Research Paper

Comparative Analysis of Negotiation Strategies in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debates

Zahraa Mohammed Hussein[1], Bahram Hadian[2]*, Salih Mahdi Adai Al-Mamoory[3], Elahe Sadeghi Barzani[4]

[1]Department of English, Isf. C., Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
zah84ra@gmail.com
*[2]Department of English, Isf. C., Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
bah.hadian@khuisf.ac.ir
[3]Department of English Language, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon. Hilla, Iraq
salih_mehdi71@yahoo.com
[4]Department of English, Isf. C., Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
E.sadeghi71@khuisf.ac.ir

Abstract
This study investigates the negotiation strategies used by Democratic and Republican candidates in the 2024 U.S. presidential debates, focusing on how language functions as a tool to navigate ideological divides in an increasingly polarized political climate. By applying a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative discourse analysis and survey data, the research examines debate transcripts alongside citizen feedback to assess the effectiveness of candidates' rhetorical strategies. Drawing on Politeness Theory, Speech Act Theory, and Pragma-Crafting Theory, the study reveals distinct linguistic patterns: Democratic candidates employ inclusive, cooperative language to foster unity, while Republican candidates use direct, assertive language to project confidence and decisiveness. The findings highlight the role of language in shaping voter perceptions of leadership and ideological alignment, offering insights into how candidates' rhetoric resonates with their respective bases and impacts broader electoral dynamics. This research contributes to the fields of political communication and negotiation theory by offering a comparative analysis of debate strategies and providing practical implications for political strategists and campaign teams navigating the complexities of modern electoral discourse.
Keywords: Negotiation strategies, 2024 U.S. Presidential debates, Political communication, Pragma-crafting theory, Politeness strategies, Speech acts, Political polarization.

تحلیل تطبیقی راهبردهای مذاکره در مناظره‌های انتخاباتی ریاست‌جمهوری ایالات متحده در سال ۲۰۲۴

این پژوهش به بررسی راهبردهای مذاکره‌ای می‌پردازد که توسط نامزدهای دموکرات و جمهوری‌خواه در مناظره‌های انتخاباتی ریاست‌جمهوری ایالات متحده در سال ۲۰۲۴ به کار گرفته شده‌اند و بر نقش زبان به‌عنوان ابزاری برای عبور از شکاف‌های ایدئولوژیک در فضای سیاسی روزبه‌روز قطبی‌تر شده تمرکز دارد. با بهره‌گیری از رویکردی ترکیبی که تحلیل کیفی گفتمان و داده‌های نظرسنجی را تلفیق می‌کند، این تحقیق متن مناظره‌ها را در کنار بازخوردهای شهروندان بررسی می‌نماید تا اثربخشی راهبردهای بلاغی نامزدها را ارزیابی کند. با تکیه بر نظریه ادب، نظریه کنش گفتاری و نظریه «ساخت‌گرایی کاربردی-Pragma» (Crafting)، این مطالعه الگوهای زبانی متمایزی را آشکار می‌سازد: نامزدهای دموکرات از زبان فراگیر و تعاملی برای ایجاد حس وحدت بهره می‌برند، در حالی که نامزدهای جمهوری‌خواه از زبانی مستقیم و قاطع برای نمایش اعتماد به نفس و تصمیم‌گیری استفاده می‌کنند. یافته‌ها نقش زبان را در شکل‌دهی به برداشت رأی‌دهندگان از رهبری و همسویی ایدئولوژیک برجسته می‌کنند و دیدگاه‌هایی را درباره چگونگی تأثیر بلاغت نامزدها بر پایگاه‌های رأی‌دهی آن‌ها و پویایی‌های گسترده‌تر انتخاباتی ارائه می‌دهند. این تحقیق با ارائه تحلیلی تطبیقی از راهبردهای مناظره‌ای، به حوزه‌های ارتباطات سیاسی و نظریه مذاکره کمک کرده و پیامدهای عملی برای استراتژیست‌های سیاسی و تیم‌های انتخاباتی در مسیر مواجهه با پیچیدگی‌های گفتمان انتخاباتی معاصر فراهم می‌آورد.

کلیدواژه‌ها : راهبردهای مذاکره، مناظره‌های ریاست‌جمهوری ۲۰۲۴ ایالات متحده، ارتباطات سیاسی، نظریه ساخت‌گرایی کاربردی، راهبردهای ادب، کنش‌های گفتاری، دوقطبی سیاسی.

Introduction

In this high-stakes environment of the 2024 U.S. presidential debates, Democratic and Republican candidates employed negotiation strategies that were comparatively dissimilar from each other, influencing the ideological and communicative precedents defining each party. These debates go well beyond merely a policy-position presentation but involve dynamic exchanges through which candidates appeal to undecided voters, reinforce their appeal to committed supporters, and manage their public personas. Through strategic rhetorical maneuvers, candidates seek to frame issues, challenge opponents, and shape public opinion while navigating the pressures of real-time performance (Meyer 2022; Beasley & Lunney 2023).

A recent trend in political communication research lends weight to how debates have turned into a platform of tussle for transmitting the values of parties, where either of the sides takes to rhetoric to present its case as championing either collective community goals or individual resilience and self-sufficiency. While Democratic candidates use more inclusive language and make more use of community-oriented themes, which allow their listeners to develop a sense of collective identity and shared unity, Republican candidates often maintain an individualistic approach in their rhetoric, using assertive language and appealing to notions of strength, leadership, and personal success in efforts to connect with voters whose political priorities include independence and toughness.

The present research accordingly adopts three key theoretical frameworks to discourse analysis of the debates: pragma-crafting theory, politeness strategies, and speech act theory. Such a framework will serve to afford a detailed look at how linguistic choices expose the underlying strategy and goals of each candidate. Pragma-crafting theory provides a holistic approach to communication because it explores both linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects of communication, hence capturing the dynamic nature of context and perception from an audience those shapes meaning in real time.

Theories on politeness strategies and speech act theory further illustrate how candidates address complex social dynamics by using language to manipulate interpersonal relations, hedge respect or challenge, and emphasize values corresponding to party ideology. This varies across the Democratic and Republican candidates, each of whom uses a particular set of linguistic approaches in order to carry through its communicative objectives within the debate. The findings show that Democratic candidates emphasize positive politeness strategies, indirectness, and appeals to unity, while Republicans use assertiveness, directness, and individualism.

These stylistic differences in rhetoric serve to reinforce the ideology underlying each party, which is very significant in demonstrating precisely how language can serve as a tool of persuasion and party distinction and delineation. It is underpinned by Zarefsky, 2020; Wodak, 2021.

Background of the Study

Political debates represent a curious and highly charged form of public discourse in which candidates are under obligation to discuss their policy positions, respond to critique, and remain composed. These venues demand complex rhetorical practices that will equally engage committed constituencies and independent voters. Candidates have to strategically use language to control their self-presentation and position their opponents negatively while portraying their vision of the future in front of the closely watching public. Fairclough (2023); Kakabadse & Kakabadse (2021)

Recent studies on political communication have highlighted a heightened sophistication in debate strategies, especially during polarized political times. For Meyer, debates are far more than an exchange of opinions but rather serve as sites where candidates struggle for advantage in

a precarious balancing of power and identity that is often reflective of the larger ideological divide. Thus, for instance, while Democratic candidates might underscore the collective good and the interdependence of all human beings, Republican candidates often rely on authority and steadfastness, images tied to strong leadership and individualism.

This ideological divide orients how the candidates interact not only with each other but also with their audience; thus, different communicative styles emerge that have disparate appeals for different voter demographics. In light of the above, debate discourses allow the use of pragmatic theories as strong tools in the analysis of deeper implications of linguistic choices made by candidates.

According to the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), candidates have to manage face-threatening acts accordingly in order to pass through controversial topics without antagonizing the audience. For instance, Democratic candidates would use positive politeness strategies of inclusion and cooperation to show respect to their audience and express solidarity with them, while Republican candidates will be direct and use strategies of assertion to demonstrate strength and decisiveness for clear and authoritative communication with their electorate.

Speech act theory also remains pivotal in underpinning the dynamics within political debates, in the sense that it provides insight into how utterances function within the debate context. For example, speech acts as directives, commissives, and expressives show how candidates seek to commit to actions, express attitudes, and manage expectations from the audience.

Democratic candidates might resort to commissives in articulating promises of social cohesion or policy reform, whereas the Republicans would resort to expressives in relation to determination or skepticism towards the opponent's view of things. It is so mentioned by Zarefsky, 2020.

Pragmatic crafting theory goes even further in providing an integrated framework by considering the language factor itself but also the larger context and the participant dynamics that shape communicative exchanges. Acheoah has cast the pragma-crafting theory to outline how communicators dynamically adjust their strategies based on audience feedback, social context, and communicative goals.

This is most apt with regard to political debate modalities where candidates make use of rhetoric gestures in appealing for response, reactions, and developing flows of argumentation. By incorporating the pragma-crafting theory, this paper captures the multi-perspective negotiation of meaning within debates and exposes precisely how the language of each candidate reflects party ideology while appealing to pressures of live performance.

In all, the given research is situated within the wider discourse on political communication in a manner that it seeks to investigate how Democratic and Republican candidates negotiate meaning through language, resolve instances of conflict, and convey values that resonate with party identity.

The concentration of the current research on the negotiation strategies of each party forms an integral comprehension of the use of rhetorical means to shape public perception and influence voter attitude in the polarized political landscape until today, as reaffirmed by Moffitt (2023) and Wodak (2021).

The Problem
Televised debates hold a privileged position within the context of U.S. presidential elections; they have very often formed public opinion, swung undecided voters, and crystallized the core messages of candidates. These debates represent some of those particularly important moments by means of which a candidate is able to performatively express the values of his or her party,

demarcate his or her platforms, and strategically deploy rhetorical devices in order to appeal to diverse audience segments. While scholarship has identified the general debate influence on changes in voter attitudes and behavior-for example, recent meta-analysis on debate influence-there is a specific lack of understanding of how nuances of negotiation strategies by candidates of different parties are played out within the polarized landscape of contemporary American politics.

Traditionally, scholarship in the field of political communication has focused on broader rhetorical strategies, encompassing how candidates employ ethos, pathos, and logos to construct attractive messages. Yet very few studies systematically compare these strategies within the same debate series, especially under the condition of intensified ideological division typical of recent U.S. elections.

This gap is important, given that recent scholarship has demonstrated both Republican and Democratic candidates have developed increasingly unique communicative strategies, particularly as they attempt to appeal to voter bases with deeply entrenched ideological viewsgiven the most recent studies of political polarization and audience segmentation.

While these strategies are crucial for candidates as they try to negotiate ideologies effectively and integrate themselves with the values of voters, there is still a lack of systematic comparisons of party-specific tactics.

This research will contribute to filling these gaps by analyzing the 2024 U.S. presidential debates. The debates are a peculiar context in which the candidates of each party engage in verbal sparring, which brings to the fore their strategies of negotiation, linguistic choices, and rhetorical appeals. By analyzing these debates, this study will try to explain how Democratic and Republican candidates use language to negotiate not only between rival ideologies but also among the subtle expectations of their respective electorates.

This work will lean on discourse analysis tools to point out regularities in framing issues, appealing to emotions, and constructing narratives that may converge or diverge according to party ideology. Moreover, the current study looks at what those strategies mean for the voters themselves in perceptual terms, which can only add to how language in debates functions as a tool of ideological negotiation.

Some of the main research questions this investigation tries to follow are:

(1) What are the concrete negotiation strategies that characterize each party's rhetorical approach in the 2024 debates?

(2) Based on these approaches, how do these two parties try to appeal to the values and expectations of the electorate, particularly polarized ones?

Well-timed, as there is accumulating evidence that voters are more and more processing political messages through partisan frames that then lead to selective information processing and confirmation biases. By addressing these questions, this study makes its contribution to the subtler understanding of how a televised debate functions as an arena for ideological negotiation, testing the extent to which each party's rhetorical strategies can effectively navigate the complex landscape of voter values and political identity in the 2024 election.

Objectives of the Study

-- To identify and categorize the negotiation strategies employed by the Democratic and Republican nominees in the 2024 U.S. presidential debates.

--To analyze the differences in these strategies, exploring how each reflects the communicative and ideological goals of the candidates.

-- To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies based on American citizens' feedback, as obtained through surveys and interviews.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

> **RQ1.** *What distinct negotiation strategies do the Democratic and Republican nominees employ in the 2024 U.S. presidential debates?*
> **HQ2.** *How do the negotiation strategies employed by the Democratic and Republican nominees differ in the 2024 U.S. presidential debates?*
> **H1***: Democratic candidates will emphasize politeness and cooperative strategies, focusing on unity and collective identity, in line with party values.*
> **H2***: Republican candidates will employ more direct and assertive strategies, emphasizing self-confidence and leadership strength.*

Significance of the Study

This qualitative research of a presidential candidate's negotiation strategy in U.S. presidential elections contributes to the domain of political communication, especially at a time when U.S. politics are polarizing. Because the Democratic and Republican parties are ideologically divided, it becomes important for deciphering each candidate's unique rhetoric and stylistic negotiation tactics to analyze how political messages are framed, adapted, and received. This study underlines how these candidates use language and symbolic cues to frame issues, address voter concerns, and, therefore, influence perceptions and resulting decisions made on Election Day. This thus calls for recent studies on framing and message adaptation within polarized contexts.

This paper utilizes the 2024 presidential debates to flesh out a more fine-grained perspective of rhetorical devices and techniques that appeal to voters across the political spectrum. In particular, the study probes into how candidates resort to party-specific language, story grammars, and appeals to emotion in such a way as to position themselves according to voter expectations and values. Insights such as these are useful insofar as they sometimes reveal not only methods of attempting to sway undecided voters but also those intended to reinforce loyalty among a party's base.

This becomes particularly relevant in a period when political loyalty and the segmentation of voters are evermore in line with issues of identity and ideology, posing at once a challenge to and an opportunity for candidates aiming to mold a pluralistic electorate's views. This is also noted in research related to identity politics and voter segmentation.

Findings from this study have practical implications for political strategists, campaign managers, and speechwriters, since such empirical grounds give rise to frameworks that can be used in developing strategies for debates.

This research will help inform campaign tactics by defining effective negotiation strategies used by each party and, as such, the strategist will be able to frame messages that strengthen a candidate's appeal to targeted audiences and adapt to evolving dynamics in voter preferences and concerns. Speechwriters may also use such insights to help the candidate(s) frame messages that would be most effective not only within the context of the immediate debate itself but possibly even in larger media contexts and having long-term voter resonance. Also refer to studies on media amplification and long-term message resonance.

Beyond the immediate practical applications, this research represents a contribution to the scholarly debate on political negotiation: investigating how candidates' rhetorical strategies shape public perception about leadership, credibility, and consistency with societal values. In times of high political polarization, such perceptions are crucial for the success of the candidate in surmounting ideological trenches or, quite the opposite, in consolidating the bias toward party lines.

By investigating the negotiation strategies during the 2024 debates, this research uncovers new knowledge about the communicative mechanisms that underlie the voter attitudes toward candidates regarding leadership qualities and trustworthiness. This is therefore an academic

contribution to the growing body of literature on political identity, as it underlines the fact that language may be used not only to persuade but also as a tool for the construction and affirmation of collective identities in polarized electorates. See the recent literature on political identity and trust in polarized contexts.

In sum, this research provides a very important key for practitioners and scholars of political communication to understand how debate strategies shape voter perception and hence influence election outcomes.

As long as televised debates remain one of the most telling moments in every U.S. election, this research helps reveal the power of language in navigating the complex ideological topography and constructing resonant political narratives in an era marked by division.

Literature Review

Televised debates in U.S. elections are virtually recognized as an integral part of the democratic process, influencing both the formation of public opinion and the decisions of the electorate. Whereas rhetorical strategies have been discussed in great detail in political discourse, fewer works have reconceptualized or examined systematically how Democratic and Republican candidates would implement salient negotiation strategies in a polarized context to forward their political interests. Most of the literature related to political debates is focused broadly on persuasion, conflict management, and image-building, while very little had focused on the comparative analysis of the struggle of candidates emanating from opposing parties in relation to ideological divides through language in debate settings.

One of the key interests mentioned had to do with the way in which political candidates use language to influence perceptions of their leadership and credibility with electors. In such a polarized climate of political opinion, rhetorical strategies are mechanisms of negotiation through which a candidate can signal alignment with the values of his or her party while appealing to diverse segments of voters.

For instance, Democratic candidates invoke unity, cooperation, and shared responsibility while their Republican counterparts tout renditions of individualism, resilience, and self-sufficiency as representatives of larger ideological divides between the parties. Indeed, several other works have framed negotiation within political discourse and used it as a lens to examine how candidates negotiate ideological boundaries and manage discrepant frames during debates.

More recently, it is to Political Communication Studies that scholars have turned in the work of Politeness Theory, by Brown & Levinson (1987), in order to analyze just how candidates balance face-threatening acts while maintaining social harmony in advancing their positions. For instance, the rhetoric of Biden in the 2024 debates very often uses positive politeness strategies through the usage of inclusive language like "we" and "us" to build up a narrative of collective action. This is just an expression of the more general ideological tide of solidarity and collective identity in the Democratic Party developed by Meyers & Loomis, 2022; Beasley & Lunney, 2023.

The previous Republican candidates, such as Trump, also frequently used different direct speech acts and positive language in their rhetoric that sounded sure of themselves and resolute-different qualities their electorate favored. It is also a rhetorical manifestation of the Republican values of personal responsibility and individualism. Schmidt & Merkel, 2023.

As is the case in U.S. politics, this becomes particularly well315 supportively established through Moffitt's research that such an assertiveness is used judiciously in order to attain authority and project strength in conjunction with perceived political weaknesses. Such a contrast of Democratic and Republican discourses shows that the division within ideologies in U.S.

politics is continuous. Each party seeks to use different negotiation strategies to appeal to its base while making an effort to capture undecided voters.

Speech Act Theory Austin 1962; Searle 1969 thus provides the conceptual framework to deal with the varieties of candidates' utterances and how they carry out different kinds of communicative acts. Candidates issue promises, assert policy positions, or challenge the legitimacy of opposing arguments during debates.

These speech acts build up a political identity-a candidate being portrayed either as decisive or as a unifier-depending on the strategy adopted. For example, high usage of declarative statements by Trump has not been merely informative but a performative act of maintaining his image as bold and unwavering.

Pragma-crafting theory is a broad framework that considers linguistic, extralinguistic, and situational contexts, which, in the analysis of debate strategies, is precisely fitting. In other words, this Pragma-crafting Theory stipulates that political candidates craft messages which are appealing not only in what they say but also in the way they say it and where they do so.

For example, Biden's calls for unity and the employment of positive language are set within a frame of social and economic adversity that also frames the Democrats' platform regarding shared responsibility in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, among other contemporary issues. Similarly, the strong tone of language adopted by Trump was framed against the background of his "America First" rhetoric as an appeal to nationalism and protectionism McGee & Grofman, 2021.

These studies confirm, therefore, that candidates of both Democratic and Republican persuasions use language effectively not just to articulate their policy positions but also to shape favorable perception from the public and advance ideologies for each party. Research conducted by Meyer, 2022, and Hall & Maier, 2019, has demonstrated that the rhetorical approach to debates would emanate from a need to balance ideological consistency with voter expectations.

It is a dynamic that has become all the more pronounced within the polarized political climate of the 2024 election cycle, with partisan divides deep and candidates needing to employ strategic language as they firm up their base and appeal to moderate voters. The same might be said for Fisher 2020 and Reinhard & Mutz 2021.

The above literature has also underlined how in the candidates' negotiation strategies, the broader political and social context provides meaning, with rhetoric reflecting not just party ideology but also the socio-political landscape of the election itself. This might indicate that such a structure of debate speech is neither an independent variety of political style, nor the heritage of political culture, but also a response to the political context in which, for example, immigration, healthcare, and climate change became among the most salient and polarized issues in modern times (Gibson & Baird, 2018). In this respect, debates can be viewed as sites of ideological negotiation to which candidates have to pay attention when elaborating on such complex issues while maintaining coherence with the ideological position of their party.

Methodology

This study employs a rigorous mixed-method approach to analyze debate strategies in the 2024 U.S. presidential election, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of how candidates negotiate ideological differences. By incorporating both discourse analysis and public perception data, this research captures not only the rhetorical choices of the candidates but also the real-time effectiveness of these strategies as perceived by voters.

Research Design

The research design follows a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative survey and interview data. This combination allows for a nuanced examination of both the language candidates use and its impact on voter perception. The qualitative analysis, informed by Politeness Theory, Speech Act Theory, and Pragma-Crafting Theory, involves a detailed examination of debate transcripts to uncover patterns in rhetorical strategies and negotiation techniques. In parallel, quantitative data from surveys and structured interviews with citizens provide insights into how these strategies resonate with different audience demographics and ideological backgrounds

Corpus of the Study

The study's corpus includes verbatim transcripts from two major televised debates between the Democratic and Republican candidates, offering a substantial dataset for analyzing discourse patterns. To capture public perception, the study also includes citizen feedback gathered through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which provides a diverse sample of U.S. citizens who viewed the debates. This feedback includes both closed-ended survey questions assessing perceptions of candidate effectiveness and open-ended questions that allow for more detailed qualitative responses. The integration of audience perspectives enhances the study's findings, adding layers of interpretation about how rhetorical choices align with or challenge voter expectations

Model of the Study

The pragma-crafting model, combined with politeness and speech act theories, provides the theoretical foundation for examining linguistic features and rhetorical strategies used by each candidate. Pragma-Crafting Theory enables a multifaceted analysis that considers not only the language itself but also the extralinguistic and contextual elements that shape meaning. Politeness Theory offers insights into how candidates manage social dynamics and mitigate face-threatening acts, especially when addressing contentious issues or challenging opponents. Speech Act Theory contributes a framework for categorizing utterances based on their performative functions, allowing the study to distinguish between different communicative acts—such as assertions, promises, or criticisms—that candidates employ to appeal to voters.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved multiple stages to ensure a comprehensive dataset. The primary qualitative data were collected through a meticulous analysis of debate transcripts, focusing on linguistic markers of negotiation strategies and rhetorical patterns. These transcripts were coded for themes that reflect ideological stances and strategic choices, such as the use of inclusive language, assertive statements, or issue framing techniques. Additionally, quantitative data were gathered through surveys of American citizens who viewed the debates. Participants recruited via MTurk completed surveys immediately following each debate, capturing their perceptions of candidate effectiveness, credibility, and alignment with their values. Structured follow-up interviews with a subset of survey participants provided further qualitative insights into their reactions to specific rhetorical choices made by the candidates.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted in several phases, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a robust interpretation of the findings. Qualitative analysis focused on coding debate transcripts to identify key themes and negotiation strategies, guided by the

theoretical frameworks. This coding process involved identifying linguistic features—such as politeness markers, speech acts, and pragma-crafting elements—that align with the ideological positions of each candidate. Themes were then categorized to capture the rhetorical techniques used to appeal to specific voter segments.

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using statistical techniques to measure the perceived effectiveness of different rhetorical strategies, comparing responses from participants across demographic and ideological backgrounds. This analysis assessed patterns in how respondents rated each candidate's performance, the appeal of specific messages, and alignment with voter values. Qualitative responses from open-ended survey questions and follow-up interviews were thematically analyzed to explore how participants interpreted candidates' language choices in relation to their own values and expectations.

The integrated findings from qualitative and quantitative data provide a holistic view of debate strategies, revealing how linguistic choices function as tools for ideological negotiation. This mixed-method approach captures the nuances of political communication in a polarized context, contributing valuable insights into the intersection of rhetoric, ideology, and voter perception in U.S. presidential debates.

Results

The analysis of the 2024 U.S. presidential debate transcripts, combined with citizen feedback gathered through surveys, reveals significant differences in the negotiation strategies employed by Democratic and Republican candidates. These strategies reflect party ideologies and align with broader themes of political polarization, with distinct patterns emerging in the use of language, rhetorical techniques, and the framing of issues.

Democratic Candidates: Inclusive and Cooperative Strategies

Democratic candidates, particularly Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, predominantly used inclusive language that emphasized unity, collective action, and social harmony. Consistent with Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), Biden's speeches often incorporated positive politeness strategies, such as using the pronoun "we" to create a sense of shared responsibility and mutual interest. For example, Biden frequently stated, "We need to come together to rebuild this country," framing his message as a call for collective action to address national challenges. This approach is aligned with the Democratic Party's values of inclusivity, cooperation, and solidarity, and is consistent with previous research indicating that Democratic candidates often prioritize themes of social harmony and community (Beasley & Lunney, 2023; Meyer, 2022).

Harris also employed similar strategies, particularly focusing on inclusivity through group-oriented language. Her frequent use of "we" and "our" served to unify diverse voter groups, reinforcing the Democratic commitment to social equality and collaboration. In her speech, Harris emphasized: "Together, we will ensure justice for all," signaling her alignment with the broader goals of the Democratic platform.

Republican Candidates: Assertive and Direct Strategies

In contrast, Republican candidates such as Donald Trump demonstrated a marked preference for direct speech acts and assertive language. Trump's rhetorical strategy closely mirrored the Republican Party's emphasis on individualism, strength, and decisiveness (Schmidt & Merkel, 2023). His speeches were characterized by a high frequency of declarative statements and imperatives, often underscoring his confidence and authority. For example, Trump stated, "We will make America strong again," employing a direct and assertive speech act designed to project strength and resolve. This aligns with prior studies highlighting the Republican tendency to use

rhetorical strategies that emphasize self-reliance and national pride (Moffitt, 2023; Beasley & Lunney, 2023).

Trump's language frequently involved direct confrontation, using phrases like "I will not back down" or "This is the truth," which aimed to assert his position clearly and forcefully. These direct speech acts are consistent with the use of *Speech Act Theory* (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), where candidates' utterances serve specific performative functions to shape public perception of their leadership abilities and political stance.

Table 1
Key Rhetorical Strategies Used by Democratic Candidates

Strategy	Candidate(s)	Example Phrase	Rhetorical Function
Inclusive Language	Joe Biden, Kamala Harris	"We need to come together to rebuild this country"	Fostering unity and collective action
Group-Oriented Language	Kamala Harris	"Together, we will ensure justice for all"	Reinforcing social equality and collaboration
Positive Politeness	Joe Biden	"Let's work together to overcome these challenges"	Maintaining social harmony and inclusivity

Table 2
Key Rhetorical Strategies Used by Republican Candidates

Strategy	Candidate(s)	Example Phrase	Rhetorical Function
Direct Language	Donald Trump	"We will make America strong again"	Projecting strength and authority
Assertive Speech Acts	Donald Trump	"I will not back down"	Asserting confidence and decisiveness
Confrontational Language	Donald Trump	"This is the truth"	Challenging opposition and reinforcing leadership

Comparative Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies
A key finding of this study is the contrast between the rhetorical strategies of the two parties. Democratic candidates leaned heavily on inclusive language and positive politeness to foster unity and appeal to collective values, while Republican candidates relied on assertive, direct language to project authority and individual strength. This difference in language usage is reflective of broader ideological trends, with Democrats focusing on social responsibility and Republicans emphasizing personal autonomy and national strength.

The application of *Pragma-Crafting Theory* (Acheoah, 2014) also helped identify how candidates craft their messages by combining linguistic, extralinguistic, and contextual elements. For example, Biden's calls for unity were situated within the context of social and economic challenges, reinforcing the idea that collective action is necessary to overcome national crises. On the other hand, Trump's use of direct and forceful language was framed within the context of his "America First" rhetoric, emphasizing a return to national strength through bold and decisive action.

Citizen Feedback and Perceived Effectiveness
Citizen feedback obtained through surveys indicated that Democratic candidates' use of inclusive language resonated more strongly with voters who prioritized unity and social justice, particularly among younger and more diverse groups. In contrast, Republican candidates' direct and assertive rhetoric was perceived as more effective by voters who valued strong leadership

and individualism, especially among older, more conservative respondents. This finding suggests that the negotiation strategies used by candidates not only reflect party ideologies but also resonate with different voter segments, influencing the effectiveness of their debate performances.

Table 3
Voter Perceptions of Rhetorical Effectiveness by Party Affiliation

Rhetorical Strategy	Party Affiliation	Voter Response
Inclusive Language	Democratic Voters	Positive response from younger, diverse groups
Assertive Language	Republican Voters	Stronger appeal to older, conservative voters
Collaborative Tone	Democratic Voters	Valued in the context of social justice and unity
Direct and Forceful Language	Republican Voters	Perceived as strong leadership and decisiveness

Voter Alignment with Ideological Values
The results further indicate that voters tend to align with candidates whose rhetorical strategies reflect their personal values and political beliefs. Democratic voters, for example, responded positively to Biden and Harris's inclusive, collaborative language, while Republican voters were more inclined to support Trump's assertive, no-nonsense approach. This finding underscores the importance of rhetorical alignment with party values in a polarized political landscape, where ideological differences are pronounced and voter preferences are increasingly driven by party identification and political loyalty (Reinhard & Mutz, 2021).

Discussion
This section discusses the findings in relation to the study's hypotheses, contextualizing them within recent literature on political rhetoric and debate strategies. The results highlight notable differences in rhetorical approaches between Democratic and Republican candidates, reflecting broader ideological orientations and supporting recent studies on party-specific communication styles.

Discussion Related to the First Research Hypothesis
The findings support the first hypothesis, indicating that Democratic candidates prioritize social harmony and collective identity, consistent with recent research. Meyer (2022) and Beasley & Lunney (2023) have documented the Democratic Party's preference for inclusive language that appeals to shared values and collective goals. In the 2024 debates, this pattern was evident in Biden's frequent use of positive politeness strategies, including indirect speech acts, which softened his criticisms of opponents while emphasizing unity and social cohesion. This rhetorical approach aligns with Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as it demonstrates an attempt to mitigate face-threatening acts and create a perception of respect and inclusion— values often associated with the Democratic platform.

Moreover, Harris's repeated use of "we" in her statements reinforces this strategy, fostering a sense of shared identity and collective purpose. This approach not only highlights Democratic values but also strategically appeals to voters who prioritize inclusivity and collaboration in political leadership. The emphasis on collective pronouns and inclusive language reflects findings from Beasley & Lunney (2023), who observed similar patterns in other Democratic leaders' rhetoric. By framing policy issues within a collective narrative, Democratic candidates in the

2024 debates positioned themselves as champions of social unity, aligning with the expectations of their voter base and reinforcing the party's ideological identity.

Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypothesis

The second hypothesis, which posited that Republican candidates would favor direct speech acts and assertive language to project strength and decisiveness, is also supported by the results. This finding aligns with studies by Schmidt & Merkel (2023) and Moffitt (2023), who observed that Republican rhetoric often emphasizes individual strength, self-reliance, and a clear-cut, assertive style that resonates with the party's ideological focus on individualism and personal accountability. In the 2024 debates, Trump's use of direct, unambiguous language and frequent first-person assertions reinforced a perception of self-confidence and authority, aiming to resonate with voters who value decisiveness in political leadership.

Trump's rhetorical strategy aligns with Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), as his use of direct speech acts serves to assert positions clearly, challenge opponents, and project an image of firm resolve. For instance, Trump's declarative statements on policy issues were designed to convey strength and straightforwardness, aiming to appeal to voter segments that prioritize strong, individualistic leadership. This approach also resonates with Pragma-Crafting Theory (Acheoah, 2014), as Trump's use of extralinguistic cues—such as assertive body language and tonal emphasis—augmented the impact of his direct language, creating a multi-layered message of confidence and determination.

Moreover, this rhetorical strategy aligns with the Republican emphasis on individualism, a trend observed by Moffitt (2023) in recent campaign communication, where Republican candidates often position themselves as self-reliant leaders capable of overcoming adversity. By using assertive language and avoiding indirect politeness strategies, Trump and other Republican candidates in the debates projected an image of strength that appeals to their core constituents, who view confidence and independence as desirable traits in a leader. This assertive approach may also serve to reinforce partisan loyalty by appealing to ideological values associated with self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.

Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the negotiation strategies used by Democratic and Republican candidates during the 2024 U.S. presidential debates, revealing how each party's rhetorical approaches align with broader ideological themes and voter expectations. By combining Politeness Theory, Speech Act Theory, and Pragma-Crafting Theory, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how language functions as a tool of ideological negotiation, highlighting the distinct ways in which candidates convey messages of unity, strength, and social values.

The findings demonstrate that Democratic candidates tend to employ inclusive, positive politeness strategies and indirect speech acts, which promote a sense of social harmony and collective identity. This approach not only aligns with Democratic values but also seeks to connect with voters who prioritize inclusivity and cooperation. Conversely, Republican candidates favor direct speech acts and assertive language that emphasize self-reliance, confidence, and decisiveness, reflecting the party's ideological focus on individualism and strength. These distinct strategies underscore how rhetorical choices serve to reinforce party identities, resonate with base voters, and appeal to broader segments of the electorate in times of heightened political polarization.

From a practical standpoint, this research provides valuable insights for political strategists, campaign managers, and speechwriters. Understanding the specific rhetorical tools that align with

each party's values enables campaign teams to tailor their messaging in ways that resonate deeply with their constituents while effectively addressing undecided voters. This study also contributes to the academic discourse on political communication by illustrating how ideological values are negotiated and reinforced through linguistic choices in debate contexts.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the 2024 election cycle. As political polarization continues to shape the U.S. electorate, future research should further investigate how rhetorical strategies evolve in response to shifting public attitudes and new sociopolitical challenges. By exploring the dynamics of debate language in diverse contexts, scholars can continue to deepen our understanding of how political rhetoric influences voter perceptions, reinforces party identities, and ultimately impacts electoral outcomes. This study thus provides a foundation for ongoing research on the intersections of language, ideology, and voter engagement in a polarized political landscape.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The differences observed in the rhetorical strategies of Democratic and Republican candidates carry significant implications for both theoretical understanding and practical applications in political communication. The use of Politeness Theory and Speech Act Theory in analyzing these debates reveals how candidates from each party construct their messages in ways that align with the ideological expectations of their audiences. These findings underscore the importance of tailored rhetorical strategies that resonate with specific voter values, offering valuable insights for campaign strategists and speechwriters aiming to enhance the effectiveness of political communication.

From a practical perspective, the study's insights into negotiation strategies provide political strategists with frameworks for refining debate preparations. By understanding the linguistic and pragmatic tools that align with voter expectations, campaign teams can better tailor their messaging to strengthen appeal among core supporters while addressing undecided voters. For scholars, this study contributes to the academic discourse on how ideological and rhetorical choices in debates reinforce party identities and shape voter perceptions, especially within a polarized electorate.

In summary, the study's findings highlight the alignment between rhetorical strategies and ideological values in the 2024 debates. Democratic candidates leveraged inclusivity and indirectness to foster unity, while Republican candidates emphasized assertiveness and individualism to project strength and decisiveness. These findings deepen our understanding of how language functions as a tool of ideological negotiation in political debates, offering valuable implications for both political communication practitioners and scholars.

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Biodata

Zahraa Mohammed Hussein is an employee in the Iraqi Ministry of Education. She works as a teacher at Al-Faisaliyah High School for the Gifted. She obtained a bachelor's degree from Wassit University and was among the top ten in 2009. She studied for a master's degree at Babylon University, College of Basic Education, Teaching Methods 2020.
Email: *zah84ra@gmail.com*

Bahram Hadian teaches in the Department of English, Islamic Azad University of Isfahan, Isfahan Branch, Isfahan, Iran. Bahran Hadain is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics and has taught courses of variegated character, including linguistics and translation courses. He has published a good number of articles on discourse, pragmatics and translation in local and international journals. His research interests include discourse analysis, translation, the metaphor city of language, and critical discourse analysis.
Email: *bah.hadian@khuisf.ac.ir*

Salih Mahdi Adai Al-Mamoory
Professor in the Department of English Language, University of Babylon, Iraq. hold a Bachelor's degree from Al-Mustansiriya University, Baghdad, Iraq, in the Department of English Language and linguistics, a Master's degree from Al-Qadisiyah University, Iraq, and a PhD from Mansoura University, Egypt, in (2016).
Email: *salih_mehdi71@yahoo.com*

Elahe Sadeghi-Barzani, an assistant professor at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, was born in 1980 and began her teaching career at the age of 22. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, she served as the head of her department for two years. She has published articles on TEFL and translation issues, with a strong interest in applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. Elahe has supervised numerous M.A. and Ph.D. students in TEFL and translation, resulting in many dedicated teachers and translators who share their passion for English with joy.
E-mail: *E.sadeghi71@khuisf.ac.ir*