

## The Art of Leadership: Analysing Rhetorics in the Linguistic Strategies of the 2020 US Presidential Election

(*Seni Kepimpinan: Menganalisis Retorik dalam Strategi Linguistik Pilihan Raya Presiden AS 2020*)

RIDHATUL FADHLI

### ABSTRACT

With a major focus on the rhetorical techniques used by candidates Joe Biden and Donald Trump, this study explores the nuanced linguistic discourse of the 2020 US presidential election. The study, grounded on Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, examines how these linguistic strategies were used in the speakers' speeches to understand how they influenced public opinion and shaped political discourse. The study uses a descriptive-qualitative methodology to arrange and summarise the verbal responses of the applicants systematically, enabling the discovery of recurrent themes and patterns. The results of this study highlight significant differences between the two candidates' rhetorical strategies. Joe Biden expertly combines all three rhetorical appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—into his communication strategy, unlike Donald Trump, who primarily uses pathos to elicit strong emotional reactions from his audience. This study emphasises the crucial roles of ethical credibility, emotional appeal, and logical argumentation in political communication, underlining their tremendous influence on forming public perception in democracies. This study illuminates the complex dynamics of language use in shaping and affecting public attitudes and views. Beyond its theoretical contributions, this research offers practical insights for linguistics, political science, media studies, and communication studies, elucidating the intricate dynamics of language utilisation in moulding and influencing societal attitudes and beliefs.

Keywords – Political discourse, rhetoric, linguistic device, ethos, pathos, logos

### ABSTRAK

Dengan tumpuan utama pada teknik retorik yang digunakan oleh calon Joe Biden dan Donald Trump, kajian ini meneroka wacana linguistik bernuansa pilihan raya presiden AS 2020. Kajian itu, berdasarkan teori retorik Aristotle, mengkaji bagaimana strategi linguistik ini digunakan dalam ucapan penceramah untuk memahami bagaimana ia mempengaruhi pendapat umum dan membentuk wacana politik. Kajian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif-kualitatif untuk menyusun dan meringkaskan respons lisan pemohon secara sistematik, membolehkan penemuan tema dan corak berulang. Hasil kajian ini menyerlahkan perbezaan yang ketara antara strategi retorik kedua-dua calon. Joe Biden dengan mahir menggabungkan ketiga-tiga rayuan retorik—ethos, pathos dan logos—ke dalam strategi komunikasinya, tidak seperti Donald Trump, yang terutamanya menggunakan pathos untuk menimbulkan reaksi emosi yang kuat daripada penontonnya. Kajian ini menekankan peranan penting kredibiliti etika, daya tarikan emosi, dan penghujahan logik dalam komunikasi politik, menggariskan pengaruh besar mereka dalam membentuk persepsi awam dalam demokrasi. Kajian ini menyinari dinamika kompleks penggunaan bahasa dalam membentuk dan mempengaruhi sikap dan pandangan orang ramai. Di sebalik sumbangan teorinya, penyelidikan ini menawarkan pandangan praktikal untuk linguistik, sains politik, kajian media, dan kajian komunikasi, menjelaskan dinamik rumit penggunaan bahasa dalam membentuk dan mempengaruhi sikap dan kepercayaan masyarakat.

Kata kunci – Wacana politik, retorik, peranti linguistik, ethos, pathos, logo

## INTRODUCTION

According to Jakobson (2014), language serves two main functions: it facilitates effective communication between individuals or groups and allows for expressing thoughts, feelings, and intentions. It was determined that working in businesses with other individuals would produce better outcomes than trying to work alone (Wilson, 2012). As previously stated by Jakobson (2014), to accomplish this cooperation, language or a means of communication is necessary to enable everyone to accurately transmit the meaning, feelings, ideas, and intentions.

According to Aristotle, as described by Roberts (2004), three components are required for effective communication: the listener, the speech, and the speaker (the individual trying to deliver the message). However, speech will be the most crucial persuasion technique. Persuasive language is used when a speaker aims to get the listener to understand, agree with, and embrace their point of view on a specific issue. A language device is an instrument of persuasion. Linguistic devices are techniques that intentionally emphasise points, evoke feelings, and add flare to a message to affect the listener's understanding in a way that supports the speaker's objectives. This is possible skillfully applying phonetics in morphological, syntactic, and semantic contexts.

The consent of the majority, or the nation's constituents, is essential to the operation of the state in a democratic society, and language is employed to address this. Democratic ideologies are based on the notion that the country is controlled by and for the people and that any policy changes and implementations require the support of a majority to be accomplished (Elklit & Svenson, 1997). This suggests that a representative's responsibility is to identify a policy that the representative and the constituents support and then advocate for it on their behalf. Locke's "Two Treatises of Government," published in Laslett (1963), defines popular sovereignty as a system in which the people's will determines political power.

This study will examine the strategies used by candidates seeking to represent the public to win over voters during political debates and speeches. Therefore, how a topic is phrased can disclose the unspoken premises of an argument and, consequently, the speaker's ideological stance (Hirst et al., 2014). These study scopes were chosen to yield more definitive results because they cover the fundamentals for various devices and circumstances. Linguistic devices like rhetorical appeals like *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are examined in these media's examination. Linguistic

devices, as defined by Allan and Burridge (2006), are language tactics and strategies employed in certain ways to accomplish the objectives of persuasion, manipulation, and effective message conveyance there (Hajdinjak et al., 2020). By examining regularity and the distribution of linguistic devices, factors that impact their application, and how language is interpreted, this paper seeks to understand the language of politics.

People who follow leaders to support, mentor, and elucidate their path become leaders, and this is not limited to selected individuals. For followers to follow a leader, they must demonstrate attributes in their demeanour, behaviour, and speech; to do so, they must engage their audience (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). In Roberts (2004), Aristotle responds to this question by stating that three signals—the appeal to authority (*ethos*), the appeal to emotion (*pathos*), and the appeal to reasoning (*logos*)—can be employed to sway the audience. By carefully implementing these techniques, leaders can encourage trust, loyalty, and good change among their followers and within their businesses or communities.

The 2020 presidential election in the United States of America was between two notable individuals: Joe Biden, the Democratic Party, who held the office of vice president for two terms prior to Donald Trump's ascent, and Donald Trump, the Republican Party's nominee. Both individuals have generated much controversy and public influence because of their public personas. In the US political arena, Donald Trump is viewed as a conservative and Joe Biden as a liberal; nonetheless, both occasionally employ polarising party speech (Moghadam & Samar, 2023). Therefore, it's fascinating to examine how they employ rhetoric and how they structure their arguments to cast aspersions on their opponents while simultaneously elevating themselves (Cooney & Newbolt, 2022).

Four sources, though they each focused on a different aspect of persuasion, Mohammad (2022), Veselá (2021) Al.Juboury (2022) and Bataineh (2019) all attempt to use pragmatics and political discourse studies to explain their speeches. While Al.Juboury (2022) concentrate on illocutionary, perlocutionary, and elocutionary acts, Bataineh (2019) concentrates on the linguistic device to persuade, while Mohammad (2022) and Veselá (2021) decided to concentrate on rhetorical tactics for their subjects.

We can identify distinct approaches by contrasting two prosperous and disparate leaders, such as the well-known billionaire and celebrity Donald Trump, with the long-serving politician Joe Biden. A study on Donald Trump and Barack Obama was conducted, but it is more relevant now because the

subjects never engaged with one another or dealt with distinct pertinent issues while in office.

Due to the controversial nature of the two candidates' character and history, the impact of the two candidates was huge in the 2020 election as it caused the highest turnout in the country's history. Thus, the two candidates' official presidential election was one of the most watched. The two candidates' rhetoric can influence the country's attitude. The 2020 insurrection happened because the people who followed Donald Trump believed his word and stormed the capital. Additionally, this is for the 2024 election, when both parties will almost certainly support the same two candidates.

The exact method Roberts (2007) utilised in his rhetorical theory to persuade Aristotle. The rhetorical theory is then employed as an extra spice so that particular approaches give the message greater effect. It helps to comprehend the overall strategy of how the orator attempts to achieve their aims, whether that be pathos, ethos, or logos. Given that Joe Biden has spent most of his life in politics, it is essential to compare and contrast two very successful politicians who are thought to be ideological opposites in order to examine a wider spectrum of persuasive techniques. Donald Trump has experience in both acting and business.

## RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study contributes to a more fundamental and complex understanding of how language devices function in political discourse. The results of this study have significant ramifications for democratic societies because they shed light on how politicians use their rhetoric to influence their constituents theoretically. The study emphasises the need for a more moral and responsible approach to political language. It stresses the significance of an informed and critical public that can successfully traverse the complexity of political communication and how different figures lead. Practically, the research also advances the fields of linguistics, political science, media studies, and communication studies by offering essential insights into how language is used to create and influence society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is conducted using the descriptive-qualitative strategy (Mason, 2017). The utterances of the two candidates are then collected, organised into a table, and then categorised. The data is then displayed in a table so that the researcher can find relationships or differences in the data and find patterns.

Variable	Indicator	Sub-indicator	Example	
Rhetorical	Ethos	Achievement	"I have won multiple gold medal in Olympics."	
		Responsibility	"Only we can fix climate change since we are responsible for it."	
		Credibility	"I have 20 years of experience in being a teacher."	
	Pathos	Social	"By donating a few dollars we can feed several children in need"	
		Humour	"You may ask why would I bring a ladder to Congress? Because all I want is there to be better social mobility in this country."	
		Emotional	"A lot of ethnic minority was brutalised, murdered and butchered by Pol Pot in Cambodia."	
		Logos	Statistics	"According to the statistics, cows kill 20 people per year in the United States compared to 1 death from sharks".
			Facts	"Did you know that a crocodile cannot stick its tongue out?"
			Rational	"So to solve the problem of global warming, we should invest more in solar panels as a source of power since it's carbon emission free."

Data and Source of the Data

The data is taken from available sources on YouTube. The speech is the official ad on the two candidates' YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enJwnRjkE9g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbOU2fTg6cI>

Instruments of the Research

The two primary instruments were used to conduct and acquire the following research results.

- i. The researcher is the primary instrument used to collect the data, identify, categorise, and

compare and contrast the results of the data findings.

- ii. The indicator table guides the researcher in adequately categorising the utterance using a sub-indicator

Technique of Data Collection

The collected data were analysed based on the following procedures:

- i. Gather qualitative information, then categorise and identify the transcriptions using Aristotle's rhetoric as a guide (Roberts, 2004).
- ii. Sort and categorise every video featuring Joe Biden and Donald Trump into a dataset of language devices.

Utterance	Rhetorical		
	Ethos	Pathos	Logos
I have won multiple gold medal in the Olympic”	√		

- iii. Every discovery is scrutinised and explained to bolster the findings table.

Video Type	Rhetorical			Total
	Ethos	Pathos	Logos	
Donald Trump Speech				
Joe Biden Speech				

- iv. Conclude by summarising the research findings and having a discussion on them
- is pathos (appeal to emotion), with a percentage of 64.28% and a frequency of 9. The second most used persuasive technique is ethos (appeal to authority), with a rate of 35.71% and frequency of 5, while a logo is not present at all in his speech.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the research

In this section, the researcher discussed the findings of the analysis of the Art of Leadership in Analysing Rhetorics in the Linguistic Strategies of the 2020 US Presidential Election.

From “Table 1”, it is evident that various persuasive techniques and appeals have been used to persuade and influence people by supporting the speech's main points with their arguments and supporting facts. According to the data in the table, the most frequently used type of rhetoric by Donald Trump

Joe Biden has an entirely different approach, with pathos (appeal to emotion) and logos (appeal to logic) tied with the most used with a percentage of 34.48% frequency of 20. Ethos is not too far behind, with a percentage of 31.03% and a frequency of 18.

Position of figure and table

*Donald Trump*

The emotional appeals in Donald Trump's speech are all intended to engage the audience emotionally.

TABLE 1. Total types of rhetorical devices used

Video type	Rhetorical			Total
	Ethos	Pathos	Logos	
Donald Trump speech	35.71% (5)	64.28% (9)	0% (0)	14
Joe Biden Speech	31.03% (18)	34.48% (20)	34.48% (20)	58

Expressions like "Treat the word impossible as nothing more than motivation" and "the more the system tells you that you are wrong, the more certain you should be that you must keep pushing ahead" are emotionally charged. They try to give their supporters a sense of resolve, hope, and motivation. Trump plays on the emotions of those who may feel disenfranchised or marginalised by highlighting the notion that obstacles can be overcome and that outsiders may make a significant difference.

Donald Trump uses ethos a lot in his speeches, but pathos still makes up most of his vocabulary. He highlights the importance of unity and patriotism by saying, "We must remember we share one home and one glorious destiny" and "We all bleed the same red blood of patriots." These assertions are meant to foster a sense of unity and purpose among listeners, enhancing his standing as a leader who promotes American ideals and cohesion. He aims to establish credibility and a moral and ethical connection with his audience by evoking patriotism and a sense of shared destiny.

The use of logos, the appeal to logic and reason, is not made in Donald Trump's speech because there are no clear arguments, supporting details, or factual assertions in the text. This lack of logical justification shows that his communication strategy in this specific speech depends more on emotional and moral reasons than arguments supported by facts or proof.

### *Joe Biden*

Pathos is a prominent rhetorical device used in Joe Biden's speech. He effectively describes the events in Charlottesville, including the presence of hate groups and the terrible loss of a young woman's life, using emotionally charged language. His use of the phrase "crazed faces, illuminated by torches, veins bulging and bearing the fangs of racism" aims to arouse powerful feelings in the audience, such as astonishment, wrath, and despair. By stating his conviction that the foundational principles of the country, democracy, and the American idea are in jeopardy, Biden also

engages the audience emotionally. By highlighting the emotional implications of the situation, such as the nation's fundamental principles and democracy being in jeopardy, he appeals to the audience's emotions.

The data shows that Joe Biden's speech contained many logos. He persuasively makes the case that the country's character would fundamentally change if Donald Trump were to win two terms. This suggests a cause-and-effect link, indicating that a sustained Trump presidency would adversely influence the nation's values and identity. Biden's use of logos mirrors his leadership style by combining moral and ethical arguments with persuasive rhetoric. It implies that he approaches leadership using a combination of intuition and reason.

The data also shows that Joe Biden used ethos throughout his speech. Invoking historical American ideas and the Declaration of Independence as his opening statement, he then discusses contemporary American ideals. As a result, he is seen as a leader who respects and upholds these ideals and is in line with the fundamental principles of the United States. His insistence on maintaining these standards strengthens his moral posture and establishes dependability. This application of ethos highlights Biden's dedication to moral standards and a leadership style that is based on historic American values.

In conclusion, the analysis more precisely captures Joe Biden's use of pathos, logos, and ethos in his speech, demonstrating his leadership style successfully combining emotive appeal, rational argumentation, and moral authority to engage the audience and make his point.

### Comparison

As we can see from the data, the two candidates used wildly different rhetorical strategies to persuade the US people to vote for them. Donald Trump focuses more on Pathos and none in his Logos than Joe Biden, who used more of a balanced approach by using all three Ethos, Pathos, and Logos more evenly. Bennett (2012)

states that political actors in political discourse adapt their message to accommodate their target audience. The actors realised that different audiences prioritise different issues and values, and thus, to suit what the audiences wanted to hear, they will adapt the message to be more suited to the listener. This matches Donald Trump and Joe Biden's goal to acquire the most votes in the election.

## CONCLUSION

Examining Biden's and Trump's speeches has theoretical and practical ramifications for studying leadership communication. It emphasises the crucial role of rhetorical devices like ethos, pathos, and logos in persuading leaders and influencing political discourse. Both leaders effectively engage their audiences through a potent combination of ethical credibility (ethos) and emotional appeal (pathos), highlighting the importance of fusing ethical and emotional components in leadership communication. Even though Donald Trump did not use logos in his speeches, it is still significant since it emphasises the value of arguments supported by facts in political discourse, unlike Joe Biden, who almost uses all three equally.

This study adds depth by demonstrating how leaders use rhetorical techniques while remaining consistent with earlier research on persuasion in political discourse. Additionally, the findings have demonstrated that leaders can use different rhetorical strategies to persuade the audience and that there is no one optimal way to persuade others. The findings displayed that different audience bases can be influenced differently since both candidates were highly successful in their political careers. This is valuable information for leaders of today and tomorrow as it indicates that a leader should understand their audience base first so that their speech rhetoric can be more persuasive and tailor-made for what they want to hear. Finally, it proposes possible directions for further investigation, such as cross-cultural study, audience reaction research, and longitudinal studies to monitor changes in leadership communication tactics over time.

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Ridhatul Fadhli\*  
 English Department,  
 Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang  
 Jalan Prof. Dr. Hamka, Air Tawar Padang,  
 Sumatera Barat, Indonesia.

\*Corresponding author: ridhatulfadhli78@gmail.com