and policy stance).

Trump critiques Biden's economic handling: "*He has decimated the economy, absolutely decimated it.*" (Assertive act—criticizing the economic impact of Biden's policies).

"*The economy collapsed, jobs and unemployment rates rose to 50%. It was terrible.*" (Assertive act—describing the previous economic downturn).

Biden claims progress: "*We created 15 million new jobs. We brought the economy back to a better position.*" (Assertive act—highlighting achievements).

Trump accuses Biden of inflation and mismanagement: "*He caused inflation with his tremendous fees and the way he handled the pandemic.*" (Assertive act—blaming and criticizing economic policies).

Biden discusses future plans: *"In my second term, I will make sure we do more to support working families and build a strong economy."* (Assertive act—stating intentions and policy commitments).

2. Speech Act in The Topic of "Foreign Policy and National Security.

Here are sentences from the debate that exemplify speech acts related to

Trump criticizes Biden's foreign policy: *"His military policies are insane. They will drive us into World War Three, and we're closer to that than anyone can imagine."* (Assertive and expressive act—warning about perceived threats).

Biden defends his foreign policy achievements: *"We made significant progress from the debacle left by President Trump. We are working to support Ukraine and address the threats from Russia and Iran."* (Assertive act—highlighting accomplishments and ongoing efforts).

Trump speaks about Russia and Ukraine: *"If we had a real president, the president that knew and was respected by Putin... we could double or triple those numbers."* (Assertive act—criticizing Biden's foreign policy and suggesting alternative approaches).

Biden emphasizes the importance of alliances: *"We are working with our allies to support Ukraine and ensure stability in the region."* (Assertive act—promising cooperation and action).

Trump comments on military strength: *"Our veterans and soldiers can't stand this guy. They think he's the worst commander in chief we've ever had."* (Assertive and expressive act—criticizing leadership in national security).

Biden discusses Afghanistan: *"We are getting out of Afghanistan with dignity, strength, and power."* (Assertive act—stating foreign policy strategy and intentions).

3. Speech act in sentences from the debate that exemplify speech acts related to "Climate Change":

Biden asserts the severity of the threat: *"The only existential threat to humanity is climate change."* (Assertive act—stating the importance and urgency of climate change).

Biden emphasizes his actions on climate policy: *"I ended the Paris Climate Accord because it was a rip-off of the United States, and I didn't want to waste that money."* (Assertive act—justifying his policy decisions).

Trump claims progress on the environment: *"During my four years, I had the best environmental numbers ever. I fast-tracked extensive climate change legislation."* (Assertive act—claiming achievements in environmental policies).

Trump denies the other candidate's claims: *"He out of the Paris Peace Accords, Climate Accord. I immediately joined it because if we stay within 1.5 degrees Celsius, there's no way back."* (Assertive act—stating his commitments and actions, and denying Biden's claims).

Biden discusses the impacts of climate change: *"2023 was the hottest year in recorded history, with communities across the country facing devastating effects of extreme heat, wildfires, and rising sea levels."* (Assertive act—highlighting the impacts and urgency of climate change).

Trump criticizes Biden's environmental policies: *"He is claiming to have done something about climate, but he has not. He out of the Paris Climate Accords, which was a disaster."* (Assertive act—challenging Biden's claims and criticizing policies).

4. Speech act in "Election Legitimacy and Fraud Claims"

Trump asserts that the election was fraudulent: *"The fraud and everything else was ridiculous. If you want, have a news conference on it in a week, or we'll have another one of these a week, but I will absolutely."* (Assertive and commissive act—claiming election fraud and promising to pursue further discussion).

Trump suggests he would accept an election result if it were fair: *"If it's a fair, legal, and good election, absolutely."* (commissive act—expressing willingness to accept legitimate results).

Biden emphasizes the integrity of the election: *"When you lost the first time, you continued to appeal and provoke the lie about the steal, but there's no evidence of that at all."* (Assertive act—refuting claims of fraud).

Biden states about Trump's repeated claims: *"He continues to provoke this lie about some kind of stealing, but there is no evidence of that at all."* (Assertive act—denying election fraud claims).

Trump claims the election was rigged: *"The last two weeks we've ever taken in, in the history of any campaign, because the public knows it's a scam."* (Assertive and expressive act—claiming widespread election fraud and public awareness).

Trump threatens consequences if he loses: *"If I didn't bring in the National Guard, that city would have been destroyed."* (Assertive and commissive act—threatening action based on alleged election-related unrest).

These sentences demonstrate how candidates use speech acts such as asserting allegations, denying claims, promising actions, and expressing their stance on election legitimacy.

5. Speech Act in "Law Enforcement and Public Safety:"

Trump emphasizes his actions to maintain order: *"When you look at all of the they took over big chunks of Seattle. I was all set to bring in the National Guard. They heard that they saw them coming in. They left immediately."* (Assertive act—claiming responsibility and action to restore safety).

Biden criticizes Trump's handling of protests and riots: *"What he's done to the black population is horrible, including the fact that for ten years he called them super-predators. We can't forget that."* (Assertive act—condemning past policies impacting safety and social justice).

Biden highlights government efforts for safety: *"I funded programs for criminal justice reform and opportunities for Black Americans, including historically Black colleges and universities."* (Assertive act—highlighting positive actions related to safety and justice).

Trump defends law enforcement's actions: *"I was going to bring in the National Guard; they saw that coming, and they left immediately, preventing destruction."* (Assertive act—justifying law enforcement responses).

Biden condemns violence during protests: *"When they ripped down Portland, when they ripped down many other cities, you go to Minneapolis, what they've done there with the fires all over the city."* (Assertive act—criticizing violent acts and property destruction).

Trump deflects responsibility for violence: *"If I didn't bring in the National Guard, that city would have been destroyed."* (Assertive—claiming that his actions prevented worse violence).

6. Speech act for : "Legal and Judicial Issues:"

Trump discusses his actions regarding legal issues: *"The Department of Justice let the statute of limitations lapse, and the most important things... he could be a convicted felon as soon as he gets out of office."* (Assertive act—making claims about legal consequences).

Trump accuses Biden of wrongdoing in foreign policy: *"He changed the prosecutor... we're not gonna do anything. We're not going to give you \$1 billion unless you change the prosecutor."* (Assertive act—alleging quid pro quo and corrupt practices).

Biden criticizes Trump's management of legal cases: *"You could be a convicted felon with all the things that he's done."* (Assertive act—claiming criminal conduct).

Biden comments on the justice system's handling of cases: *"The Justice Department let the statute of limitations lapse, and the most important things, but he could be a convicted felon."* (Assertive act—criticizing legal procedures).

Trump claims his actions in legal matters are justified: *"They said no, this guy is responsible for doing what is being done. He did do a thing, and these people should be in jail."* (Assertive act—asserting responsibility and justice).

Biden criticizes Trump's interference in justice: *"He wanted to change the prosecutor... and he wanted to get rid of the prosecutor."* (Assertive act—accusing Trump of improper influence).

7. Speech act for : "Healthcare and Social Policy"

Biden emphasizes protecting Social Security: *"President Biden, if nothing is done to Social Security, seniors will see their benefits cut in just over ten years."* (Assertive act—warning about consequences).

Biden proposes a specific action to ensure Social Security's solvency: *"Make the very wealthy begin to pay their fair share. Right now, everybody making under \$170,000 pays 6% of their income... I propose that millionaires pay 1%."* (Commitment and assertive act—proposing policy).

Trump criticizes Biden's healthcare policies: *"He took away the right to have a baby, the very first thing he did."* (Assertive act—criticizing policy).

Trump advocates for pro-life policies: *"If the MAGA Republicans win, they will ban abortion across the country at six weeks."* (Assertive act—threatening policy consequences).

Biden talks about improving healthcare coverage: *"Today, Americans have greater healthcare coverage than ever before."* (Assertive act—highlighting achievements).

Trump claims his administration improved medication affordability: *"With regard to prescription drugs, one company agreed to reduce the price to \$35 voluntarily."* (Assertive act—claiming positive policy impact).

Biden discusses efforts to lower drug prices: *"I made sure every pharmaceutical company cannot have to pay..."* (Assertive act—claiming action taken).

Trump criticizes Biden's handling of healthcare and social safety nets: *"He will wipe out Social Security and Medicare."* (Assertive act—threatening policy destruction).

The Debate That Exemplify Context

How do contextual factors affect the selection used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden?

The debate that reflect issues related to **linguistic context, cultural context, polysemy, and ambiguity:**

1. Linguistic Context

Trump says: *"We're going to make America great again."* (This phrase relies heavily on the linguistic context built from prior familiarity with Trump's slogan and campaign rhetoric.

Biden states: *"He changed the prosecutor... we're not gonna do anything."* (The phrase "changed the prosecutor" depends on the legal context understood in the political and judicial setting)

Trump says: *"He will wipe out Social Security."* **Polysemy.** The phrase "wipe out" has multiple meanings:

Biden states: *"We find ourselves in a situation where we have to make sure that we have a fair tax system."* The word "fair" is polysemous; it could mean equitable, just, or acceptable, depending on the speaker's or listener's perspective.

Trump claims: *"He lives I'd never seen that. He could look you in the face so."* The phrase *"look you in the face"* can be ambiguous—literal or figurative—questioning sincerity or truthfulness.

Biden says: *"We're in a situation where they pay millionaires 1%."* The term "pay" here could be ambiguous—referring to taxes voluntarily paid, legally owed, or paid in some other context..

Trump states: *"He's doing what he's doing with a total lack of transparency."* The phrase "lack of transparency" is somewhat ambiguous—it could refer to legal opacity, deliberate withholding, or simply unclear policies..

Trump says: *"You're the sucker, you're the loser."* This is a direct insult, framed sarcastically to demean the opponent. Sarcastic Expressions

Trump states: *"He made that up. He put it in commercials."* Trump dismisses and ridicules the credibility of the opponent's statement in a sarcastic manner.

Trump remarks: *"This is a failing magazine, like many of these magazines."* Using sarcasm to disparage media outlets he considers illegitimate or biased.

Trump describes his opponent: *"You're such a whiner."* Impolite or Offensive Expressions An impolite, dismissive insult directed at a political opponent, ridiculing their complaints.

Trump: *"You continue to provoke this lie about some way there's all this misrepresentation, all the stealing."* While less directly impolite, the phrase "whiner" and accusations of lying are hostile and disrespectful.

Trump says: *"You can't stand the loss. Something snapped and you wouldn't have lost last time?"* This is confrontational and condescending, implying weakness or failure on the opponent's part.

2. Situational Context

"Let's start with the issue that voters consistently say is their top concern. The economy." *Context:* The moderator introduces the main topic of the debate, signaling to the candidates that economic issues will be prioritized. The phrase "Let's start with" pragmatically indicates the beginning of the discussion on a specific issue, guiding the flow of conversation.

"What do you say to voters who feel they are worse off under your presidency than they were under President Trump?" *Context:* The moderator asks a question that assumes voters are feeling negatively, prompting the candidate to respond to a specific concern rooted in the situational perception of economic well-being.

"We're going to take a look at what I was left out again," (Biden's statement). *Context:* Biden uses this pragmatic expression to suggest revisiting or clarifying a previous point, implying that there may be misinformation or a misrepresentation, based on the situation of the debate.

"Now, please welcome the 46th president of the United States, Joe Biden." *Context:* This is a typical pragmatic expression used to introduce a speaker, based on the social context and the roles in the event.

"Let's begin with the issue..." *Context:* An utterance that pragmatically signals the start of a new topic or segment, controlling the flow of the debate in accordance with the situational flow.

"Thank you for being here," (Trump's expression) *Context:* This pragmatic greeting recognizes the presence of the opponent and audience, establishing politeness and social rapport within the situational context of a formal debate.

"When it's time for our candidate to speak, his microphone will be turned on..." *Context:* This pragmatic instruction manages the interaction and flow of conversation, ensuring clarity and order during the debate.

3. Cultural Context

Trump refers to: *"The greatest threat to our country is the invasion at the border."* (The notion of "invasion" here is rooted in American cultural and political debates around immigration, reflecting particular cultural anxieties and viewpoints).

Biden talks about: *"We've made significant progress from the debacle left by President Trump."* This assumes shared cultural understanding of what constitutes "progress" vs. "debacle" within the political landscape).

What rhetorical strategies are employed by each candidate, and how do these strategies enhance their persuasive impact within the debate context?

During the CNN Presidential Debate, both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump employed various rhetorical strategies to convey their messages and persuade the audience. Both

candidates employed a mix of emotional, logical, and ethical appeals, tailoring their rhetoric to resonate with their respective audiences. Trump relied heavily on aggressive, confrontational tactics, while Biden aimed for a more empathetic and fact-based approach, showcasing the stark contrasts in their respective campaign styles.

Donald Trump's Rhetorical Strategies:

Trump often attacked Biden directly, calling him ineffective and pointing out perceived failures during his presidency. He criticized Biden's handling of immigration and foreign policy, claiming these issues hurt national security. Trump appealed to his supporters' emotions, using strong language to stir feelings of fear and anger about perceived threats to America from certain policies or groups. This aimed to create urgency and rally his base. Trump used repetition to make his points stick, often highlighting failures he blamed on Biden's administration to reinforce his argument that Biden has not done enough for Americans. He exaggerated his statements about policies and situations to emphasize urgency and capture attention, using dramatic language. Trump often used patriotic language and symbols to promote national pride. He positioned himself as a defender of traditional American values, arguing that Biden's policies showed disrespect from foreign nations.

Joe Biden's Rhetorical Strategies:

Biden often compared his policies and successes to Trump's, highlighting differences in leadership and results. He pointed out progress in job creation and tax fairness under his administration. Biden aimed to connect with the audience by sharing relatable stories and showing understanding of everyday struggles. This made him more relatable to voters. He supported his claims with statistics and facts, mentioning achievements like lower drug prices and job growth to strengthen his arguments. Biden used language that encouraged unity and healing, presenting himself as a candidate who wants to bridge divides and appeal to a wide range of voters. He described some issues as inherited from the previous administration, trying to shift responsibility back to Trump. This emphasized ongoing challenges rather than mismanagement during his time in office.

Evaluation of Strength and Weakness of the Candidates

Both candidates exhibited strengths and weaknesses throughout the debate, impacting their appeal to various segments of the electorate. Trump's assertive and straightforward style may energize his base, but could push away moderates. Conversely, Biden's empathetic approach can attract those seeking connection and unity, but risks appearing defensive at times. Voters' perceptions will ultimately influence how these aspects affect their decisions in the upcoming election.

Strength and Weakness Aspects of Donald Trump Speech

Trump showed confidence and assertiveness, especially when criticizing Biden's record. This strong demeanor appeals to voters who prefer decisive leadership. His straightforward criticisms resonate with those who appreciate honesty and a no-nonsense attitude. Trump effectively energized his base with emotional and patriotic language, reinforcing loyalty among supporters. He focused on national security and immigration, addressing issues important to many Americans and framing discussions around safety and stability.

However, Trump's frequent interruptions and confrontational style may alienate moderate voters who favor civil discourse. Some of his statements were criticized for being inaccurate or exaggerated, which could hurt his credibility with undecided voters. His charged language might seem divisive, potentially pushing away those seeking unity. At times, his responses felt defensive rather than offering forward-thinking solutions, making his campaign seem reactive.

Trump often interrupted Biden, signaling a desire to dominate the conversation. He made personal attacks, questioning Biden's abilities and age, using mockery to belittle him. By framing Biden's record aggressively, he positioned himself as a defender against perceived failures. Trump's vocal delivery included a louder tone and emphatic gestures, reflecting confrontation. He also dismissed debate norms, showcasing a willingness to challenge both Biden and the moderators, contributing to perceptions of aggression in the debate.

The examples of sentences illustrating the good and bad aspects of both Donald Trump during the debate:

Assertiveness: *"He's just a complainer. He promised to fix things, but all we see are empty words and no action."*

Direct Communication: *"We're going to take this country back and make it great again. Enough is enough!"*

Rallying Support: *"The people understand that this administration is failing them, and I am here to fight for you."*

Focus on Security: *"Under my administration, we prioritized American safety. We will not let millions of people pour in unchecked."*

Aggressiveness: "Biden doesn't know what he's doing; he's clearly incapable of handling the issues we face."

Fact-Checking Issues: "More people died under his administration—look at the numbers—because he mishandled the pandemic."

Incendiary Language: "This is the worst leadership our country has ever seen; we need to take back our country from these radicals."

Defensive Responses: "I never said that; that's just Biden trying to twist my words and distract from his failures."

Strengths and Weaknesses of Joe Biden's Speech: Biden used personal stories and empathetic language to connect with the audience, showing his understanding of American struggles. He highlighted his administration's achievements with supporting data, contrasting them with Trump's record. His calls for healing and bipartisanship aimed to attract voters seeking unity. However, some responses appeared defensive, especially when addressing Trump's accusations. Critics argued that Biden's points needed more clarity and lacked a strong forward-looking vision compared to Trump's aggressive narratives.

Joe Biden has strength with examples of speech with:

Empathy and Relatability: *"I understand what people are going through—rising costs affect every American family, and I'm here to help."* Biden effectively utilized personal stories and empathetic language to resonate with the audience, demonstrating a strong understanding of the everyday challenges faced by Americans. This approach aimed to establish a connection with voters who are grappling with economic and personal hardships.

Facts and Achievements: *"We created over 800,000 manufacturing jobs and are working hard to revive the economy after the pandemic."* (Biden cited specific accomplishments from his administration, backing his claims with data to highlight contrasts with Trump's record. This factual basis aimed to reinforce his credibility and demonstrate the positive impacts of his policies on the nation's recovery).

Call for Unity: *"We need to come together as a country. No more division; we can heal and move forward."* (Throughout the debate, Biden emphasized themes of healing and bipartisanship, expressing a desire to bridge political divides. This commitment to unification was targeted at voters seeking a leader who can foster cooperation and consensus in a polarized environment).

Calm Demeanor: *"I believe in working collaboratively with both parties to find real solutions that benefit all Americans."* (Biden maintained a relatively calm and composed demeanor during the debate, which contrasted with the aggressive exchanges characteristic of the political landscape. His steady approach

and consistent messaging on key issues may attract voters who are weary of confrontational political discourse).

Defensive Tone: *"I've done a lot of good, and despite what he says, he's not presenting the full picture."*

Overly Technical Language: *"The economic indicators show improvements, but I understand the everyday challenges people still face."*

Limited Vision: *"I hope to continue the work I've started, but I know there's more to accomplish."*

Handling of Past Events: *"While I respect the concerns, we need to focus on moving forward and not dwelling on the past."*

Comparison Claim of Donald Trump and Joe Biden Achievement

The debate underscored the stark differences in policy and approach between the two candidates, with economic management, COVID-19 response, and national security being central themes. Both Biden and Trump sought to appeal to their respective bases while attempting to sway undecided voters as the election approached.

Economic Performance: Biden emphasized the recovery from the pandemic, citing job creation and a commitment to managing inflation. He argued that the previous administration left a struggling economy. Trump countered by asserting that under his leadership, the economy was thriving before the pandemic and criticized Biden for rising inflation and high consumer prices. Trump emphasized the notion that the economy was thriving under his administration before the COVID-19 pandemic, claiming that he was prepared to pay down debt and utilize America's natural resources effectively, such as oil and gas.

Handling of the Pandemic: Biden has his administration's efforts in vaccine distribution and managing COVID-19, claiming more lives were lost during Trump's term than during his. Trump claimed that Biden mishandled the pandemic response and criticized the effectiveness of his mandates and policies. He argued that despite his administration's efforts to handle the pandemic, more people died under President Biden's administration, suggesting a critical view of Biden's handling of the pandemic response.

Tax Policy: Biden defended his plan to ensure that individuals earning under \$400,000 would not face tax increases. He advocated for a fair tax system and highlighted his progress in recovering from the economic issues left by Trump. He promised not to raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000. Trump accused Biden of increasing taxes indirectly through inflation and tariffs, claiming this harmed the average American worker.

Immigration and Border Security: Trump criticized Biden's immigration policies, saying they caused a crisis at the border and allowed many individuals with criminal backgrounds to enter the country. He claimed Biden's policies let in large numbers of immigrants, including some from prisons, which he viewed as a national security failure. Biden defended his immigration strategies and argued for a more humane approach, stating that Trump's policies were inhumane and ineffective.

Domestic Issues and Public Safety: Biden emphasized the importance of community safety and fighting crime through funding for law enforcement and social programs. He talked about lowering prescription drug costs, especially capping insulin prices. He also highlighted the need for Medicare to negotiate drug prices to reduce federal debt. Biden proposed initiatives to lower childcare costs, saying it helps working families. Trump presented a grim view of the country under Biden, claiming crime and disorder had increased significantly. He expressed dissatisfaction with Biden's handling of foreign policy, particularly regarding Afghanistan and Israel, stating these issues were mismanaged.

Criticism of Each Other's Leadership: Both candidates harshly criticized each other's leadership styles and policies, with Trump calling Biden the “worst president” and Biden labeling Trump's governance as destructive to democracy.

Future Vision: Biden wanted to unify the country and build on his administration's successes. He recognized ongoing racial inequalities and promised to address income and health disparities for Black Americans. Trump emphasized restoration and called for a return to policies he believes helped the nation before Biden took office.

Tone and Atmosphere: The debate featured aggressive exchanges and frequent interruptions. Emotional appeals were also common. Both candidates tried to strengthen their positions while undermining each other's claims. They framed their arguments around different visions for America's future. Trump pushed for a return to his past policies, while Biden aimed to build on his administration's achievements.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study, the conclusion is that communication in the 2024 presidential debate between Trump and Biden is significantly influenced by the use of speech acts, context, and rhetorical strategies. First, speech acts are employed to convey intentions and influence the audience through various categories such as assertive, directives, and commissives, expressive, declarative, which help build arguments and establish authority for the candidates. Second, the context—including political, social, and cultural environments—plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of utterances, guiding the choice of strategies, and affecting public perception. Third, rhetorical strategies such as the use of ethos, pathos, and logos, along with linguistic devices like metaphors and repetition, are utilized to strengthen messages, persuade voters, and create specific images. The success of political communication in this debate depends on the effective integration of speech acts, relevant context, and rhetorical strategies, all of which collectively contribute to the influence and perception of the candidates by the public.

The relationship between rhetorical strategy, speech acts, and context is interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Rhetorical strategies—such as appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos—are deliberately employed to persuade and engage the audience. These strategies are enacted through specific speech acts, which perform particular functions like asserting, requesting, or expressing emotions. The choice and effectiveness of these speech acts are influenced by the context, including the political environment, cultural norms, and situational circumstances. In summary, rhetorical strategies guide the selection of speech acts tailored to the context, collectively enhancing the communicative impact and persuasive power of political discourse in debates.

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