Genre-Based Analysis of Selected Political Debates: A Discourse Analysis Study

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Abstract:
The researchers of the present study have conducted a genre analysis of two political debates between American presidential nominees in the 2016 and 2020 elections. The current study seeks to analyze the cognitive construction of political debates to evaluate the typical moves and strategies politicians use to express their communicative intentions and to reveal the language manifestations of those moves and strategies. To achieve the study's aims, the researchers adopt Bhatia's (1993) framework of cognitive construction supported by van Emeren's (2010) pragma-dialectic framework. The study demonstrates that both presidents adhere to this genre structuring to further their political agendas. For a positive and promising image, presidents focus on highlighting domestic and international issues to reflect leadership. On the other hand, highlighting controversies and defense strategies appear to be prominent in debate in consensus with the contemplative nature of this genre. Discoursal devices like polarized lexicalization and actor description are vital in orienting the controversies and influence with the aid of in-group pronouns, representative speech acts, and national/self-glorification.

Keywords: Bhatia, discourse analysis, moves, political debates, Pragma- Dialectic

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Introduction

It is believed that knowledge is a crucial and critical component of context models. Cognitive structures and knowledge continually modify the linguistic patterns of the discourse and, as a result, establish the common ground on which language users communicate (Akbar & Abbas, 2019). The word "genre" comes from a Latin word that means "kind" or "class." It has long been used to denote various literary and artistic works. Language educators and linguists have expanded it recently to include language use and communication classes in all aspects of life. Since the 1970s, the emphasis on stylistics, text linguistics, and syntactical elements or forms of discourse has shifted to a more comprehensive and multi-layered account of discourse's macrostructures and communicative purposes. Thus, genre analysis has emerged and has become an essential branch of discourse analysis. Despite this accord, the theoretical dispersion of work on genres has filled many voids; one of these gaps in evaluating the genre is utilized for communication objectives in political discussions instead of speeches.

On the other hand, a debate is a procedure involving formal discourse on a particular subject, sometimes including a moderator and an audience. In an argument, reasons for often opposed positions are presented. In places that elect holders of high political office, such as the president or prime minister, candidates sometimes engage in public debates, often during general election campaigns (Andrew, 1996). Political speeches are primarily investigated in terms of genre. The current study investigates the genre of debate rather than speech employed for the communicative purposes of America's two most recent political debates.

Literature Review

Swales (1990) defines a genre as an identifiable communication event defined by a set of communicative aims specified and mutually understood by professionals or academic group members in which it happens often. Typically, it is highly organized and conventionalized, with restrictions on acceptable contributions in terms of their purpose, location, shape, and functional usefulness. However, competent discourse community members often use these limits to attain personal goals inside the context of socially acknowledged objectives.

By incorporating psychological and cognitive dimensions of genre creation, Bhatia (1993) expands on Swales' theory. Although a variety of factors, such as content, shape, target audience, medium, or channel, have an impact on the structure and construction of a genre, according to Bhatia, it is primarily defined by the communication purpose it is intended to fulfill. The genre's internal structure is established by the common set of communication functions. Any considerable change in communicative aims is likely to give rise to a new genre, but slight alternations or adjustments help to distinguish subgenres.

Genre analysis is a broad term that incorporates several methodologies and approaches to texts, ranging from an in-depth qualitative study of a specific book to quantitative counts of linguistic features (Hyland, 2009). Martin (1984) says, "Genres are how things are accomplished when language is employed." (p. 248). According to Flowerdew (2000), genre analysis gives a grounded description and explanation of academic and professional language usage. Initially, a genre describes various literature, poetry, theatre, and films. Over the previous 20 years. It has become an important paradigm for analyzing the form and intent of scientific discourse, in addition to being a useful tool for designing instructional strategies in areas such as rhetoric, technical writing, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).
Genre analysis is also seen as the evolution of the three analytic techniques listed above. Genre analysis is undoubtedly a very recent branch of discourse analysis and establishes itself via four stages: register analysis, grammatical-rhetorical analysis, interactional analysis, and genre analysis. Trimble (1985) is an essential contribution to the field of grammatical-rhetorical analysis. Trimble devotes greater attention to examining broad grammatical aspects of tense and article choices in scientific works and demonstrates care for non-literary texts. The interactional analysis investigates the social and linguistic meanings formed during interaction and ultimately matures into "applied discourse analysis" and "speech function analysis,"

Genre analysis comprises many essential principles (Liu, 2012). In contrast to the other three analytic techniques, Genre analysis stresses the psychological process of text formation. By presenting and examining the regular arrangement and other linguistic characteristics of a text, genre analysis provides a more thorough understanding of the link between form and function.

Presidential debates allow candidates to convey their pre-written themes with opposition. Presidential debates after the 1950s, place candidates side-by-side on a stage to answer questions from a panel of journalists and reply to one another's remarks. There are few opportunities for in-depth questions, which may reveal more about candidates' comprehension of complicated matters like foreign policy, healthcare, and the economy. The journalist John P. Koch in his article "How to make presidential debates serve voters, not candidates," comments that the presidential debate is an intense process that needs further research and more profound knowledge to examine the argumentative nature used to persuade voters (Koch, 2020). Before presidential elections in the United States, The Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) organizes debates between the Republican and Democratic nominees (Khalil & Abbas, 2018).

Regarding genre as a communicative activity type, political debates are classified as a deliberation genre of political communication. Argumentation Theory analyses deliberation as a genre, or goal-oriented, staged speech that belongs to a discourse community (Bhatia, 2004). Argumentation Theory increasingly employs the idea of deliberation (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). Argumentation roughly describes how individuals attempt to obtain conclusions via reasoning (Fischer, 2012).

Methodology
Data Selected

The present study examines two presidential debates in two presidential elections. The first debate belongs between Hillary Clinton and Donald J. Trump, the presidential nominees of the 2016 elections. Joe Biden and Donald Trump, the leading contenders in the 2020 United States presidential election, represent the second debate hosted in the United States. The first discussion was held on September 29, 2020. These debates are recent, representative and famous in the history of American presidential debates. The latter issues are considered as reasons behind selecting the data precisely.

Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative research technique to analyse the chosen debates. According to the qualitative research method, things are studied in their natural contexts to understand or interpret events in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.
2). The selected debates will be interpreted in terms of cognitive genre structure used to gain the goals of the debate as genre-specific.

Model Adopted

Bhatia (1993) defined a genre as "a communicative event, recognising that a shared communicative purpose is the primary criterion for classifying a collection of texts into a genre and recognizing that a genre has a historically evolved, stable textual structure." This definition emphasises cognitive orientation, a unique aspect of Bhatia's conception of the genre. The selected debates will be analyzed according to Bhatia's (1993) cognitive genre structure to identify the cognitive structure used to achieve the aim of the study in determining the genre's linguistic realizations. Thus, there are norms that genre users may employ to achieve their aims and purposes, but they cannot break from the limits set by the genre (Zhan, 2012, pp. 214-215).

According to Bhatia (1993, p.13), the communication aim is achieved by cognitive structure, consisting of a move, sequencing, and the strategies that accomplish them.

Move

A move is a portion of a written or spoken text that accomplishes a specific aim within the text. Swales (1990) asserts that it is the fundamental text analysis unit. Mirador (2000) introduces a move in genre analysis of written comments from instructors to students as a logical manoeuvre that communicators use in written or spoken discourse. This manoeuver is visible in the cohesive, functional meaning of a sentence or collection of phrases in a written or spoken text. The expression or set of sentences has a single unifying function regarding its context. Therefore, the action adds to the genre's overarching aim.

Strategy and Step

In the process of studying a genre, "strategy" and "step" are more used in addition to "move." According to Bhatia, "strategy" refers to how the Author or speaker executes or implements the move. He further states, "To achieve a specific communicative purpose at the level of a single move, a writer may employ various rhetorical strategies." In his CARS model, Swales's (1990) term "Step" serves a similar purpose. The Author contends that the two subordinate units "move" and have identical implications.

The study adopts Bhatia's model (1993) and the Pragma-dialectic conceptualization of van Eemeren (2010) to support the debate content underlying the three phases of Bhatia. The presidential debate is regarded a deliberation genre and hence tied to argumentation theory, which shares Van Eemeren's argumentation strategies (2010). Van Eemeren's pragma-dialectic framework shares with Bhatia's (1993) model three moves (namely, opening, argumentation, and closure). However, in consensus with debates as an argumentative discourse, the pragma-dialectic framework has an additional move termed the 'confrontation move' (or stage). The confrontation move of van Ememren is merged with the argumentative move in Bhatia's model because confrontation can be regarded as a natural part of argumentation. The moves and their underlying strategies are described as follows.

Opening Move: In Bhatia's conception, this move is characterized by the speaker welcoming the audience, thanking them for their hospitality, and extending an invitation. They are additionally commemorating the event for which this gathering is conducted. This manoeuver is distinguished by its use of honorifics and lexicalization. In van Emeren's conception, the parties
attempt to settle the disagreement. They assign the roles of the protagonist (the character who defends a position on a specific issue) and antagonist (the character who criticizes or refutes the protagonist's position by presenting an opposing position). The sides also agree on the discussion's guidelines and beginning points.

**Argumentation Move:** In Emeren's conception, the speaker or Author demonstrates that a controversy exists or threatens to emerge. This may be accomplished by highlighting recognized objections or possible doubts. During this stage, the protagonist advances his position and encounters the antagonist's misgivings, occasionally implied. Parties must agree on a starting position before moving on to support or refute the viewpoint subjected to discussion.

In Bhatia's conception, the argumentative move comprises six strategies, each contributing to the overall objective. Furthermore, van Emeren's concept of confrontation and argumentation offers two additional tactics, which are incorporated to Bhatia's argumentation approach. The strategies are as follows:

**Strategy 1: Addressing domestic concerns.** This strategy contains language cues: pronouns, lexicalisation, compassion, and national self-glorification. It is differentiated by its substance, which focuses on domestic matters in the United States at the debate. These subjects are already well-known to the public through the media.

**Strategy 2: Discuss regional and international issues.** The strategy's message is conveyed by addressing global and regional issues that affect people's lives all around the globe. Lexicalization, compassion, honesty, caution, and actor description are the textual signals included in this strategy.

**Strategy 3: Finding common ground.** This strategy seems complementary to the second strategy since having global or regional issues necessitates that people in power work to find a solution. Here enters the position of the United States as the superhero who can fix others' problems. This strategy's textual indicators consist of pronouns, lexicalization, counterfactuality, honesty, consensus, and illustration.

**Strategy 4: Creating a replicable model.** In this strategy, the United States and its allies are often portrayed as examples of free, high-value nations. This nation accepts variety and grants everyone a life of dignity and wealth. It is depicted as a superpower that aids the most afflicted and the most defenseless. National Self-glorification, Authenticity, Illustration, and Lexicalization are the distinctive literary clues.

**Strategy 5: Identification of enemies of peace and liberty.** In this strategy, the line between in-group and out-group is highlighted explicitly. The adversaries of the United States and its allies are identified and characterized as the evil of humanity. This strategy exposes their worst qualities, such as violence and inhumanity—this strategy distinguishes characteristics of polarization, compassion, and warning.

**Strategy 6: Carrying the burden of saving the world.** It is the sixth strategy. The substance of this strategy might be seen as a complement to strategy 4, "creating a model to be followed," because the United States is the purported superhero tasked with fixing the issues of the poor without requesting compensation. These tactics are employed: authenticity, national self-glorification, caution, and pronouns.
Strategy 7: Highlighting controversies and doubts. According to van Emeren (2010), this strategy is signalled by disagreement on a policy issue, a decision made in front of a typically non-interactive and diverse audience. The speaker or Author demonstrates that a controversy exists or threatens to emerge. This may be accomplished by highlighting recognised objections or possible doubts.

Strategy 8: Support or refute the highlighted issue. This strategy includes that the protagonist advancing his position and encountering the antagonist's misgivings, occasionally implied. Parties must agree on a starting position before moving on to the argumentation stage, in which arguments are presented to support or refute the viewpoint.

According to van Emeren's framework, argumentation entails the protagonist defending their position against the sometimes-relentless criticism of the antagonist by presenting reasons to answer the antagonist's objections or dispel the opponent’s concerns about the acceptability of his position. The speaker or Author offers their point. The speaker or Author may also mention the viewpoints of the opposing side.

Closure Move: It entails, according to Bhatia, expressing gratitude and promising to continue sharing the same energy and passion with the audience, who are also ambassadors of their nations. This move might also contain a concise review of the key topics or a compliment to the audience's moral character. The distinguishing characteristic of a text is its expressive speaking actions.

Regarding Emeren's, the closing step requires the parties to evaluate the degree to which the disagreement has been settled and in whose favor. The speaker or Author considers how their argument has determined the conflict. If the protagonist abandons his position, the controversy is decided in favor of the antagonist; if the antagonist leaves their reservations, the disagreement is settled in favor of the protagonist.

The textual signals deemed essential and required to detect moves-strategies are various; they come from renowned linguists regardless of the method or approach they adhere to. These indicators include speech acts of Searle (1975, p. 359), honorifics of Brown and Levinson (1978, p.276), actor description, compassion, national self-glorification, polarization, lexicalization, illustration, openness, honesty, counter factuality, consensus, warning of van Dijk (1995, 2006), and pronouns of Charteris-Black (2005, p. 4).

Data Analysis
Debate 1: The Republican nominee, Donald J. Trump, and the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton.

Several issues were proposed for debate, one of which is the abusive behaviour of Trump toward women. This debate was held at Washington University - St. Louis on October 9, 2016. Participants follow the next moves and strategies.

The Opening Move
The participants, Clinton and Trump, open the debate with the following statements:

Clinton: “Well, thank you. Are you a teacher? Yes, I think that that's a very good question because I've heard from lots of teachers and parents about some of their concerns about some of the things that are being said and done in this campaign. And I think it is very
important for us to make clear to our children that our country really is great because we're good. And we are going to respect one another, lift each other up. We are going to be looking for ways to celebrate our diversity, and we are going to try to reach out to every boy and girl, and every adult, to bring them into working on behalf of our country." (Clinton H., 2016)

Trump: “Well, I actually agree with that. I agree with everything she said. I began this campaign because I was so tired of seeing such foolish things happen to our country. This is a great country. This is a great land. I've gotten to know the people of the country over the last year-and-a-half that I've been doing this as a politician. I cannot believe I'm saying that about myself, but I guess I have been a politician.” (Trump D., 2016)

In this move, the participant in the debate opens the discourse with:

- **Speech acts**: Clinton opens the debate with a speech act of thanking and then continues with a figurative speech act where she tells the audience about her future focus for the American people's good. Like Clinton, Trump starts and continues his speech with a representative speech act where he represents himself as a supporter of the American dream.
- **Lexicalization**: Both Clinton and Trump open the debate with positive lexis describing America and its future with their efforts like 'great, good, and celebrate diversity.'
- **Pronouns**: Clinton and Trump use in-group pronouns to convey the soul of teamwork.

Trump agrees with Clinton on the starting points and thus comes in consensus with Emen's view that this move or phase includes showing an agreement on guideline matters and hospitality. Accordingly, indicating agreement on essential points is a strategy in the discourse of debate.

**Argumentative Move**

The debate text shows that the argumentative move comes before the confrontation stage.

**Strategy 1: Raising domestic issues**

Clinton: “That's why the slogan of my campaign is Stronger Together because I think if we work together if we overcome the divisiveness that sometimes sets Americans against one another, and instead we make some big goals — and I've set forth some big goals, getting the economy to work for everyone, not just those at the top, making sure that we have the best education system from preschool through college and making it affordable, and so much else." (Clinton H., 2016)

Trump: “And my whole concept was to make America great again. When I watch the deals being made, when I watch what's happening with some horrible things like Obamacare, where your health insurance and health care is going up by numbers that are astronomical, 68 percent, 59 percent, 71 percent, when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is for us, it's a one-sided transaction where we're giving back $150 billion to a terrorist state, really the number one terror state, we'd made them a strong country from really a very weak country just three years ago." (Trump D., 2016)
In this move, both Clinton and Trump put a vital national issue under argumentation. Clinton introduces the problems of diversity and educational system economies as her case. Trump, on the hand, sets the subject of terrorism and Iran's nuclear weapon as vital matters to focus on when he becomes a president. Lexicalisation is realised in this strategy: both nominees use strong lexis to describe their strong cases under discussion, gaining the audience's acceptance. For example, "Stronger Together," big goals, work for everyone, not just those at the top, America great again, a terrorist state, strong country.

- **Pronouns:** Clinton uses the in-group pronouns 'we' in "we work together if we overcome the divisiveness, we make some big goals, we have the best education system." This pronoun gains the effect of the team that the audience is part of her team and that they are one group with the same goal. Another view is the pronouns 'I, my', which reflect on her positive actions or futural achievements as in "I've set forth some big goals, getting the economy to work for everyone, not just those at the top, making sure...."

Similar to Clinton, Trump depends on the personal in-group pronouns to get the audience to feel that he has something valuable to introduce and that he has his own national goal, as in "my whole concept was to make America great again.... when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is..." and to use 'we, us' pronouns to represent himself as one of the public to reflect his nationality as in "when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is for us, ... we've made them a strong country from really a very weak country just three years ago." He emphasises the public responsibility and contribution to this victory by electing the right person as 'him.'

- **Compassion:** Both nominees show companionship to the American public and their essential needs as "getting the economy to work for everyone, not just those at the top, making sure that we have the best education system." Here Clinton shows her deep concern for the American opportunity for an education.

**Strategy 6: Carrying the burden of saving the world.**

**Trump:** "You know, when we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening, this is like medieval times. We haven't seen anything like this, the carnage all over the world. And they look and they see. Can you imagine the people that are, frankly, doing so well against us with ISIS? And they look at our country and they see what's going on. Yes, I'm very embarrassed by it. I hate it. But its locker room talks, and it's one of those things. I will knock the hell out of ISIS. We're going to defeat ISIS. ISIS happened a number of years ago in a vacuum that was left because of bad judgment. And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS." (Trump D.,2016)

This extract may entail the sixth strategy and the interwoven second, fourth, and fifth strategies. The latter terrorist group is identified as the enemy of peace and liberty as in "You know when we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off heads..., drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening, this is like medieval times... We're going to defeat ISIS." That is, the identification of ISIS as the enemy of America also denotes an international issue of a common ground where America is the
republic model to follow in fighting ISIS. And more significantly, Trump sets America as the world's savior by defeating ISIS.

The following linguistic devices manifest these strategies in combination:

- **Pronouns**: The personalization using 'you' reflects Trump's attempt to put the responsibility on the public shoulder to choose the right fighter and scare them by showing that they are the people affected by ISIS crimes, not him or the government. This is clear: "you have ISIS chopping off and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening." The negative action of ISIS is directed toward the public to motivate them to elect the strong nominee who saves them. When it comes to defeating ISIS, Trump introduces himself as the hero with America the whole as one team fighting as in "I will knock the hell out of ISIS. We're going to defeat ISIS... And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS."

- **Lexicalization**: Negative lexis describes ISIS, while positive lexis shows Trump's motivation to defeat ISIS. Negative lexis denoting ISIS as "chopping off, steel cages, wars, horrible sights, bad things, medieval times, hate, hell." Positive lexis include: "knock, defeat, a vacuum, take care,"

- **Caution**: The caution is evident in Trump's indication of ISIS action sketching. He images the ISIS lifestyle in wars by saying, "you have ISIS chopping off and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening."

- **National and self-glorification**: Trump glorifies himself as the American Hero saving the world from ISIS in "We're going to defeat ISIS... And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS."

**Strategy 7: Highlighting controversies and doubts.**

With this strategy, nominees are represented as antagonists either by each other or by the interviewers. Thus, the nominees may naturally disagree, defend, or justify themselves. An example of this strategy is the confrontation of Trump's abusive acts against women and his response as follows:

**Cooper**: "Just for the record, though, are you saying that what you said on that bus 11 years ago that you did not actually kiss women without consent or grope women without consent?"

**Trump**: "I have great respect for women. Nobody has more respect for women than I do." (Trump D., 2016)

**Cooper**: "So, for the record, you're saying you never did that?"

**Trump**: "I've said things that, frankly, you hear these things I said. And I was embarrassed by it. But I have tremendous respect for women." (Trump D., 2016)

**Trump**: "And women have respect for me. And I will tell you: No, I have not. And I will tell you that I'm going to make our country safe. We're going to have borders in our country,
which we don't have now. People are pouring into our country, and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places.” (Trump D.,2016)

Trump is accused of the abusive characterization of women. In his response, he uses the following textual signals:

- **Speech acts**: to defend himself against the accusation raised by the interviewer, Trump disagrees with the interviewer and denies any relationship to the claim that he respects women rather than showing disrespect as he states, "I have great respect for women... No, I have not.” Thus, Trump performs speech acts of denial and rejection. Moreover, Trump conducts a speech act of shifting topics. Shifting topics occur in certain conversation phases that indicate transitions from one discourse chunk that has a coherent topic or content to another piece with another coherent topic or content. This speech act enables the speaker to evade the responsibility accompanied by the topic being changed or shifted, in the current study scope at least. In the argumentative move, Trump turned the topic, which focused on his abuse of women in public, onto the safety of America and how he would be a hero in making America safe again. This shift appears in "I will tell you: No, I have not. And I will tell you that I'm going to make our country safe. We're going to have borders in our country, which we don't have now. People are pouring into our country, and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places."

- **Pronouns**: Trump employs the personal pronoun 'I' to deny any commitment to the act of abuse, as in "I have great respect for women... No, I have not." And also, to highlight other different positive traits about him like "I will make our country safe."

- **Lexicalization**: Positive lexis is used to cover up the negative act of women abuse as in "great respect and safety."

- **Self-Glorification**: Trump glorifies and bolsters himself as a respectful man for women and the one who will make America safer "that I'm going to make our country safe., women respect me."

**The Closure Move**

In this move, the debate on a specific issue is resolved for the sake of one side. Here, it is terminated for the sake of Trump because the protagonist leaves the declaration and thanks Trump, with no insistence on the claim of abusing women. This is clear in:

**Trump**: “We're going to make America safe again. We're going to make America great again, but we're going to make America safe again. And we're going to make America wealthy again because if you don't do that, it just — it sounds harsh to say, but we have to build up the wealth of our nation

**Cooper**: Thank you, Mr Trump.

**Trump**: Right now, other nations are taking our jobs and our wealth.

**Cooper**: Thank you, Mr Trump.

**Trump**: And that's what I want to talk about.”
This move is realized by the use of:

- **Speech acts**: Trump uses the representative speech act to assert his positive efforts if elected and his advanced moves towards a greater America. The interviewer uses thanking to close the topic and moves on.
- **Lexicalization**: Trump asserts positivity by "great, safe, wealthy, build up."
- **Pronouns**: Trump employs the in-group pronoun 'we' to assert his belonging to Americans.

**Debate 2: Trump and Biden's Final Presidential Debate**

This debate was facilitated by Kristen Welker on October 22, 2020, in Nashville. Regarding genre analysis, several matters are the focus of this debate. One of these matters is the efforts made to face the Covid-19 pandemic. The following moves and strategies are performed to achieve communicative purposes.

**The Opening Move**

In this move, the interviewer and the participants open the debate by focusing on the Covid-19 issue and the presidential efforts to face it. The following excerpt exemplifies this move:

*Welker*: “A very good evening to both of you. This debate will cover six major topics. At the beginning of each section, each candidate will have two minutes, uninterrupted, to answer my first question... we will begin with the fight against the coronavirus. President Trump, the first question is for you. The country is heading into a dangerous new phase. More than 40,000 Americans are in the hospital tonight with COVID, including record numbers here in Tennessee. And since the two of you last shared a stage, 16,000 Americans have died from COVID. So please be specific: how would you leave the country during this next stage of the coronavirus crisis? Two minutes, uninterrupted.”

The interviewer, Welker, opens the debate by putting guidelines for the coming discussion. The interviewer welcomes the participants and states the question with a specification of time to answer. The following textual signals realise this move:

- **Speech acts**: the interviewer uses the speech act of greeting to welcome the participants in "A very good evening to both of you" In addition, the representative speech act is used in the rest of the statement to tell the participant the nature of the debate process.
- **Illustration**: the interviewer illustrates the process of debating in "This debate will cover six major topics. At the beginning of each section, each candidate will have two minutes, uninterrupted, to answer my first question" Moreover, the interviewer uses illustration to introduce the main topics under discussion and the reason behind conducting the debate as in "we will begin with the fight against the coronavirus. President Trump, the first question is for you... how would you leave the country during this next stage of the coronavirus crisis."
- **Honorifics**: the interviewer uses honorifics to address the president with their titles as in "President Trump, the first question is for you"

**The Argumentative Move**

This move includes the argumentation over Covid-19 and the governmental efforts to face the pandemic. It includes several strategies used to handle the argument by the participants as follows:
Strategy 2: discussing regional and international issues.

Trump starts his argument by referring to Covid-19 as an international issue affecting the world:

Trump: “So, as you know, more than 2.2 million people, modelled out, were expected to die. We closed up the greatest economy in the world in order to fight this horrible disease that came from China. It's a worldwide pandemic. It's all over the world. You see the spikes in Europe and many other places right now. If you notice, the mortality rate is down, by 85%. The excess mortality rate is way down and much lower than almost any other country”

Trump highlights that Covid-19 affected all of Europe and that America is an advanced country in fighting the virus. The following textual signals are used to perform this strategy:

- **Lexicalization:** Trump indicates the internationality and fatality of the disease with the intensified negative lexes’ horrible disease, worldwide pandemic.
- **Compassion:** Trump shows his sympathy and compassion toward people around the globe as "more 2.2 million people, modelled out, was expected to die. We closed up the greatest economy in the world in order to fight this horrible disease that came from China. It's a worldwide pandemic."
- **National glorification:** Trump indicates the superiority of America in fighting the virus compared to the other countries in "If you notice, the mortality rate is down 85%. The excess mortality rate is much lower than almost any other country."

Strategy 1: addressing domestic concerns.

After discussing Covid-19 as an international pandemic, Trump focuses on the pandemic inside America in the following statement: "There is a spike. There was a spike in Florida, and it's now gone. There was a very big spike in Texas, it's now gone. There was a very big spike in Arizona, it's now gone. And there were some spikes and surges in other places. They will soon be gone. We have a vaccine that's coming, it's ready. It's going to be announced within weeks, and it's going to be delivered. We have Operation Warp Speed, which is the military, is going to distribute the vaccine."

In his response, Trump concentrates on how America suffered from the virus in many states and that America has a strong influence on defeating the virus. The following textual signals mainly realise this strategy:

- **Lexicalization:** Trump uses the term 'spik' to describe the waves of the virus. The word used denotes that the virus waves are fast and faster to end by the government efforts to distribute the vaccine. Also, Trump uses the word 'gone' to denote that the virus has finished.
- **Pronouns:** Trump uses the in-group pronouns to denote that the victory against the virus belongs to all Americans, among whom Trump is one as in "We have a vaccine, we have Operation Warp Speed."
- **National glorification:** Trump highlights the victorious efforts of the government to denote his success "There was a spike in Florida, and it's now gone. There was a very big spike in Texas, and it's now gone. There was a massive spike in Arizona,
and it’s now gone. And there were some spikes and surges in other places. They will soon be gone.”

Strategy 7: Highlighting Controversies and Doubts.

Biden, in his turn, raises doubts and accuses Trump of being unable to control the situation during the pandemic; thus, he communicates that Trump is not qualified to lead America anymore: Biden: “220,000 Americans dead. If you hear nothing else, I say tonight, hear this. Anyone who’s responsible for not taking control — in fact, not saying I take no responsibility, initially — anyone who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain as President of the United States of America. We’re in a situation where there are thousands of deaths a day, a thousand deaths a day. And there are over 70,000 new cases per day. Compared to what’s going on in Europe, as the New England Medical Journal said, they’re starting from a very low rate. We’re starting from a very high rate. The expectation is we’ll have another 200,000 Americans dead by the time, between now and the end of the year.”

The following textual signals realise the accusations and doubts raised against Trump:

- **Speech acts:** Biden uses the representative speech act to report facts and numbers on the deaths caused by Covid-19 in America. With this information, his previous argument of Trump is claimed as unrealistic and that the situation in America is not much better than in other countries, as Trump has reported previously. He states that”220,000 Americans dead, there are over 70,000 new cases per day... we’ll have another 200,000 Americans dead by the time, between now and the end of the year”

- **Caution:** Biden warns Trump that the latter will not continue as the president of America for being unable to control the pandemic. This caution is implied in Biden's"Anyone who's responsible for not taking control — in fact, not saying, I take no responsibility, initially — anyone who is responsible for that many deaths should not remain as President of the United States of America" Biden warns Trump of a higher rate of deaths in the future.

- **Polarization:** Biden makes a polar comparison between the European and American progress in fighting Covid-19, where Europe started from"a very low rate" While America started"from a very high rate"

- **Actor description:** Biden employs a negative actor description when describing Trump. Biden characterises Trump as"responsible for not taking control... responsible for that many deaths”

The Closure Move

In this move, the debate on fighting Covid-19 efforts ends with thanks and appreciation as follows:

Welker: “All right. I want to thank you both for a very robust hour and a half, a fantastic debate. Really appreciate it. President Trump, former Vice President Joe Biden. Thank you to Belmont University for hosting us tonight and later thank you to those watching tonight.
Election Day is November 3. Don't forget to vote. Thank you everyone and have a great night."

The interviewer thanked the presidents and the host university. The following textual signals realise the closure move:

- **Speech acts**: The interviewer uses thanking speech act to end the debate and performs a greeting speech act.
- **Honorifics**: the interviewer uses the titles of the participants to thank President Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden.

**Conclusion**

The present study's researchers have attempted a qualitative genre analysis of two political debates. They have reached the following conclusions: Presidential debates are competitive in pattern to gain public votes. Consequently, the strategies of discussing domestic and international issues are present to communicate the international political qualities needed for a successful leader. In a political debate, a genre is argumentative, and thus, highlighting controversies and defense are fixed strategies within the argumentative move. The opening and closing moves are patterned, while the argumentative move is more complicated with various strategies used to gain a positive influence on the audience. The representative speech act is also important to report achievements, the positivity of the speaker and the negativity of the other participants in the debate. Besides, self/national glorification is opposed by negative actor descriptions to gain superiority. Lexicalisation is polarised to raise the positivity of the presidential plan and the negativity of the other nominees' plans. In-group pronouns exist to reflect the nominees belonging to the American public.

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