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*Exploring Strategic Evasion and Rhetorical Maneuvers in the 2024
U.S. Presidential Debates: A Pragma-Discoursal
Analysis*

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, who have always supported me with love and care. Their help and encouragement gave me the strength to keep going. I also dedicate it to my brothers, Ahmed, Sofiane, Amine, and Faouzi. Thank you for being there for me and for always believing in me. I am truly lucky to have you in my life.

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Ibari sarah

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Abstract

The present study is a pragmatic analysis of the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The main objectives of this research are twofold: first, to explore how the candidates employ strategic evasions by deliberately violating Grice's maxims to generate implicatures; and second, to examine the rhetorical strategies used to persuade voters, reinforce political ideologies, and influence public perception. The analysis applies three theoretical frameworks: Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), Aristotle's persuasive appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), and Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology of evasive responses. Following a qualitative, corpus-based design, the study draws on directed content analysis to interpret how candidates use language strategically. The findings show that both Trump and Harris used various evasion strategies, such as shifting topics, refusing to answer, and attacking the question, while also relying on rhetorical tools like emotional storytelling, expert opinion, and repetition. These linguistic choices helped them manage sensitive topics, protect their image, and shape how voters perceived their competence. By uncovering the hidden techniques behind political speech, this study aims to raise awareness and promote critical thinking about how language is used to influence audiences in high-stakes political settings.

Key Words: Pragmatics, strategic evasion, rhetorical appeals, presidential debate

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GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Language has been studied by linguists for many years because it plays a big role in society. It is a powerful tool that helps people express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Language is also used to influence others and manage social and political relationships. In political situations, language is not just about sharing information. It is also used to show authority and shape how people think. Political language helps people understand policies, leaders, and important events. It affects how people form opinions and who they support, especially during elections. Through speeches and debates, politicians use language to show power and support certain beliefs (Fairclough, 2015). They also use it to look more trustworthy and to shape how the public sees them (Chilton, 2004).

One significant way language functions in politics is through political debates. A debate is a structured discussion in which two or more participants present different viewpoints on a particular issue. Each participant aims to express their ideas clearly and persuade the audience that their stance is more convincing (Smith, 2010). Political debates allow candidates to present their opinions, address counterarguments, and use persuasive strategies to influence voters.

Presidential debates are one example of this kind of debate. In these debates, people who want to be president talk about big problems that affect the whole country. They explain their ideas and plans to fix these problems, like improving schools, creating jobs, and solving different issues. At the same time, they use language carefully and strategically to influence voters. According to Jamison (1992), they try to explain to voters why they are the best choice to lead the country. They want to show that they have the right skills, experience, and plans to do a good job as leaders. These kinds of debates are important because they help people see the differences between the candidates. By watching the debate, voters can understand each

candidate's ideas, what they believe in, and how they react to hard questions. This helps voters choose the person they think is better to lead the country. In this way, debates are like a test where candidates show their abilities and personality under their pressures (Colman ,2013).

Given the recent nature of the 2024 U.S. presidential debates, particularly those involving Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, scholarly analysis of the rhetorical and pragmatic strategies employed remains limited. Although the debates have attracted extensive media attention, few academic studies have examined how the candidates strategically manipulate language to evade questions, appeal to emotions, and shape public perception. One notable study by Jiménez-Preciado et al. (2024) used Natural Language Processing to examine how language was used in the 2024 U.S. presidential debates. Their goal was to track word patterns and changes in language over time, using computational tools rather than close reading or interpretation. Another study by Salma and Heryono (2025) focused on presuppositions in the same debate. They used a pragmatic approach to show how both candidates used hidden meanings to guide how people understand the messages. A third study, by Ashraf et al., (2024) applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model to explore how power and ideology appeared in the candidates' speech. This critical discourse analysis helped explain how language can support political beliefs.

While these studies give useful insights into the debate, they mainly looked at word use, hidden meanings, or ideology. This study aims to address the aforementioned gap by providing a pragmatic analysis of rhetorical and evasion techniques used in this high-stakes political exchange. It looks closely at how Donald Trump and Kamala Harris used language to follow or break Grice's maxims, how they used strategies of evasion to avoid direct answers, and how they relied on Aristotle's appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) to influence the audience. This approach helps reveal how language works not only to inform, but also to persuade and protect political image.

Aims and Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore how language is strategically used in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate to manage difficult questions and shape public perceptions. Specifically, it explores how candidates employ strategic evasions by deliberately violating Grice's maxims to generate implicatures. Furthermore, the study examines the rhetorical strategies used by the candidates to persuade voters, to reinforce their political ideologies, and influence audience reactions, drawing on Aristotle's appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos.

This study is important as it helps us understand how political candidates use language in strategic ways to answer difficult questions, build trust, and influence public opinion. By analyzing the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, the study shows how both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris avoided direct answers through evasion strategies and used rhetorical appeals to appear honest, emotional, or logical. This kind of analysis raises awareness about how language works in real-life political situations and encourages critical thinking about what politicians say and how they say it. It helps students, researchers, and voters better understand political communication and the hidden meanings behind candidates' words. In our Department of English, this research brings together ideas from pragmatics and rhetoric, offering a fresh approach to studying political language. It also shows how linguistic tools like Grice's maxims and Aristotle's appeals can be used to analyze debates, which can inspire other students to study language in similar real-world settings. to study how language is used in real-life situations like political debates and media.

Research Questions

In order to reach the objectives mentioned above, following question are raised :

Q1: How do presidential candidates strategically violate Grice's maxims to create indirect meanings (implicatures) during debates?

Q2: What rhetorical strategies, especially Aristotle's appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), do candidates use to persuade voters and reinforce their political messages?

Research Design and Methodology

The study consists of a pragmatic analysis of the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate, focusing on the strategic use of language by the candidates, namely Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. It is, therefore, corpus-based, with the selected corpus comprising the debate transcript obtained from google. To reach the study's objectives, three theoretical frameworks are adopted. The first is Grice's Maxims, which was applied to analyse violations of conversational norms along with Clayton and Bull's (2006) Typology of Evasive Strategies. The second was Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, to examine how persuasive strategies are employed to influence audience perception. The study adopted a qualitative Content Analysis for data analysis, focusing on the use of language to shape meaning, manage difficult questions, and persuade the audience.

The Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation follows a traditional simple model . It consists of a general introduction, followed by four main chapters: the literature review, research design, research results, discussion and a general conclusion. Each chapter includes an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion. The general introduction provides background information and explains the steps taken to conduct the study. The literature review discusses previous studies and theoretical frameworks relevant to the research. The research design chapter describes the methodology, including data collection and analysis procedures, ensuring a structured approach to the study. The third chapter presents the research results, showing the main findings of the study , the fourth chapter is the discussion, which explains and interprets the results, connects them to the theoretical framework, and answers the research questions

outlined in the general introduction .Finally, the dissertation concludes with a general conclusion, summarizing the key findings and offering recommendations for future research in the field.

CHAPTER ONE
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter is theoretical. It aims to give the background needed to understand the topic of this study. It explains key ideas related to political communication and political discourse. The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section explains what U.S. presidential debates are, their main features, how they have developed over time, and the role of the party system. The second section discusses how these debates are used in political communication and how candidates try to connect with voters. The third section looks at political discourse and how we study political speeches, especially the use of techniques like evasions. The fourth section focuses on pragmatic aspects and rhetorical strategies that make political messages stronger. The final section presents previous studies that are related to this research.

1. Presidential Debates in the U.S Political System

1.1. Definition of Debate

A debate is a formal discussion in which people share and defend different opinions on a specific topic. It usually follows clear rules and aims to convince the audience or reach a decision through reasoning and argument. Drury et al. (2017) define debate as “the exchange of arguments on a topic,” meaning that it is a structured process of presenting ideas and trying to persuade others. This organization ensures that the discussion remains fair, clear, and effective. In most debates, arguments are arranged logically and supported by evidence to make them stronger and more understandable. However, debates can take different forms depending on their goals and contexts. General debates are often used in academic, political, or public settings to present and defend opinions in an organized way. In contrast, presidential debates are more direct and dynamic, where candidates strongly express their positions and interact with each other and the audience (Lyu, 2021).

1.2. Characteristics of U.S. Presidential Debates

The U.S. presidential debate is a formal and highly organized political event that is quite different from general or informal debates. Unlike informal debates, which often lack clear rules and structure, presidential debates follow specific regulations, have limited speaking times, and mainly focus on discussing policy issues (Cohen, 2014). They provide an essential platform for candidates to present their ideas, question their opponents, and persuade voters across the nation. As part of the political campaign process, these debates aim to convince citizens to support the candidate they believe is most suitable to lead the country (Felsen, 2024).

One of the main features that distinguish U.S. presidential debates is the presence of a moderator. According to Cohen (1997), these debates usually follow a similar format from one election to another, even though some small changes may occur. The moderator asks questions to the candidates, and each candidate responds both to the question and to their opponent's comments. This structure allows direct interaction between the candidates, which is a central part of the debate. Moderators also play a vital role in managing speaking time, avoiding constant interruptions, and ensuring a fair and balanced discussion. Moreover, they help keep the debate organized and focused by reminding candidates to stay on topic when they avoid questions or use persuasive techniques.

1.3. The U.S Party System and its Influence on presidential Debates

The Presidential elections in US are an important platform where candidates express both their values and their perspectives on specific issue. It involves two major political parties the Democratic party and Republican party, these two which have different traditions ,political attitude and values are important institutions in the country's political history.

Each of these parties with different ideas on how the country be should be run. The Democratic Party is generally liberal; it supports social equality, environmental protection, and government involvement in economic issues (Dwyre & Kolodny, 2014). In contrast, the Republican Party is conservative. It supports traditional values and believes the government should not be too involved in the economy. Democrats, on the other hand, prefer a bigger role for the government in helping with economic issues. The Democratic Party is the oldest political party in the United States. It was created in the early 1800s (Franklin & Baun, 2020).

Party ideas are very important because they help shape political debates and how parties make decisions. According to Downs' theory (1957), in a two-party system like in the U.S., parties like the Democrats and Republicans try to attract voters in the middle while also keeping their main supporters. This way of working decides which topics are most talked about in debates and how they are explained. For example, important issues like healthcare, taxes, and social policies are often discussed based on these party ideas, which make complicated topics easier to understand.

Political parties are very important in choosing who will run in elections (Aldrich, 1995; Katz & Mair, 1995). They select people to be candidates and represent the party. Parties use different ways to do this. Some ways are not very open, and others are more democratic (Scarrow, 2005). There are three main reasons why parties use primary elections. First, primaries help stop fights inside the party. Second, they help parties choose better candidates. Third, primaries make party members work harder and compete fairly.

1.4 Historical Evolutions of U.S. Presidential Debates

The traditions of political debates in the U.S. began with Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. These were not presidential debates, but were long, formal discussions between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas during their race for the U.S. Senate. Each debate

lasted three hours. One candidate spoke first for an hour, the second candidate then responded for an hour and a half, and finally the first candidate gave a half-hour reply (Zarefsky, 1990, p. 165). But when they faced each other in the 1860 presidential elections, no debates occurred. Presidential debates did not become a key part of elections until a century later. The first presidential debates shown on television were in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. These debates are considered a key moment in U.S. political history because they showed how important a candidate's image on TV could be (Kraus, 2000; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988). Since many people believed that Nixon did not perform well and that this hurt his chances of winning, and because of concerns about equal-time rules in the media, there were no presidential debates in 1964 or 1968. Since the form of debates has changed, in the past candidates spoke formally while standing behind podium. In 1992, the town hall format was introduced where candidates answered questions from regular people in the audience. In 2020, virtual debates were used due to COVID-19, showing how debates adapt to new situations. Today, presidential debates are a major event where candidates try to connect with voters through both their policies and personalities.

2. The Role of Presidential Debates in Political Communications

Presidential debates play an important role in political communication by shaping public opinion and influencing voters' perceptions. They provide candidates an opportunity to present their ideas, policies, and challenge their opponents on a national stage. As some previous studies have suggested that presidential debates positively influence how the public perceives candidates and key political issues (Cohen, 2014). Other studies show that debates can directly shape how people see a candidate's personality, ideas, and overall performance (Holbrook, 1999). In simple terms, voters watch how candidates deal with pressure, how confident they seem, and how well they respond to their opponents. Sometimes, this can strongly affect how people decide to vote.

The way the media shows presidential debates influences how people view and judge the candidates. According to Entman (2007), media framing means choosing certain parts of political events to focus on, which shapes how the audience understands and reacts to them. This means that media coverage of debates often highlights things like the candidates' confidence, body language, or memorable moments. As a result, people may pay less attention to important policy issues. Similarly, McKinney and Carlin (2004) explain that the media often pays more attention to how candidates act during debates such as how they speak or move than to what they actually say. This means that the way the media shows the debate can make some moments seem more important and can influence who people think won, based more on style than on real ideas.

3. Political Discourse

Political discourse is the study of how language is used in political situations, like speeches, debates, and other political talks. According to van Dijk (1997), the way people use language can change depending on the political and historical background. This means we should not only focus on what politicians say, but also look at the social and historical context, because political language is influenced by these factors (van Dijk, 1997). Political discourse is a way of using language to influence public discussions and national debates. Its main goal is to persuade people. According to Chilton (2004), the meaning of a message is very important because political leaders choose their words carefully to support their ideas, defend their policies, and criticize their opponents. Political discourse is also a tool of power. It helps shape society, affects election results, and helps leaders keep their position.

3.1. Discourse Analysis

Discourse refers to the way people use language to express ideas and shape others' understanding. It enables individuals to communicate about their surroundings, relationships, and emotions. As stated by Gee (2014), discourse is not limited to spoken or written words; it

also involves social interactions and the context in which communication occurs. The concept of discourse analysis was first introduced by Harris (1952) and later developed into a major field of study during the 1970s. Rather than focusing only on grammar or individual sentences, discourse analysis examines how language is used in real-life situations. It also considers non-linguistic factors such as cultural and social contexts. According to Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates (2001), discourse analysis helps researchers understand how people construct and share meaning by studying the ways they speak or write, the vocabulary and expressions they choose, and how they attempt to make their communication effective or convincing.

3.2. Discoursal Devices in Political Discourse

Discoursal devices are useful tools in communication, especially in political speeches. They help speakers make their arguments stronger and affect how the public understands their messages. One common device is using negative words to make opponents look weaker. For example, Charteris-Black (2014) explains that politicians often use negative language as part of their strategies to influence people's feelings. This kind of language can make the audience feel worried or angry, which helps shape their opinions. In addition to spoken and written strategies, images and texts like memes also play a big role in political communication. Shifman (2014) explains that memes use pictures and words together to send messages that can criticize or support politicians. This shows how important social media has become in shaping people's political opinions and influencing public views today. Also, repetition plays a big role in political speech. Tannen (1989) explains that repetition is not just about saying the same words again, but also repeating sounds and ideas to create rhythm and make the message stronger. Repeating things helps speakers make their points clearer and keep the audience's attention. Politicians don't only use negative words, memes, and repetition to

convince people. They also use evasions to avoid hard questions, escape criticism, and control what people think.

3.3. Evasion Strategies

In media interviews and election debates, when politicians are asked a difficult question that might damage their public image, they often use evasion to avoid giving a direct answer. This means they speak in a vague or unclear way to escape the question and protect themselves. According to Bull (2020), evasion happens when a speaker does not fully follow the rules of effective communication and instead gives an answer that avoids the main point. Clayman (2001) explains that politicians often use this strategy when they do not want to give specific information or when the question makes them feel uncomfortable. A common way they do this is by avoiding the question, talking about something else, or giving a general answer instead of a clear one. Harris (2001) adds that this way of speaking helps the politician stay calm and look confident, even if they do not really answer the question. So, evasion becomes a helpful way for politicians to control the conversation and influence how the audience sees them.

While there are various possible ways to classify evasive strategies study focuses on two of the most frequently adopted types in the data: Topic Management (Clayman, 2001) and Information Control (Bull, 2020).

3.1.1 Topic Management

This category includes strategies where the speaker shifts the topic away from the original question, often to steer the discussion toward a more favorable or safer subject. Rather than directly addressing the issue raised, the politician reframes the conversation, often by invoking unrelated past events, highlighting personal achievements, or attacking the premise of the question.

Topic Shift: Changing the subject altogether.

Deflection to Past Behavior: Avoiding the present issue by referencing the opponent's past actions.

Redirection to Strengths: Replacing a critical question with a list of accomplishments.

Attacking the Question: Undermining or ridiculing the question itself.

As noted by Clayman (2001), such moves allow the speaker to **preserve control** of the conversation while avoiding potentially damaging admissions or details.

3.1.2 Information Control

This category focuses on how politicians manage and manipulate the amount and clarity of information they share with their audience. Rather than completely changing the topic, the speaker stays within the same subject area but provides vague, partial, or evasive responses. Such strategies allow politicians to appear cooperative and responsive while actually concealing important details or avoiding direct answers.

One common strategy under information control is **vagueness or generalization**. This occurs when a speaker uses broad and abstract language instead of giving specific details. For example, a politician might say “we are doing our best to improve the economy” without explaining what specific actions are being taken. This vagueness helps the speaker sound positive and confident while hiding precise information.

Another method is giving an **incomplete or partial answer**. In this case, the politician provides some information but deliberately leaves out essential parts. This approach allows them to seem as though they have addressed the question, even though the most important details remain unstated. For instance, a candidate might discuss the importance of healthcare reform but avoid mentioning how it will be funded.

A third strategy is **refusal to answer**, which involves directly avoiding a question or rejecting the need to respond. Politicians may do this by saying things like “we don’t need to discuss that right now” or by ignoring a yes-or-no question entirely. This method helps them maintain control over the conversation and avoid potentially damaging admissions.

Finally, **moral reframing** is another subtle form of information control. Instead of answering the question directly, the speaker redirects the discussion toward moral or emotional values. For example, when asked about a controversial policy, a politician might shift the focus to themes like fairness, family, or national pride. This technique appeals to the audience’s emotions and ethics while deflecting attention from the original issue.

4. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is an important branch of linguistics that deals with how language is used in real communication. It focuses on how meaning depends not only on the words used but also on the situation in which they are said. In other words, pragmatics studies how people understand and produce language in different contexts. For example, the same sentence can mean different things depending on who says it, when, and how (Yule, 1996). One key point in pragmatics is that people use language to do things in real life, like giving information, convincing others, or telling someone what to do. It studies how speakers try to make others think, feel, or act in a certain way through their words (Thomas, 1995, P. 22). Pragmatics looks at how different factors, like the relationship between speakers, their background knowledge, goals, and the situation, affect how we understand language. These things help us understand language better in different situations (Cutting, 2002, p. 3). In discourse, pragmatics is not only about the words that are clearly said, but also about what is suggested or not said at all. As Grundy (2008, p. 5) explains, we often need to look deeper than the words to understand what the speaker really wants to say. This is especially important in

political debates, where candidates often do not give clear answers and use indirect language to try to persuade or influence the audience.

4.1. Pragmatic Devices in Political Discourse

Pragmatic devices are language tools that help speakers express their ideas clearly, control how conversations go, and reach their communication goals in a specific situation (Thomas, 1995). In political discourse, these tools are important because they help persuade people, shape political ideas, and arrange arguments clearly (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). For example, Some common pragmatic devices include deixis words like “we” or “they” that help connect people or show differences between groups (Cutting, 2002). Also, Metaphors help people understand political issues better and affect their feelings by connecting political events to things they know from daily life (Semino, 2008). Moreover, rhetorical strategies are very important because they help politicians convince people, highlight key points, and sometimes avoid answering questions directly (Fowler, 1996).

4.1.1. Rhetorical Strategies

In political debates, rhetorical strategies play an important role in persuasion. They help candidates connect with the audience and deliver strong messages. As Aristotle explained, rhetoric is the ability to find the best way to persuade in any situation, which means it is a powerful tool to influence how people think and make decisions (Aristotle, trans. 2007). In politics, candidates use rhetorical techniques to create strong arguments and gain the public’s trust. One important strategy is *ethos*, which means showing credibility. It helps the speaker appear trustworthy and reliable to the audience (Jamieson & Campbell, 2001). Politicians also use framing and emotional appeals to influence how people see and understand issues. They often do this by sharing personal stories or using techniques like repetition and rhetorical questions (Charteris-Black, 2011). Many studies on political debates

have shown that candidates use *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (logic) to make their arguments more convincing (Johannesen, Valde, & Whedbee, 2008).

5. Previous Works

Many studies have examined different aspects of presidential debates, focusing either on strategic evasions or rhetorical techniques. For example, Johnson (2018) explored how candidates use evasive language to avoid direct answers and manage sensitive topics during debates. Also, Clementson (2016) studied U.S. presidential debates from 1996 to 2012 and found that candidates often used unclear or tricky language to avoid giving direct answers. Similarly, Yousofi and Najafi (2024) studied how Iranian presidential candidates avoid answering questions directly by ignoring them or giving vague responses. On the other hand, some studies focus on persuasive techniques, examining how candidates use language to convince and influence voters during political debates. For example, Morris and Johnson (2011) used a pragma-dialectic approach to study how candidates in the 2008 U.S. presidential debates used different rhetorical strategies to support their arguments. While their research helps us understand how candidates try to persuade voters, it usually does not look at how strategic evasions and rhetorical techniques work together. Our study aims to fill this gap by combining both views. We examine the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, focusing on how strategic evasions and rhetorical techniques are used together within a pragmatic approach. This combined method helps us better understand how candidates use language to handle difficult political topics and influence how people see them and make voting decisions.

Conclusion

this chapter reviewed the main studies about U.S. presidential debates and their importance in American politics. It explained what a debate is and described its key features, including how the party system affects it. The chapter also looked at the history of presidential debates to show how they became an important part of political communication. In addition, it discussed how politicians use language strategically in debates, focusing on tactics like evasion that influence public opinion and how voters see the candidates.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to explore the use of strategic evasion and rhetorical strategies in the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. It aims to examine how language was used not only to express political positions but also to avoid direct answers and influence public opinion. The chapter is divided into five main sections. It begins by presenting the research method adopted in this study. It then introduces the selected debate and explains the reasons for its choice. The third section provides brief background information about the two candidates. The fourth section discusses the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter describes the analytical frameworks applied to interpret the data, which include Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology of evasive strategies, and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos.

2.1. Research Method

The qualitative approach is the research method used in this study. It is a method that usually involves data presented as words rather than numbers (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 7). This is different from quantitative research, which focuses on statistical analysis. Qualitative research collects data in the form of words, narratives, or visual materials. It aims to deeply understand social phenomena in everyday life, focusing on why things happen rather than just what happens (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10). In this study, the qualitative approach is used to examine how the candidates strategically use evasions and persuasive tactics in the final 2024 presidential debate. By analyzing the debate using a corpus-based method, the study aims to uncover how strategic evasions and rhetorical techniques are used.

2.2. Description of the Corpus and Rationale

The corpus of this study is the full recorded video and the official transcript of the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. The debate took place in Philadelphia and was broadcasted by ABC News on September 11, 2024. It was moderated by David Muir and Linsey Davis. The debate got a lot of attention and was watched more than 14 million times on YouTube channel and received 166,000 likes and 85774 comments online, reflecting the high level of public attention. The debate began at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) and lasted for more than one hour. During that time, both candidates talked about important issues and policies for the 2024 election. The video of the debate can be accessed through the following link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgsC_aBquUE

The video is accompanied by a transcript, available on the ABC News website <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/harris-trump-presidential-debate-transcript/story?id=113560542>, which provides a clear written version of the debate, helping us to analyze how the candidates use language, build arguments, and persuade the audience. The 2024 final presidential debate in the US election was selected as the case study for this research due to its importance in shaping the public opinion before the election. Since it is the last debate, both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump did their best to persuade voters, defend their position, and respond to challenges. So this debate is a good example to show how politicians speak in a way that helps them win support while avoiding a direct answer. The debate has received 14,376,516 views, which means the candidates' words can have an impact in many voters, not only in the US but it has a big impact around the world and shaping their opinions about American politics and the candidates.

2.3. Biographies

2.3.1 Donald Trump

Donald John Trump was born on June 14 ,1946, in Queens, New York City and graduated from The Wharton school of the university of Pennsylvania, where he was an economics student. He is a very successful businessman, Media personality and a politician, a dominant figure in the Republican Party.

Donald John trump, become the 45th President of The United States in 2016, thanks to his hard working and media presence he become famous public figure. Trump's success was rooted in nationalism and populism je prioritizes national interests and resisted external threats such as :immigration. Donal Trump has authored many books :Gripped America :How to Make America Great Again (2015), which made him a powerful and well known politician figure in The United Stated .

2.3.2 Kamala Harris

Kamala Harris is a woman of law. She is the middle-class daughter of an Indian mother and a Jamaican economics professor. She was born in october 20,1964. She was raised in Berkeley, California, and Montreal, Canada. She is married to lawyer Douglas Emhoff, and she is a member of the Democratic Party. In 2003, she was elected as the District Attorney of San Francisco, where she followed a strict approach to crime. In 2020, Joe Biden chose her to be his vice-presidential running mate. This made her the first woman of color to be on a major political party's ticket (Friedman, 2020). Her policies mainly focused on dealing strictly with serious crimes, especially violent ones. However, she also supported reforms to make the justice system fairer. In 2010, she became the first woman and the first African American to be elected as California's Attorney General. Later, in 2016, she was elected to the U.S. Senate, making her the first African American woman to serve in that role.

2.4. Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as: “an approach of empirical, methodological, controlled analysis of text within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step-by-step modal, without rush qualification”. (Mayring, 2000, P.2). She explains qualitative content analysis as a clear and organized way to study text within their communication context. It follows specific steps and rules to make sure the analysis is accurate and reliable. Instead of just counting words or numbers, This method focuses on understanding the deeper meaning of the text. The process is careful and structured, ensuring that the results are based on real data without being rushed or overly simplified.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), “Current applications of content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative” (Hsieh & Shannon, p. 1277). These three approaches are known as the conventional, directed, and summative methods of content analysis. In the conventional approach, categories and patterns are not decided in advance. Instead, they appear naturally from the data without using any previous theories or research. The directed approach is different because it begins with theories or ideas that already exist. These theories help the researcher know what to look for in the data. This approach is helpful when the goal is to test or develop a theory. Even though it uses existing ideas, it still allows the researcher to find new and unexpected results (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Finally, the summative approach starts by counting certain words or phrases in the data. After that, the researcher looks at how these words are used and what they mean in their context (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

This study follows directed content analysis as it is guided by established theories but still allows for new findings. It applies Grice's maxims and Aristotle's appeals to examine how strategic evasions and rhetorical maneuvers are used in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

2.5.1. Rhetorical Appeals

The first fundamental theory used in this research is concerned with the rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, logos, which are the rhetorical proofs introduced by Aristotle to illustrate how rhetorical occurs.

Aristotle defines rhetoric in *The Art of Rhetoric* as the ability to identify the available means of persuasion in any given situation (Kennedy, 2007). Aristotle sees rhetoric as the art of persuasion. In *The Art of Rhetoric*, he explained that rhetoric is not just about speaking well but about finding the best way to convince an audience based on the situation. His definition suggests that rhetoric is a flexible tool, it can be used in any subject or discussion to persuade people.

2.5.1.1. Ethos

The first persuasive appeal is based on trust and credibility. People believe a speaker if they see them as honest, knowledgeable, and experienced in the topic. According to Herrick (2017), ethos is the audience's perception of the speaker's credibility and authority over the subject s/he is speaking. Meaning that credibility comes from the speaker's background, the way they communicate, and how they support their ideas. A speaker who appears confident, provides strong evidence, and demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic will earn the audience's trust and make their message more persuasive.

For example, a political leader can build *ethos* by talking about their years of work, education, or achievements. This helps them look experienced and capable. In the same way,

when a doctor or health expert gives advice during a health crisis, people usually believe them because they know the person is trained and speaks with calm and confidence. In both cases, *ethos* makes the speaker seem honest and trustworthy, so the audience is more likely to believe what they say.

2.5.1.2. Pathos

Pathos is a way of persuading people by appealing to their emotions. It happens when a speaker uses language, stories, or tone in a way that makes the audience feel something like sympathy, anger, joy, or fear. According to Aristotle (as cited in Kennedy, 2007), pathos is the means of persuasion that works by appealing to the emotions of the audience .in other words pathos is a way to persuade people by making them feel emotions. A speaker can make their message stronger by making the audience feel happy, sad, angry, or scared. When people feel strong emotions, they pay more attention and are more likely to agree with the speaker. This can be done by using emotional words, personal stories, or powerful images to create a connection with the audience and make the speech more convincing.

For example, a politician may talk about poor families or children who need help to make people feel sad and care about social problems. In the same way, someone who talks about the environment might show pictures of dirty rivers or burning forests to make people feel worried and want to protect nature. These emotional examples help the speaker touch the audience's feelings and make the speech more interesting and convincing.

2.5.1.3. Logos

According to Aristotle (as cited in Herrick, 2017), logos is persuading by the use of reasoning which includes critical thinking, analytical skill, good memory, and purposeful behavior, which is the most important part of argumentation. This refers to the ability to build strong arguments using logic and evidence. *Logos* focuses on presenting ideas clearly and

supporting them with facts, making it easier for people to understand and agree with the argument. It encourages critical thinking and helps guide the audience to a logical conclusion. Unlike emotional appeals (*pathos*) or trustworthiness (*ethos*), *logos* is all about using reason to persuade. It's considered the most important part of argumentation because it allows the speaker or writer to appeal to the audience's rational side and making the argument more convincing.

For example, a politician may use statistics about unemployment or education to show that their plan will help people find more jobs or improve schools. In the same way, a scientist may present research results or data to prove that climate change is real. These examples show how *logos* helps speakers convince people by using reason, proof, and clear information.

2.5.2. Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (Four Maxims)

The second fundamental theory used in this research is concerned with Cooperative principles and maxims of conversation which are two essential concepts in pragmatics introduced by H.P. Grice to facilitate effective communication. Grice introduced this theory to explain that good communication happens when people share the same understanding and work together in conversation. He identified four maxims that explain how speakers can make their messages clear and meaningful. These are: Quantity (give enough information, but not too much), Quality (say only what you believe is true), Relation (say things that are relevant), and Manner (be clear and avoid confusion). These maxims help the listener understand both the words and the speaker's intended meaning. Many scholars have continued to study Grice's work and agree that his ideas are very important in the field of pragmatics (Yule, 1996).

2.5.2.1. The maxims of Quantity (Content Length and Depth)

The maxims of quantity, one of Grice's four conversational maxims, focuses on providing the right amount of information in communication. In simple terms, the maxim of quantity is to be informative (Cutting, 2002, P. 35). Meaning to give the right amount of information when you speak. You should say enough for the listener to understand, but not too much that it becomes unnecessary or confusing. As Grice (1975) explains, when people talk, they should give enough information not too little and not too much. For example, if someone is helping to fix a car and the person needs four screws, they should give exactly four not less and not more. This shows how the maxim of quantity works in real-life situations, by giving just the right amount of information.

In this study, the Maxim of Quantity is used to identify when the candidates in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate give enough information or when they give too little or too much. When a candidate avoids a question, gives vague answers, or adds unnecessary details, it means they are flouting this maxim. This helps show how politicians use language to hide information or control what the audience understands.

2.5.2.2. The Maxim of Quality: (truth)

The Maxim of Quality means that people should tell the truth and give information that is supported by evidence during communication. If this maxim is not followed, people may misunderstand each other, share wrong information, or even lie. The speaker should say only what they believe is true and give enough proof, without exaggerating, to make communication clear and effective. Grice explains this maxim with an example: if someone is helping him make a cake and he asks for sugar, he expects real sugar not salt. And if he asks for a spoon, he expects a normal one not a fake rubber spoon (Grice, 1989, P. 27; Cutting, 2002, P. 34).

In this study, the Maxim of Quality is used to see when the candidates in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate tell the truth or give false or exaggerated information. If a candidate says something without proof or gives wrong information, it means they break this maxim. This helps to show how they use false or unclear ideas to influence the audience or protect their reputation.

2.5.2.3. The Maxim of Relation(Relevance)

Grice gives an example to explain this maxim, saying that what the speaker says should be related to the topic and fit the situation at each point in the conversation (Grice, 1989, P. 27; Cutting, 2002, P. 34). Relevance is a principle in communication that suggests speakers should provide information that is directly connected to the topic of conversation. It helps make sure that what is said makes sense in the situation, stays on topic, and avoids extra or off-topic details. This maxim helps people communicate better by keeping the conversation clear and focused

In this study, the Maxim of Relation is used to see when the candidates in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate stay on topic or move away from it. When a candidate changes the subject or avoids answering a question, it means they are breaking this maxim. Studying this helps to understand how they use topic shifts to escape difficult questions or to guide the discussion in their favor.

2.5.2.4. The Maxim of Manner (Clarity)

In simple terms, the maxim of manner is to be clear. While the other maxims focus on the content of what is said, the maxim of manner deals with the way it is said. According to Grice (1975), the maxim of manner is about speaking in a clear and well-structured way so that the message is easy to understand. While the other maxims focus on the meaning of what is said, this one is more about how the message is expressed. It involves avoiding confusing language, long or complicated sentences, and unclear expressions.

In this study, the Maxim of Manner is used to find out when the candidates in the 2024 U.S. presidential debate speak in a clear way or when they make their answers unclear on purpose. If a candidate uses words that are not clear, speaks in a confusing way, or does not answer directly, it means they break this maxim. Studying this helps to understand how politicians use unclear language to hide the truth or to escape difficult questions.

In order to reveal the strategies of evasion through which the Gricean maxims are flouted, this study draws on **Clayton and Bull's (2006) Typology of Evasive Strategies (see 3.1)** in political interviews. Their framework provides a systematic account of how politicians avoid direct answers, including techniques such as ignoring the question, deflecting, or attacking the interviewer.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter explained how the study is designed. It described the research method, which is the qualitative approach, and presented the corpus, the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate. It also gave reasons for choosing this debate and some background about the two candidates. In addition, it explained how the data were collected and analyzed. Finally, it introduced the theoretical framework based on Aristotle's rhetorical appeals and Grice's Cooperative Principles. This framework will help in the next chapter to understand how the candidates use language to persuade, avoid questions, and create a good image of themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTING THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the analysis of the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, based on Grice's Cooperative Principle (which includes the four conversational maxims), Clayton and Bull's (2006) Typology of Evasive Strategies, and Aristotle's three persuasive appeals. These frameworks helped explain how the two candidates tried to convince the audience and manage what they said during the debate. This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part presents the results of the analysis based on Grice's maxims and the types of strategic evasion used by the candidates. The second part focuses on how the candidates used the persuasive appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, to influence the audience. The findings of the study are analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).

1. Results of the Pragmatic Analysis of the Final U.S Presidential Debate

1.1. Presentation of the Observance and Violation of Grice's Maxims in the 2024 Final U.S. Presidential Debate

This part is devoted to the presentation of the findings obtained from the analysis of the candidates' answers in the 2024 Final U.S. Presidential Debate, based on Grice's Cooperative Principle. It shows how the four maxims, Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, were either respected or violated by the speakers. In order to highlight the strategies used to flout the maxims, the analysis also draws on Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology of evasive strategies (see 3.1) in political interviews. Their framework provides a systematic account of how politicians avoid direct answers.

1.1.1 Maxim of Relation (Relevance)

In the final 2024 presidential debate, both candidates sometimes gave answers that were not directly related to the questions, indicating a consistent flouting of the Maxim of Relevance. These instances also reveal the use of strategic evasion techniques, such as topic

shifting, redirection, or refusal to answer, which are analysed in light of the typology adopted in this study. The following examples illustrate how these violations and strategies occurred.

For more

instances of flouting the Maxim of Relevance, see **Appendix 2**.

<i>EX</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Type of evasion</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1	Kamala harris	“Are you better off than you were four years ago?”	“So, I was raised as a middle-class kid.”	Redirection to Strengths	She avoids answering the economic question and instead talks about her personal background, which is irrelevant to the topic.
2	Donald Trump	“Do you believe Americans are better off than four years ago?”	“We have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails...”	Topic Shift	He changes the subject from the economy to immigration, breaking the Maxim of Relevance.
3	Kamala Harris	“Please respond on the economy.”	“What you’re going to hear tonight is a detailed and dangerous plan called Project 2025...”	Topic Shift	She ignores the economic topic and talks about Project 2025 instead.
4	Donald Trump	“How would you respond on the economy?”	“I went to the Wharton School of Finance...”	Redirection to Strengths	He focuses on his education to boost credibility instead of answering the question.
5	Kamala Harris	“Why did the administration act late on immigration?”	“I’m the only person on this stage who has prosecuted transnational criminal organizations...”	Redirection to Strengths	She talks about her achievements instead of addressing the policy question.
6	Donald Trump	“Do you regret what you did on that day?”	“What about all the people pouring into our country and killing people?”	Deflection to Past Behaviour	He avoids self-reflection and shifts blame to Harris and immigration issues.

7	Donald Trump	“How would you negotiate with Netanyahu and Hamas?”	“If I were president, Russia would have never gone into Ukraine...”	Topic Shift	He changes the topic from Gaza to Ukraine, breaking the rule of relevance.
8	Kamala harris	“Why have your policy positions changed?”	“I grew up a middle-class kid raised by a hard-working mother...”	Redirection to Strengths	She avoids answering and uses a personal story instead of addressing the policy issue.

1.1.2 Maxim of Quantity

The analysis of the debate revealed that both candidates at times failed to provide enough information or gave incomplete responses, suggesting a clear flouting of the Maxim of Quantity. This conversational maxim requires speakers to be as informative as necessary for the purposes of the exchange. However, many of the candidates’ answers were either too general, or omitted key details. These instances reflect the use of strategic evasion techniques which are analysed through the typology adopted in this study.

<i>EX</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Type of evasion</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1	Donald Trump	“Do you believe Americans can afford higher prices because of tariffs?”	“They aren’t gonna have higher prices... China will.”	Vagueness/Generalisation	He gives a short and unclear answer without explaining how Americans won’t pay more.
2	Kamala harris	“Are Americans better off than four years ago?”	“I am the only person on this stage who has a plan about lifting up the middle class...”	Vagueness/Generalisation	She avoids giving evidence or examples; her answer lacks details.
3	Donald Trump	“Would you veto a national abortion ban?”	“I didn’t discuss it with JD... We don’t have to discuss it.”	Refusal to Answer	He avoids giving a yes-or-no answer.

4	Donald Trump	“There are no credible reports of immigrants harming pets.”	“Well, I’ve seen people on television.”	Vagueness/Generalisation	He gives a vague and unsupported response.
5	Kamala harris	“Why have your policy positions changed?”	“Let’s talk about fracking because we’re here in Pennsylvania.”	Partial Answer	She focuses only on one example and avoids the full question.
6	Donald trump	“Do you regret what you did on that day?”	“I had nothing to do with that... If Nancy Pelosi did her job...”	Refusal to Answer / Moral Reframing	He avoids giving a direct yes-or-no answer and blames others.
7	Donald trump	“Do you want Ukraine to win the war?”	“I want the war to stop... people are being killed.”	Refusal to Answer / Moral Reframing	He avoids giving his opinion and speaks generally about peace.

1.1.3 Maxim of Quality

The analysis of the debate showed that both candidates sometimes said things that were not fully true or were hard to prove. This suggests they flouted the Maxim of Quality. This maxim says that speakers should be honest and only say what they believe is true. If they say something false or give no evidence for their claims, they are breaking this rule. Some of their answers included exaggerations or unproven statements. These cases are linked to strategic evasion techniques and are examined using the typology followed in this study.

<i>EX</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Type of Evasion</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1	Donald trump	“Are Americans better off than four years ago?”	“We were at 21%. Many things are 50–80% higher.”	Exaggeration	He gives false or exaggerated numbers without evidence.
2	Donald trump	“Can Americans	“China was paying us hundreds of	Exaggeration	He makes an untrue claim to make his policy look better.

		afford higher prices because of tariffs?”	billions of dollars.”		
3	Kamala harris	“Response to President Trump on abortion.”	“Project 2025 would monitor your pregnancies and miscarriages.”	Moral Reframing / Overstatement	She uses emotional exaggeration without evidence to warn against Trump’s policies.
4	Donald trump	“60 cases were dismissed by judges.”	“No judge looked at it.”	Denial / Minimisation	He denies the facts about court rulings to defend his position.

1.1.4 Maxim of Manner

The analysis of the debate also showed that both candidates sometimes broke the Maxim of Manner. This conversational rule requires speakers to be clear, orderly, and avoid being vague or confusing. However, in several cases, their answers were either unclear, overly complicated, or included vague and ambiguous expressions. These unclear responses made it harder for the audience to fully understand their positions. Such instances reflect the use of strategic evasion techniques, which are examined using the typology adopted in this study.

<i>EX</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Type of Evasion</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1	Donald trump	“What about your link to Project 2025?”	“I have nothing to do with it... some good, some bad... makes no difference.”	Vagueness / Incomplete Answer	His response is unclear and repetitive, avoiding a clear position.
2	Donald trump	“About the 60 court cases dismissed...”	“We have so many facts and statistics. But you know what? That doesn’t matter.”	Vagueness / Contradiction	His response is confusing and contradictory, making the meaning unclear.
3	Kamala harris	“How would you deal with the Israel– Hamas hostages?”	“We will continue to work around the clock on that.”	Vagueness / Generalisation	She gives a general answer without specific actions.

4	Kamala harris	“How would you deal with Vladimir Putin?”	“A dictator who would eat you for lunch.”	Moral Reframing / Figurative Language	She uses a metaphor instead of a clear explanation.
5	Donald trump	“Your response about the Taliban talks.”	“The agreement said you have to do this, this, this, this.”	Vagueness / Repetition	His vague repetition avoids giving any real information.
6	Kamala harris	“What is your current plan for healthcare?”	“You don’t like him; you said at the time because he got caught.”	Topic Shift / Ambiguity	Her response is disorganized and unclear, avoiding the main question.

2.2. Presentation of the Rhetorical Strategies Based on Aristotelian Appeal in the 2024 Final U.S. Presidential Debate

2.2.1. Ethos

Ethos refers to the way speakers try to show they are trustworthy, reliable, and have the right experience to speak on certain topics. In the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both candidates used different techniques to build their credibility and gain the audience’s trust. These techniques include sharing personal stories, referring to achievements, making promises, or quoting respected people. The examples presented below are representative instances from the debate. The remaining relevant extracts appear in **Appendix 3**.

EX	Speakeer	Extract / Quote	Explanation / Function
1	Donald trump	“I created one of the greatest economies in the history of our country.”	Highlights past achievements to strengthen his image as a capable economic leader.
2	Donald trump	“What I did is something for 52 years they've been trying to get Roe v. Wade into the states.”	Shows authority by referring to historical success, reinforcing competence and trustworthiness.
3	Kamala harris	“And I pledge to you when Congress passes a bill to put back in place the protections of Roe v. Wade as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law.”	Builds ethos through a clear pledge, showing commitment and moral integrity.

4	Kamala harris	“So I'm the only person on this stage who has prosecuted transnational criminal organizations for the trafficking of guns, drugs, and human beings.”	Uses professional experience to prove credibility and expertise.
5	Donald trump	“So when somebody does a bad job I fire them. And you take a guy like Esper.”	Emphasizes decisiveness and leadership strength.
6	Kamala harris	“I grew up a middle-class kid raised by a hard-working mother...”	Builds trust by showing humility and connection with ordinary people.
7	Kamala harris	“I was at the Capitol on January 6th. I was the Vice President-Elect. I was also an acting senator. I was there.”	Uses repetition and testimony to reinforce credibility and first-hand experience.
8	Donald trump	“Laura Ingraham, Sean Hannity, Jesse... all of these people, they covered it.”	Gains credibility by aligning with well-known media figures.
9	Donald trump	“I got almost 75 million votes. The most votes any sitting president has ever gotten.”	Uses numbers and past support to emphasize popularity and legitimacy.
10	Donald trump	“Viktor Orban, one of the most respected men... He said the most respected, most feared person is Donald Trump.”	Builds ethos through external praise from a respected international figure.
11	Donald trump	“I know Putin very well. He would have never ... and there was no threat of it either, by the way, for four years.”	Presents personal relationships with global leaders as proof of experience.
12	Donald trump	“I know Zelenskyy very well and I know Putin very well. I have a good relationship. And they respect your president. Okay? They respect me. They don't respect Biden.”	Contrasts himself with opponent to emphasize credibility and diplomatic respect.
13	Kamala harris	“Four presidents said they would, and Joe Biden did.”	Builds ethos through comparison showing effective leadership and action.
14	Kamala harris	“I travel our country, we see in each other a friend. We see in each other a neighbor.”	Uses inclusive and empathetic language to build credibility as a compassionate leader.
15	Donald trump	“I had a choice to make when I was president, do I save it and make it as good as it can be?... And I saved it. I	Uses repetition and moral conviction to show decisiveness and integrity.

		did the right thing.”	
16	Kamala harris	“I was a senator at the time ... since I have been vice president ...”	Highlights political experience and continuity to reinforce competence.
17	Kamala Harris / Donald Trump	Harris: “The reality is, it has been about standing as America always should, as a leader upholding international rules.” Trump: “Secretary General Stoltenberg said Trump did the most amazing thing I've ever seen.”	Both appeal to ethos: Harris aligns with American leadership values; Trump uses testimony from NATO leader.

2.2.2. Pathos

Pathos refers to the emotional appeal used by speakers to influence the audience’s feelings and reactions. During the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both candidates made use of various techniques to appeal to the audience’s emotions. The following examples demonstrate how pathos was used to shape public opinion and strengthen the candidates’ messages.

Additional extracts appear in **Appendix 3**.

<i>EX</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Extract / Quote</i>	<i>Explanation / Function</i>
1	Kamala harris	“Donald Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression... the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War.”	Uses historical comparison and exaggeration to create fear and concern.
2a	Donald trump	“...People can't go out and buy cereal bacon or eggs or anything else.”	Employs hyperbole to evoke worry and anger about economic hardship.
2b	Donald trump	“...the people of our country are absolutely dying with what they've done.”	Uses strong emotional language to intensify fear and dissatisfaction.
3	Donald trump	“She's a Marxist. Everybody knows she's a Marxist. Her father's a Marxist professor.”	Repetition and labeling create fear and distrust toward the opponent.
4	Kamala harris	“A 12 or 13-year-old survivor of incest being forced to carry a pregnancy to term?”	Appeals to sympathy and compassion through a sad and emotional example.

5	Donald trump	“You're going to end up in World War 3.”	Allusion to a catastrophic event to provoke fear and urgency.
6	Donald trump	“The 13 people whose, whose, were just killed viciously and violently killed and I got to know the parents and the family.”	Descriptive and emotional language evokes sadness and empathy.
7	Donald trump	“They've destroyed the fabric of our country.”	Metaphor suggesting national decay, appealing to fear and loss.
8	Kamala harris	“The American people are exhausted with the same old tired playbook.”	Connects emotionally with the public's frustration and fatigue.
9	Kamala harris	“My work that is related to having a friend when I was in high school who was sexually assaulted by her stepfather.”	Personal anecdote evokes sadness and compassion.
10	Donald trump	“She went out in Minnesota and wanted to let criminals that killed people, that burned down Minneapolis, she went out and raised money to get them out of jail.”	Uses vivid imagery and strong verbs to evoke anger and fear.
11	Donald trump	“Ashli Babbitt was shot by an out-of-control police officer that should have never, ever shot her. It's a disgrace.”	Expresses outrage and injustice to provoke sympathy and anger.
12	Kamala Harris	“Because it is also true far too many innocent Palestinians have been killed. Children, mothers.”	Appeals to compassion through references to innocent victims.
13	Donald trump	“She hates Israel. She wouldn't even meet with Netanyahu... She hates Israel... She hates Israel... she hates the Arab population.”	Repetition and accusation create emotional tension and hostility.
14	Donald trump	“And we have a president that we don't even know if he's -- where is our president? We don't even know if he's a president.”	Uses rhetorical question to create doubt and emotional unease.

15	Kamala harris	“If Donald Trump were president, Putin would be sitting in Kyiv right now.”	Uses vivid imagery to generate fear and urgency.
16	Donald trump	“Eventually, you know, he's got a thing that other people don't have. He's got nuclear weapons. They don't ever talk about that.”	Repetition and understatement emphasize danger and fear.
17	Kamala harris	“When I went to meet with President Zelenskyy, I've now met with him over five times.”	Repetition highlights dedication and builds emotional connection.
18	Kamala harris	“Who took out a full-page ad in The New York Times calling for the execution ...who spread birther lies about the first Black...”	Allusion to racism and injustice to evoke moral outrage and empathy.

2.2.3. Logos

Logos is the appeal to reason. It is used when speakers try to convince the audience by presenting logical arguments, facts, numbers, expert opinions, or cause-effect reasoning. In the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both candidates used logos to show that their arguments were based on reason and logic, not just emotions. They tried to make their points sound clear, practical, and believable. The following examples show how logos was used in their answers.

Additional examples are provided in **Appendix 3**.

EX	Speaker	Extract / Quote	Explanation / Function
1	Donald trump	“I got almost 75 million votes... the most votes any sitting president has ever gotten.”	Uses statistical evidence to appeal to logic and demonstrate popularity.
2	Kamala harris	“Four presidents said they would, and Joe Biden did.”	Employs logical comparison to highlight action and credibility.
3	Donald trump	“China was paying us hundreds of billions of dollars.”	Uses factual claim and cause-effect reasoning to justify economic policy.

4	Kamala harris	“America should stand as a leader upholding international rules.”	Appeals to ethical reasoning and logic of moral responsibility.
5	Donald trump	“We were energy independent, we had the lowest energy prices in history.”	Cites factual evidence to appeal to logical reasoning about success.
6	Kamala harris	“We have invested in small businesses, we have reduced child poverty.”	Provides logical evidence and specific examples to support her claim.
7	Donald trump	“We rebuilt the military, created Space Force, took care of our vets.”	Lists concrete achievements to strengthen his argument logically.
8	Kamala harris	“Our economy has grown faster than any other in the developed world.”	Uses statistics and factual data to make a logical appeal.
9	Donald trump	“We had the lowest unemployment for African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, everybody.”	Employs numerical logic and inclusivity to show tangible success.
10	Kamala harris	“The American Rescue Plan lifted millions of children out of poverty.”	Uses statistical proof to appeal to reason and demonstrate results.
11	Donald trump	“We had the strongest border in history. We built 500 miles of wall.”	Uses measurable evidence to appeal to logic and credibility.
12	Kamala harris	“Under our administration, manufacturing has come back to America.”	Logical argument linking policy action to concrete economic result
13	Donald trump	“When I was president, there was no war between Russia and Ukraine.”	Causal reasoning suggesting his leadership ensured stability.
14	Kamala harris	“We strengthened NATO, we united our allies.”	Uses logical argument of unity and cooperation to support leadership.
15	Donald trump	“We left them with a great plan in Afghanistan.”	Causal reasoning defending his policy decisions.
16	Kamala harris	“We reduced insulin costs for seniors by capping prices.”	Provides factual example to prove effective policy.
17	Donald trump	“We had the biggest tax cuts in history.”	Appeals to logic through quantifiable evidence.
18	Kamala harris	“We invested in clean energy, creating thousands of jobs.”	Uses cause-effect logic to connect environmental and economic success.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key findings derived from the analysis of the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, using two main analytical lenses: Grice's Cooperative Principle (covering the four conversational maxims) along with Clayton and Bull's (2006) Typology of Evasive Strategies, and Aristotle's three persuasive appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos). Each framework helped highlight different strategies used by the candidates to communicate, persuade, and manage meaning during the debate. The first section of the chapter addressed how the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner were respected, flouted, or violated by both candidates in their responses. Examples from the debate were carefully analysed to show how each maxim contributed to or obstructed effective communication. The second section focused on the persuasive strategies used by Trump and Harris, through an exploration of ethos, pathos, and logos. The next chapter will provide a deeper discussion and interpretation of these findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to discuss the key findings presented in the previous chapter, obtained from the pragmatic analysis of the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. The discussion is based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, particularly the observance and violation of the four conversational maxims, supported by Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology of strategic evasion. Additionally, Aristotle's persuasive appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, are used to explain how each candidate sought to influence public perception and shape their message. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section focuses on how the candidates flouted the maxims and used evasive strategies to avoid direct answers, shift blame, or redirect attention. The second section discusses how these pragmatic choices intersect with persuasive techniques. Together, these findings help answer the research questions raised in the General Introduction.

4.1. Discussion of the Observance and Violation of Grice's Maxims

This section addresses the first research question: *How do the candidates flout Grice's Maxims during the final 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate?* The analysis reveals systematic flouting of all four conversational maxims Relevance, Quantity, Quality, and Manner in ways that align with strategic political evasion.

4.1.1. The Maxim of Relevance

According to Grice (1975), the Maxim of Relevance requires speakers to make their contributions relevant to the ongoing topic of conversation. When this maxim is flouted, it often generates implicatures, meaning that the listener must infer the hidden or intended message behind the irrelevant response. In political discourse, such flouting is not random but often serves as a strategic rhetorical device to redirect attention, avoid difficult topics, or strengthen the candidate's public image.

The most frequently flouted maxim in the debate was the Maxim of Relevance. In the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both candidates used this type of flouting to maintain control of the conversational agenda, a feature that aligns with Grice's notion of cooperative deviation, where speakers appear uncooperative on the surface but pursue communicative goals strategically.

For example, when Kamala Harris was asked whether Americans were better off financially, she replied: "So, I was raised as a middle-class kid." From a pragmatic perspective, this answer violates the Maxim of Relevance because it does not directly address the economic question. However, the implicature generated here is that her background gives her a deep understanding of middle-class struggles. This connects with Aristotle's appeal to ethos, as she uses personal experience to gain credibility and empathy. Thus, her flouting of the maxim serves a persuasive rather than a communicative purpose.

Similarly, Trump's reference to studying at the Wharton School instead of detailing his economic plan is an example of Redirection to Strengths, a rhetorical strategy that aligns with face-saving theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). By emphasizing his education, Trump preserves his positive face and presents himself as competent and trustworthy. The pragmatic meaning is that his expertise speaks for itself, so no further details are necessary.

In another instance, Harris responded to a question about tariffs by recalling how Trump praised President Xi during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a Deflection to Past Behaviour, which serves a discrediting function. From a Gricean perspective, this deliberate irrelevance creates an implicature that Trump's current economic views are unreliable. Likewise, Trump's personal attack on Harris's father, calling him a Marxist, shows attacking the opponent through flouting relevance. The implicature is that Harris's political ideas are

extreme due to her background. Both cases highlight how violations of the Relevance Maxim contribute to rhetorical conflict and image management.

Overall, these violations mirror what Clayman and Heritage (2002) describe as *agenda shifting*, whereby politicians handle difficult questions by re-framing the topic. This finding confirms that flouting the Maxim of Relevance is a strategic pragmatic act used to manage interactional control and self-presentation. The results align with prior studies: Imansyah et al. (2024) found similar topic-shifting and vague responses in the Indonesian presidential debate, while Ali and Abdulmun'im (2021) observed that Relevance was the most frequently violated maxim in the Biden-Trump 2020 debate. In all these cases, flouting Grice's Maxim of Relevance is not a breakdown of cooperation but a deliberate pragmatic maneuver to achieve persuasive and rhetorical goals.

1.2. The Maxim of Quantity

The Maxim of Quantity requires speakers to provide as much information as needed, not more or less. In the 2024 debate, candidates flouted this maxim most often by offering insufficient, vague, or partial answers, revealing a strategic use of ambiguity to maintain ideological flexibility and avoid political risk.

Kamala Harris, when asked why her policies changed despite unchanged values, responded by only addressing one issue, fracking. This Partial Answer avoided addressing the broader accusation. The implicature is that addressing one issue can deflect from answering all, softening potential criticism.

Donald Trump, when asked if he would veto a national abortion ban, said: "I didn't discuss it with JD... we don't have to discuss it." This answer is vague and avoids giving important information. It flouts the Maxim of Quantity because he does not give a clear or full answer. The Refusal to Answer strategy shows he is trying to avoid problems inside his party

while keeping his position unclear. The implicature is that the topic is too sensitive to talk about openly and is better left without details.

In another example, Trump was asked if tariffs would lead to higher prices. He answered: "They aren't gonna have higher prices. What's gonna have... is China." But he did not explain how or why. This flouts the Maxim of Quantity, as he gives too little information. It shows the strategy of Vagueness/Generalisation, where he avoids clear economic details. The implicature is that other countries, not U.S. policies, are responsible for the problem.

Harris, when asked if Americans were better off economically, said: "I believe in the ambition, the aspirations, the dreams of the American people." Instead of giving numbers or clear examples, she gave a general emotional message. This flouts the Maxim of Quantity and shows the Vagueness/Generalisation strategy, where she avoids giving details while trying to sound hopeful and relatable. The implicature is that her belief in the people is enough, so she doesn't need to explain her policies.

Trump, when asked about January 6th, talked about his speech, blamed others, and gave a long description of the day. But he did not say yes or no to the question. This flouts the Maxim of Quantity and uses both Over-Explanation and Refusal to Answer strategies. The implicature is that the situation explains itself, so he does not need to give a clear answer.

Finally, Trump was challenged about his claims linking immigration to people eating pets. He answered: "I've seen people on television." This vague and unclear source flouts the Maxim of Quantity and shows the strategy of Vagueness/Generalisation. Instead of giving facts, he uses a personal story that can't be checked. The implicature is that what seems true is more important than what is proven.

Just like with Relevance, these violations of the Maxim of Quantity serve rhetorical goals. Candidates use them to show empathy, avoid sensitive topics, or blame outside forces. By flouting this maxim, they keep control of their message without needing to give full or

clear facts. These findings agree with what other studies have shown. Imansyah et al. (2024) noted similar Quantity violations in the Indonesian debates, especially via vague appeals and selective disclosure. Ali and Abdulmun'im (2021) also found that in the Biden-Trump 2020 debate, insufficient information and strategic generalisation were common, especially when candidates sought to bypass policy details or accountability. In a similar vein, Khany and Hashemian (2022) explored Iranian parliamentary discourse and found that flouting the Maxim of Quantity was the preferred strategy when questions touched on sensitive domestic issues. Likewise, Chen and Chang (2020) analyzed Taiwanese campaign discourse and found that generalities and slogans often replaced specifics to avoid alienating swing voters.

1.3. The Maxim of Quality

The Maxim of Quality requires speakers to provide information that is true and supported by evidence. In the 2024 debate, these violations were particularly notable when addressing politically sensitive or polarizing topics such as immigration, crime, and national security, issues with significant electoral impact.

Donald Trump, when asked about how effective his border wall was, said: "It's almost complete. It's fully operational." This is an Exaggeration because official reports show that many parts of the wall are still unfinished or don't work well. The implicature is to make him look successful and strong, even if the facts don't fully support that. This appeals to voters who care most about border security.

Kamala Harris, talking about how the administration handled inflation, said: "We've brought down prices across the board." This is an Overstatement because prices are still high in important areas like housing and groceries. The implicature is that her leadership has fixed the economy, supporting the Democratic message of recovery, even though some facts show a different picture.

In another moment, Trump said: "I was the most pro-environment president in history." This is a False Claim because during his time in office, many environmental rules were removed. The implicature is that he wants to make his record look good to voters who care about climate issues, even if the facts do not support it.

Harris, talking about foreign policy, said: "We've restored America's standing around the world." This is an Unfounded Generalisation because it ignores problems with some countries and ongoing criticism about military help and diplomacy. The implicature is that America's global image is strong again, while avoiding mention of the more difficult parts. Trump, when asked about white supremacist endorsements, replied: "I don't know anything about that." This Denial of Knowledge flouts the maxim by trying to distance himself from known links. The implicature is that he wants to avoid taking a clear position, so he doesn't lose support from undecided voters while still sending a message to his main supporters.

These violations of the Quality maxim show how politicians use misinformation, selective memory, and exaggeration as tools. They often flout truthfulness not just to lie, but to influence how people see them, support their political stories, and avoid talking about difficult topics. The implicatures they create, like showing strength, success, or innocence, are used to persuade voters during elections.

This aligns with several studies. Benoit and Henson (2009) found that presidential candidates frequently use exaggeration and omission to defend against attacks or promote accomplishments. Adeosun (2020), analysing Nigerian presidential rhetoric, found systematic violations of Quality when addressing corruption and security issues, topics that directly influence public trust. van Dijk (2006) also noted how ideological polarization encourages candidates to construct parallel truths, especially in U.S. presidential discourse. Similarly, Al-Faki (2014) showed that in Sudanese political interviews, factual distortions were common when the stakes involved national identity or religious policy.

1.4. The Maxim of Quality

The Maxim of Quality requires speakers to provide only what they believe to be true and to avoid giving information without evidence. In presidential debates, this maxim is flouted when candidates make unverifiable or exaggerated claims, often aiming to strengthen their rhetorical appeal or cast doubt on opponents, at the cost of factual accuracy. Fact-checking institutions like PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and the Washington Post's Fact Checker provide verification that helps assess these statements.

Kamala Harris, when asked if Americans were better off than four years ago, said: "Economists have said that Trump's sales tax would actually result for middle-class families in about \$4,000 more a year." According to BBC News (2024), one group did estimate around \$4,600, but another group gave a much lower number; between \$1,700 and \$2,500, depending on the tax. Harris picked the highest number without giving full context or showing clear evidence. This is a Misleading Use of Statistics, flouting the maxim through selective citation. The implicature is that Trump's return would badly affect middle-class families financially.

In another instance, Harris was asked about Trump's economic legacy. She said: "Donald Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression." However, BBC News (2024) shows this is not accurate. The unemployment rate in January 2021 was 6.4%, which is high but not the worst in history. This is a False Claim that makes Trump's record seem worse than it really was. The implicature is that his time in office caused a major crisis, and that voters should reject him because of it.

Harris, when talking about abortion and Project 2025, said: "There would be a national abortion monitor tracking your pregnancies, your miscarriages." But BBC News says this claim is speculative. The project suggests restrictions, but it does not mention surveillance. Trump also said he is not connected to it. This is Alarmist Framing, flouting the maxim by exaggerating to create public fear. The implicature is that people's reproductive rights are in

serious danger. Donald Trump, meanwhile, claimed: “Millions are pouring in from prisons and insane asylums.” CNN (2024) confirms that while around 14,700 immigrants had criminal records, this is far from the “millions” he claimed. This Exaggeration and False Attribution tactic stokes fear about immigration. The implicature is that a crisis exists requiring strong border policies.

In another statement, Trump said: “Under Roe v. Wade... abortions could happen in the seventh, eighth, ninth month, maybe after birth.” This is not true. Gomez, Salganicoff, and Sobel (2024) explain that such abortions are illegal in the U.S., except in rare medical emergencies. This is a Disinformation Strategy, flouting the maxim by making the other side look extreme. The implicature is that abortion rights supporters allow very late and harmful procedures.

Perhaps most clearly, when asked about crime in Springfield, Trump said: “They're eating the cats... the dogs.” But CNN and the Springfield police confirmed there is no real evidence for this claim. It came from a Facebook rumor and was rejected by officials. This is an example of Urban Myth Mobilization, flouting the maxim by using fear based on false stories. The implicature is that immigration harms American life in very personal ways.

Trump also flouted the Maxim of Quality when moderator David Muir reminded him that more than 60 court cases about the 2020 election were dismissed. Trump answered, “No judge looked at it.” This is clearly false. In fact, many judges, some chosen by Trump, looked at the evidence and made official decisions. By saying something that goes against proven facts, Trump flouts the Maxim of Quality through a False Denial. This shows both Strategic Evasion and Minimisation. The implicature is that the legal system ignored him, which helps him continue to question the election results.

These examples show how both candidates twist the truth to support their political messages. They use fear, exaggeration, or oversimplification to make the truth serve their

goals. These findings are similar to what earlier studies have also found. Ali and Abdulmun'im (2021) found exaggeration common in the 2020 Biden-Trump debate. Chen and Chang (2020) documented hyperbole in Taiwanese discourse. Bakry and Hasan (2023) noted deliberate misinformation in Egyptian campaigns. Collectively, they confirm that truth-flouting is a global political pattern rooted in persuasion, not ignorance.

1.4. The Maxim of Manner

In the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate, both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump often broke the Maxim of Manner, which says speakers should be clear, brief, and organized. Instead of giving straightforward answers, they used vague language, confusing phrasing, or emotional expressions. This was not accidental, being unclear helped them avoid giving direct answers to sensitive or controversial questions.

Kamala Harris, when asked about her support for Ukraine and how she would deal with Vladimir Putin if elected, answered: “What you think is a friendship with what is known to be a dictator who would eat you for lunch.” Instead of giving a clear foreign policy plan, Harris used a metaphor and emotional language. This flouts the Maxim of Manner through Figurative Vagueness, because her answer sounds strong but lacks clear details. The implicature is that Trump’s friendships with world leaders are risky, but she avoids saying exactly what she would do.

In another moment, Harris was asked to explain her current position on healthcare after earlier supporting Bernie Sanders’ plan. Instead of clearly saying where she stands now, she changed the topic and said: “You don’t like him, you said at the time because he got caught.” This unclear comment lacked context and did not answer the question. It reflects Disordered Response and Topic Shift, which flout the Maxim of Manner by making the answer confusing and off-topic. The implicature is that Trump is inconsistent or dishonest, but her message is hard to understand because it is not clearly explained.

Donald Trump also flouted the Maxim of Manner many times. When asked about his connection to Project 2025, he said: “I have nothing to do with it... I haven't read it. I don't want to read it, purposely. I'm not going to read it. It makes no difference.” This answer is repetitive and vague, showing Strategic Disorganization. The implicature is that the plan is not part of his agenda, but at the same time, he leaves space to deny or accept it later if needed.

Another example of manner flouting appears when Trump said: “They didn't do this, this, this, this...” while talking about the Taliban agreement. He does not explain what “this” refers to, so his answer is not clear. This shows Evasion through Repetition, where repeating vague words hides the real meaning. The implicature is that the opponent failed, but Trump does not give any clear details.

These strategies show that ambiguity is used on purpose in political debates. By not speaking clearly, candidates leave room for different interpretations, avoid taking responsibility, and send different messages to different groups of people. Previous studies support this conclusion. Nartey & Yankson (2021) documented the use of rhetorical ambiguity in Ghanaian political campaigns. Halmari (2008) analyzed similar evasive structures in U.S. debates. More recently, Kurtić and Clift (2023) explored vague expressions in UK parliamentary discourse. These findings affirm that manner flouting is not accidental, it is instrumental in environments where clarity can be politically dangerous.

4.2. Discussion of the Use of Aristotelian Appeals in the Final 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate

4.2.1. Ethos

Ethos is one of the three main rhetorical appeals. It is used to achieve certain goals, such as appearing trustworthy, honest, and having enough experience or knowledge. In presidential debates, candidates use ethos to make the audience believe in them and support

their ideas. They try to show that they understand the people's needs and can help them. In the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump used ethos in different ways to show that they are strong leaders who deserve the public's trust.

In the debate, Donald Trump tried to show that he is a smart, experienced, and strong leader. He referred to exaggerations to demonstrate his leadership skills. For example, when he said, "I created one of the greatest economies in the history of our country," he tried to present himself as someone who knows how to lead and improve the country's economy. However, such bold claims have been challenged by fact-checkers, who argue that economic growth under Trump was not unprecedented. For instance, real GDP growth during Trump's first three years averaged about 2.5% annually, which is respectable but below the 4.0% average achieved during Bill Clinton's two terms from 1993 to 2001. Additionally, the U.S. economy added approximately 6.7 million jobs under Trump's presidency, compared to about 15.2 million jobs added during Biden's presidency (U.S. House Budget Committee, 2024; FactCheck.org, 2024). This contrast between his assertion and objective data reveals that he prioritizes impression over accuracy. In this sense, while Trump strives to project a strong ethos, his credibility becomes questionable when the audience is presented with conflicting factual evidence. Thus, the economic claim, while persuasive on the surface, reveals an attempt to construct a selective and heroic version of leadership, enhancing ethos rhetorically but risking credibility loss among more informed or critical audiences.

In addition, he talked about his role in ending the protection of *Roe v. Wade* when he said: "What I did is something they have been trying to achieve for 52 years." He wanted to show that he can do what others cannot. He relied on repetitions: "It took courage to do it, and the Supreme Court had great courage," to make his actions sound brave and powerful. This statement is partly true. Trump did not personally end *Roe v. Wade*, but he appointed three conservative Supreme Court justices who helped the Court make that decision. The final

ruling was made by the Supreme Court, not by Trump himself (FactCheck.org, 2024). From a pragmatic point of view, Trump uses the phrase “What I did” to make himself look like the main person responsible, even though it was not his direct action. By saying “for 52 years,” he wants to show that he achieved something very difficult and historic. This language helps him build his ethos and appear as a strong leader, but it can also mislead the audience because he does not explain that others played a key role. In this way, he creates a persuasive image, but his credibility may decrease when listeners know the full truth.

He also used a personal story (anecdote) to show what kind of leader he is. For instance, when he said, “If someone does a bad job, I fire them,” he wanted people to see that he makes strong decisions when needed. This helps him appear confident and powerful. From a pragmatic perspective, this is a way to build his ethos. He uses language to present himself as a strong and decisive leader. Even though he does not directly say, “I am a good leader,” the story implies that he is. This is called self-presentation: he chooses words that help shape the audience’s opinion of him. So, the goal is not only to give information, but also to influence how people see him as a leader.

Additionally, he used name-dropping when he referred to important people like Viktor Orbán, a well-known leader from another country who said good things about him. By speaking about Orbán’s praise, Trump wanted to show that important people from other countries respected him. This makes him look like a strong leader who has power and support not just from the American people but also from people around the world. This statement is true. During the final 2024 presidential debate, Trump said: “There’s a man, Viktor Orbán, who’s the head of Hungary, very powerful, very strong, very respected. He said this: ‘Trump is the man who can save the Western world.’” These words were actually said by Orbán and reported by reliable news sources such as Reuters (Kahn, 2024). From a pragmatic perspective, this is a clear example of how Trump uses name-dropping and others’ praise to

build his ethos. Instead of saying directly that he is powerful, he quotes a respected foreign leader to make himself appear important and admired. This helps him influence the audience's view of him as a strong international figure, without openly praising himself.

He also relied on statistics. When he said, "The poll says 80 and 85, even 90%, that the Trump economy was great," he wanted to make people believe he knows a lot about the economy. Using these numbers helps him sound more trustworthy and persuasive because it looks like many people agree with him. However, he did not give clear sources for these polls, which can weaken the strength of his argument. On the other hand, Kamala Harris used different ways to appear trustworthy and show that she is a good leader. She talked about her personal experience and what she did in the past to show that she is an experienced person. For example, when she said: "I'm the only person on this stage who has prosecuted transnational criminal organizations," this is an appeal to ethos because she is using her past work to build her credibility. She wants the audience to see her as someone who has taken action and made real changes. From a pragmatic point of view, the phrase "I'm the only person on this stage" also compares her with the other candidates. She is saying that none of them have done what she has done, which helps her look stronger and more capable. In this way, her language is persuasive because she connects her personal story with political leadership and tries to win trust by showing real achievements.

She wanted to show that she has dealt with serious issues before, which means she has the experience needed to do a good job in the future. She also made promises to show that she is serious and will take action. By saying, "I will proudly sign it into law," she wanted to tell people that she will support their rights. This helps her look like a leader who cares about others and is ready to act. She also shared a personal story about her life when she said that she grew up in a middle-class family with a mother who worked hard, to make people feel close to her and trust her more. She wanted to show that she understands how normal people

live. This makes her look like someone who will care about their problems because she lived through similar things.

She also mentioned that she was at the Capitol on January 6 to show that she was part of an important and difficult moment in the country. By saying, “I was at the Capitol on January 6,” she wanted to show that she was there during a very serious time, not just watching from far away like Donald Trump did. In addition, she repeated sentences like: “I was the vice president-elect, I was also an elected senator.” She uses anaphora by repeating “I was,” to remind people of her important roles. To add to this, she mentioned her meeting with world leaders like the president of Ukraine, Zelensky, when she said, “We brought 50 countries together.” She wanted to indicate that she helps solve big problems with other countries. This makes her look like she knows how to work with other countries and can do important jobs around the world.

4.2.2. Pathos

Pathos is one of the three persuasive strategies identified by Aristotle, along with Ethos (credibility) and Logos (logic). Pathos is used by the speaker to make people feel something such as sadness, anger, or fear, in order to support their message or argument. In political debates, candidates use Pathos as a tool to create strong connections with voters and influence how they think or feel about an issue through emotionally charged language. During the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate, both candidates used this strategy to influence the audience. To achieve this, they employed hyperbole, imagery, personal stories, repetition, and metaphors. These strategies allowed them to discuss serious issues like abortion, the economy, immigration, and war in a way that touched the audience's emotions.

Donald Trump used exaggeration, repetition, and emotionally intense words to make people feel scared and angry. For example, when he said things like “people can't even buy cereal, bacon, or eggs” and “people are dying,” he aimed to make the audience feel that the

country is in a dire situation. If people respond by feeling afraid or angry, they may conclude that the current leaders are failing and should be replaced.

Trump also relied on anaphora, repeating powerful words like “Marxist” when referring to Kamala Harris and her father, who he claimed support Marxism. In the U.S., many perceive Marxism as a threat to freedom and democracy. By repeating this term, Trump intended to provoke fear and suspicion toward Harris and her ideas. His use of shocking imagery further amplified emotional reactions. For instance, when he claimed, “they are eating the dogs... they are eating the cats,” he wasn’t merely offering information but creating a frightening mental image. This kind of language evokes fear and frames the border as a place of chaos and danger, prompting the audience to believe that immediate action is necessary. Similarly, when talking about crime, he used emotionally loaded phrases like “criminals that killed people” or “burned down Minneapolis.” These expressions generate concern and reinforce the perception that crime is rampant and urgent intervention is required.

Additionally, when discussing the death of Ashley Babbitt, Trump used emotionally charged language, calling the police officer “out-of-control” and the event “a disgrace.” These words suggest outrage and injustice, helping Trump emotionally align with audience members who viewed the event as unfair. On the other hand, Kamala Harris used vivid emotional language to connect with the audience's feelings. For example, when she said, “Donald Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression... the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War,” she invoked painful moments in American history. These historical references are not meant merely to inform, but to evoke a sense of fear and urgency. Her words are carefully chosen to create a powerful emotional impact and to present herself as someone who understands public pain and can offer hope and security, thereby strengthening her image as a trustworthy and capable leader.

She also used personal stories and real-life examples to reinforce her points. In the debate, she spoke about a friend who was sexually assaulted by her stepfather: “my work that is related to having a friend when I was in high school who was sexually assaulted by her stepfather.” This story highlights the severe consequences of strict abortion laws. Her goal was not only to inform but also to evoke empathy, especially among women. She further cited the case of a 12-year-old girl forced to leave her state for abortion services, saying: “a 12-13-year-old survivor of incest being forced to carry a pregnancy.” These examples emphasize how legislation affects vulnerable individuals, helping the audience emotionally grasp the real-life impact of these policies.

Furthermore, both candidates used metaphors to strengthen their emotional appeal. For instance, when Harris said voters are “exhausted with the same old tired book,” she used metaphorical language to express frustration with repeated political strategies and broken promises. She wasn’t referring to an actual book; instead, the metaphor symbolized political stagnation. This emotionally charged expression helped her appear more relatable and aware of the public’s dissatisfaction.

Donald Trump also employed metaphor to create emotional impact, saying undocumented immigrants are “destroying the fabric of our country.” He didn’t mean literal fabric but used the metaphor to suggest that core aspects of American society are being damaged. From a pragmatic perspective, this metaphor evokes fear and concern about immigration, encouraging the audience to see it as a severe threat.

Moreover, both candidates used emotional language when addressing foreign policy to influence audience reactions. Kamala Harris, for instance, mentioned “innocent Palestinians... children... mothers.” She wasn’t simply sharing facts; she was crafting a narrative designed to evoke empathy and compassion. Her phrasing helped her appear kind,

caring, and trustworthy in the eyes of voters, especially those concerned with peace and human rights.

In contrast, Trump used fear-based emotional appeal when he warned of “World War 3.” This was not just a literal statement but a strategic emotional device intended to make people feel unsafe under the current leadership. His aim was to portray himself as the only leader capable of protecting the country, thereby strengthening his image as strong and responsible while suggesting his opponents are weak or dangerous. This emotional tactic helped him connect with voters concerned about national security.

4.2.3. Logos

Logos is the third rhetorical appeal introduced by Aristotle. It means convincing people using logic, facts, and clear reasoning. In politics, candidates use logos to gain the audience’s trust by giving ideas that sound smart and believable. It is not only about showing facts but also about using language in a way that helps people understand and agree. During the 2024 U.S. presidential debate, both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris used logos by referring to expert opinions, giving statistics, using cause-and-effect arguments, and repeating key phrases or asking questions.

Kamala Harris used expert opinion when she said “sixteen Nobel laureates” and “Goldman Sachs” to criticize Trump’s economic plan. She did not just give information but used these names to build trust with the audience. Fact-checkers said that what she said about the economists was mostly true. These experts warned that Trump’s plan might cause higher prices and hurt the economy. But they didn’t clearly say there would be an economic collapse. Harris used their words to make her argument sound stronger (Jacobson, 2024). This helped her seem more credible and made her message more convincing.

She also used cause-and-effect reasoning. For example, she said that Trump’s policies could lead to more trade deficits or that supporting Ukraine would help it stay free. She

organized her points clearly, which made it easy for the audience to follow her logic. From a pragmatic view, this helped the audience see how one action leads to another. This way of speaking made her arguments sound more reasonable and easy to accept. Harris also repeated some phrases to support her arguments. For instance, she kept saying “I have a plan” when talking about health care and the economy. This showed that she was prepared and had ideas. Repeating this phrase helped the audience remember it and made her message stronger.

Donald Trump also used logos in his own way. He used simple and direct language. One of his strategies was repetition. When he talked about the Taliban breaking an agreement, he said, “they didn’t do it,” several times. He used this repetition to make the point clear and to put the blame on them. The repeated phrase made it easy for the audience to understand and remember. Trump also used rhetorical questions. These are questions that do not need an answer but are used to make people think. He asked, “Can you imagine a system where the president doesn’t have standing?” and “Why does Biden go in and kill the Keystone pipeline and approve... NordStream 2?” He used these questions to make the audience feel that something was wrong with Biden’s choices. From a pragmatic view, rhetorical questions help Trump guide how people understand his point without explaining too much.

Trump also used cause-and-effect logic. He said crime was lower in Venezuela because criminals were taken off the streets. This makes the issue sound simple and easy to understand. But fact-checkers said there is no proof that Venezuela is emptying prisons or sending people to the U.S. (PolitiFact, 2024). So even if the claim was not true, it still worked as a way to make the audience believe his point.

When we compare these findings with past research, we see some changes in how candidates try to build trust. Wicke and Bolognesi (2024) found that Trump didn’t often name his opponent directly. Instead, he used words like “I” and “we” to show closeness with his supporters. Harris, on the other hand, named Trump often and used more inclusive

language. While their study looked at names and pronouns, this study shows more strategies used to build credibility. For example, Trump used exaggeration, name-dropping, repetition, and numbers to show he was strong and successful. He talked about ending *Roe v. Wade* and used his business experience to look smart. Harris, in contrast, used emotional and personal stories. She talked about her work, being at the Capitol during the attack, and meeting world leaders to show she had real experience. She also repeated important roles she played to appear prepared and trustworthy.

This study supports what past research found but also gives new examples. Jesudas and Mohammed (2025) said that Trump used fear and blame, while Harris focused on hope and fairness. This study agrees and adds examples from abortion. Harris used emotional stories and promises, and Trump used bold statements and numbers to look confident. For logos, Al-Azzawi et al. (2024) said Trump's logic often created division and fear, while Harris talked about teamwork and shared values. This study supports that. Harris used facts and clear ideas, and Trump used strong claims to support his image, even if they were not fully explained. In short, this study shows more about how each candidate used logos to influence people, especially when talking about serious topics.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter has discussed and interpreted the main findings of the pragmatic analysis of the 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The discussion focused on the flouting of Grice's maxims, the use of strategic evasion based on Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology, and the use of Aristotle's persuasive appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos. The analysis showed how both candidates used various pragmatic tools to shape their image, influence public opinion, and address sensitive topics. These findings helped respond to the research questions raised in the General Introduction.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

In the current study, we aimed to pragmatically explore the final 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The goal was not only to examine how each candidate presented their ideas and policies, but also how they used language to avoid direct answers and influence the public. The research focused on two main areas. First, it analyzed how the candidates broke Grice's (1975) conversational maxims, quantity, quality, relation, and manner, to create indirect meanings or implicatures. This was supported by Clayman and Bull's (2006) typology of strategic evasion. Second, the study explored how both candidates used Aristotle's persuasive appeals, ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic), to strengthen their political message and shape public opinion.

To reach these objectives, a qualitative and corpus-based approach is used. The data used in this study includes both the official transcript and the full recorded video of the 2024 U.S. presidential debate. The analysis follows a directed content analysis approach based on the method by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). This means we used existing theories to guide our analysis, especially focusing on strategic evasions and rhetorical techniques.

The findings show that both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris used language carefully when talking about sensitive or difficult topics. Instead of giving clear or direct answers, they often avoided the question by flouting Grice's maxims. They did this by giving vague or general statements, changing the subject, or giving too much or too little information. These choices were not random; they were part of a strategy to avoid risky answers while still trying to persuade the audience. This way of speaking helped them protect their image, control the conversation, and guide how people understood their positions. Crucially, the implicatures generated through these floutings are politically charged: they suggest unspoken justifications, reframe assumptions, and subtly reposition the candidate's persona in the minds of viewers. These strategies show that the candidates were more focused

on performing well in the debate than giving clear answers. By changing the topic or avoiding the question, they tried to get the audience's support rather than explain their ideas fully.

As for the second research question, the analysis shows that both the candidates use different rhetorical tools to connect with the audience. One of the main findings is that they strongly rely on emotional appeals (pathos) logical arguments (logos) and personal credibility (ethos). They try to touch the audience's feelings, use facts and reasons to support their ideas, and show their experience and character to appear trustworthy. They also rely on figurative language that adds creativity and emotions to their speech, making their ideas more powerful and easier for the audience to understand and remember. These strategies help them create a strong image in the mind of the audience and connect with voters on different levels. Ethos was clearly seen through references to professional experience, personal background, and leadership roles, which are used to establish authority and trust.

Despite these insights, the study has a few limitations. First, it focuses only on one debate, the 2024 U.S. presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. This means the findings cannot be applied to all debates or to all political figures. Different candidates may use different strategies in other debates. Second, the analysis looks only at what the candidates said, without considering non-verbal communication like tone of voice, gestures, or facial expressions. These elements can change how people understand a message and can also play an important role in persuasion. Lastly, this study used a small amount of data from one event, which may not show the full range of persuasive or evasive strategies used by each candidate across different settings.

Even with these limitations, the study still gives useful ideas about how language is used in political debates and what this means for communication and persuasion. It helps us understand how politicians use language not only to present their views but also to guide the conversation, protect their image, and persuade people. This study shows how rhetorical tools

and pragmatic strategies work together to create powerful political messages. These insights are helpful for students, teachers, and anyone interested in politics, as they make people more aware and critical when they watch debates or listen to political speeches. Understanding these strategies also helps people think more carefully about what they hear and notice how language is used to shape opinions, highlight certain ideas, or hide others. The study shows that language is a strong tool in politics, and by studying how it is used, people can better understand debates and reflect more critically on what politicians say.

Based on what this study has shown, there are many useful areas that future research can explore to better understand political language and its effects. One useful idea is to look at more than one debate, possibly from different times or countries, to see if the same language strategies are used again. Another area to explore is body language, tone of voice, and facial expression. These non-verbal signs can give extra meaning to what is said. Researchers can also focus on how different groups of people, like (young or older viewers, men and women, or people from different cultural backgrounds) react to these strategies. It may also be helpful to use quantitative or mixed methods in future studies. Future research could also look at how the media affect how people understand political debates, how candidates change the way they speak across time or when participating in different political systems and using different languages.

In conclusion, this dissertation shows that strategic evasion and rhetorical persuasions are essential parts of modern political debates. Through the case study of final 2024 U.S presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, it became evident that candidates use language not just to share their policies but to shape their image, avoid risks, and influence public opinion. This study also shows that language is a strong tool in politics. The candidates use it to build trust, touch people's feelings, and appear reasonable and credible. Since debates are still an important part of democratic life, studying how

language is used in them will continue to be a useful and important area of research in political communication and pragmatics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 01: Full Transcript of the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate between Donald

Trump and Kamala Harris

For the full transcript of the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, access it via the following link:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/harris-trump-presidential-debate-transcript/story?id=113560542>

Appendix 02: Complete Set of Examples of Flouting the Maxim of Relevance

Example 1

Kamala Harris: *“My opponent has a plan that I call the Trump sale tax...”*

David Muir: President Trump, I'll give you a minute here to respond.

Donald Trump: *“We made ventilators for the entire world...”*

David Muir: Vice President Harris, I'll let you respond.

Kamala Harris: *“Donald Trump actually has no plan for you, because he is more interested in defending himself than he is in looking out for you.”*

Example 2

David Muir:...A really quick response here, Vice President Harris, on this notion of weaponization of the Justice Department.

KAMALA HARRIS (part 1): *“Understand the context in which this election in 2024 is taking place. The United States Supreme Court recently ruled that the former president would essentially be immune from any misconduct if he were to enter the white house again.”*

Kamala Harris (part 2): *“Understand, this is someone who has openly said he would terminate, I'm quoting, terminate the constitution of the United States. That he would weaponize the Department of Justice against his political enemies. Someone who has openly expressed disdain for members of our military.”*

Example 3

David Muir:... In the past couple of weeks leading up to this debate, you have said, quote, you lost by a whisker, that you, quote, didn't quite make it, that you came up a little bit short.

Donald Trump: *"We need walls. We need -- and we have to have it. We have to have borders. And we have to have good elections... Our elections are bad. And a lot of these illegal immigrants coming in, they're trying to get them to vote. They can't even speak English."*

Example 4

DAVID MUIR: I did watch all of these pieces of video.... Many of them And said there was no widespread fraud.

DONALD TRUMP: *"They said we didn't have standing. That's the other thing. They said we didn't have standing. A technicality. Can you imagine a system where a person in an election doesn't have standing, the President of the United States doesn't have standing? That's how we lost."*

Example 5

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, thank you. Vice President Harris... One of your campaign's top lawyers responded saying, "We won't let Donald Trump intimidate us. We won't let him suppress the vote." Is that what you believe he's trying to do here?

Kamala Harris: *"Donald Trump was fired by 81 million people."*

DAVID MUIR: I'll give you one minute to respond, Mr. President.

DONALD TRUMP: *"Let me just tell you about world leaders. Viktor Orban, one of the most respected men -- they call him a strong man. He's a tough person. Smart. Prime Minister of Hungary. They said why is the whole world blowing up? Three years ago it wasn't. Why is it blowing up? He said because you need Trump back as president."*

Example 6

Linsey Davis: Vice President Harris, he says you hate Israel.

Kamala Harris: *“He knows that. He's trying to again divide and distract from the reality, which is it is very well known that Donald Trump is weak and wrong on national security and foreign policy.”*

LINSEY DAVIS: Vice President Harris, thank you.

Donald trump: *“Why does Biden go in and kill the Keystone pipeline and approve the single biggest deal that Russia's ever made, Nordstream 2, the biggest pipeline anywhere in the world going to Germany and all over Europe?”*

Example 7

DAVID MUIR: I want to take this to Vice President Harris.... how would you deal with Vladimir Putin and would it be any different from what we're seeing from President Biden?

Kamala Harris: *“first of all, it's important to remind the former president you're not running against Joe Biden, you're running against me.”*

DAVID MUIR:.... Vice President Harris, have you ever met Vladimir Putin, can you clarify tonight?

KAMALA HARRIS: *“Yet again, I said it at the beginning of this debate, you're going to hear a bunch of lies coming from this fella. And that is another one.”*

Example 8

DAVID MUIR: We've talked about Ukraine and Vladimir Putin. I do want to talk about Afghanistan. It came up in the first hour of this debate.

DONALD TRUMP: *“Secretary General Stoltenberg said Trump did the most amazing thing I've ever seen...”*

DAVID MUIR: Thank you. I want to turn to Afghanistan..... I do want to ask the vice president, do you believe you bear any responsibility in the way that withdrawal played out?

Kamala Harris: *“Donald Trump when he was president negotiated one of the weakest deals you can imagine.”*

Example 9

LINSEY DAVIS:.... President Trump, this is now your third time

Donald Trump: *“They're destroying our country. And they come up with things like what she just said, going back many, many years, when a lot of people, including Mayor Bloomberg agreed with me on the Central Park Five.”*

Example 10

LINSEY DAVIS: President Trump, thank you.... The question to you both tonight is what would you do to fight climate change? And Vice President Harris, we'll start with you. One minute for you each.

Kamala Harris: *“Donald Trump said he was going to create manufacturing jobs. He lost manufacturing jobs.”*

LINSEY DAVIS: Vice President Harris, thank you.

Donald Trump: *“Why did he get 3 1/2 million dollars from the mayor of Moscow's wife? Why did he get -- why did she pay him 3 1/2 million dollars? This is a crooked administration, and they're selling our country down the tubes.”*

Example 11

LINSEY DAVIS: Would you veto a national abortion ban if it came to ...

Donald trump: *“You know what it reminds me of? When they said they're going to get student loans terminated and it ended up being a total catastrophe.”*

Example 12

LINSEY DAVIS: Vice President Harris, he says you hate Israel.

Kamala harris: *“It is well known that he said of Putin that he can do whatever the hell he wants and go into Ukraine. It is well known when that he said when Russia went into Ukraine it was brilliant. It is well known he exchanged love letters with Kim Jong un.”*

EXAMPLE 13

David Muir: Let me just ask, though, why did you try to kill that bill and successfully so? That would have put thousands of additional agents and officers on the border.

Donald Trump: *“Our country is being lost.... you're going to end up in World War 3.... They're eating the cats. They're eating -- they're eating the pets of the people that live there..”*

Complete Set of Examples of Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

Example 1

LINSEY DAVIS: Turning now to the Israel-Hamas war ... President Biden has not been able to break through the stalemate. How would you do it?

Kamala harris : *“On Oct. 7, Hamas, a terrorist organization, slaughtered 1,200 Israelis. Many of them young people who were simply attending a concert. Women were horribly raped.”*

Example 2

LINSEY DAVIS: There is no state in this country where it is legal to kill a baby after it's born. Madam vice president, I want to get your response to President Trump.

Kamala harris: *“I have talked with women around our country. You want to talk about this is what people wanted? Pregnant women who want to carry a pregnancy to term suffering from a miscarriage, being denied care in an emergency room because the health care providers are afraid they might go to jail and she's bleeding out in a car in the parking lot? She didn't want that. Her husband didn't want that...”*

Example 3

DAVID MUIR: ... Vice President Harris. I want to get your thoughts on support for Ukraine in this moment... how would you deal with Vladimir Putin and would it be any different from what we're seeing from President Biden?

Kamala Harris : *“And because of our support, because of the air defense, the ammunition, the artillery, the javelins, the Abrams tanks that we have provided...”*

Example 4

DAVID MUIR:... I want to turn to Afghanistan...I do want to ask the vice president, do you believe you bear any responsibility in the way that withdrawal played out?

Kamala harris : *“Four presidents said they would, and Joe Biden did. And as a result, America's taxpayers are not paying the \$300 million a day we were paying for that endless war.”*

Example 5

DAVID MUIR:... President Trump, your response to her saying that you began the negotiations with the Taliban.

Donald Trump: *“And Abdul is the head of the Taliban. He is still the head of the Taliban.”*

Example 6

LINSEY DAVIS: President Trump, thank you.... The question to you both tonight is what would you do to fight climate change? And Vice President Harris, we'll start with you. One minute for you each.

Kamala Harris: *“We have created over 800,000 new manufacturing jobs while I have been vice president. We have invested in clean energy to the point that we are opening up factories around the world.”*

Appendix 3: Additional Persuasive Appeals in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Debate

1.Ethos

EXAMPLE 1:

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President,.... Do you believe Americans can afford higher prices because of tariffs.

Donald trump (a): *“I was the only president ever China was paying us hundreds of billions of dollars .”*

Donald trump (b): “look at a poll. The polls say 80 and 85 and even 90% that the Trump economy was great that their economy was terrible.”.

EXAMPLE 2:

DAVID MUIR: Vice President Harris, thank you. President Trump, on that point I want to get your response.

Donald trump: “We have the biggest rallies, the most incredible rallies in the history of politics.”

EXAMPLE 3:

DAVID MUIR: President Trump, thank you. I'll let you respond, Vice President Harris.

Kamala harris : “Coming from someone who has been prosecuted for national security crimes, economic crimes, election interference, has been found liable for sexual assault.”

EXAMPLE 4:

DAVID MUIR: President Trump, thank you. A really quick response here, Vice President Harris, on this notion of weaponization of the justice department.

Kamala harris : “Understand, this is someone who has openly said he would terminate, I'm quoting, terminate the constitution of the United States.”

EXAMPLE 5:

LINSEY DAVIS: President Trump, your response.

Donald trump: “My father was a Brooklyn builder. Brooklyn, Queens. And a great father and I learned a lot from him. But I was given a fraction of that, a tiny fraction, and I built it into many, many billions of dollars. Many, many billions.”

EXAMPLE 6:

DAVID MUIR: Linsey, thank you. We have an election in just 56 days.... Is there anything you regret about what you did on that day?

Donald trump: “Peacefully and patriotically, I said during my speech. Not later on. Peacefully and patriotically.”

EXAMPLE 7:

DAVID MUIR: Mr. President, thank you... One of your campaign's top lawyers responded saying, "We won't let Donald Trump intimidate us. We won't let him suppress the vote." Is that what you believe he's trying to do here?

Kamala harris : “ I have traveled the world as vice president of the United States. And world leaders are laughing at Donald Trump. I have talked with military leaders, some of whom worked with you. And they say you're a disgrace.”

EXAMPLE 8:

LINSEY DAVIS: Turning now to the Israel-Hamas war... President Biden has not been able to break through the stalemate. How would you do it?

Kamala harris : “Israel has a right to defend itself. We would. And how it does so matters. Because it is also true far too many innocent Palestinians .”

EXAMPLE 9:

LINSEY DAVIS: Vice President Harris, thank you.

Donald trump: “Putin endorsed her last week. Said I hope she wins. And I think he meant it. Because what he's gotten away with is absolutely incredible. It wouldn't have happened with me.”

EXAMPLE 10:

DAVID MUIR: I want to take this to Vice President Harris... how would you deal with Vladimir Putin and would it be any different from what we're seeing from President Biden?

Kamala harris : “I actually met with Zelenskyy a few days before Russia invaded.... I shared with him American intelligence about how he could defend himself... I and others did we brought 50 countries together to support Ukraine .”

EXAMPLE 11:

DAVID MUIR: Please I'll give you a minute here.

Donald trump: “ She's worse than Biden. In my opinion, I think he's the worst president in the history of our country. She goes down as the worst vice president in the history of our country.”

EXAMPLE 12:

DAVID MUIR: Vice President Harris, thank you. President Trump, your response to her saying that you began the negotiations with the Taliban.

(a) Donald trump: “ I got involved with the Taliban because the Taliban was doing the killing. That's the fighting force within Afghanistan.”

(b)Donald trump: “I told Abdul don't do it anymore, you do it anymore you're going to have problems.”

EXAMPLE 13:

LINSEY DAVIS: President Trump... The question to you both tonight is what would you do to fight climate change? And Vice President Harris, we'll start with you. One minute for you each.

Kamala harris : “We have created over 800,000 new manufacturing jobs while I have been vice president.”

2. Pathos

EXAMPLE 1:

DAVID MUIR: Vice President Harris, I'll let you respond.

Kamala Harris : “Donald Trump actually has no plan for you, because he is more interested in defending himself than he is in looking out for you.”

EXAMPLE 2:

LINSEY DAVIS : I want to turn to the issue of abortion... Therefore, why should they trust you?

Donald Trump : “ the baby will be born and we will decide what to do with the baby. In other words, we'll execute the baby.”

EXAMPLE 3:

DAVID MUIR: We're going to turn now to immigration and border security.... But my question to you tonight is why did the administration wait until six months before the election to act and would you have done anything differently from President Biden on this?

Kamala Harris : “...I know there are so many families watching tonight who have been personally affected by the surge of fentanyl in our country.”

EXAMPLE 4:

DAVID MUIR: Vice President Harris, I'll let you respond to the rest of what you heard.

Kamala harris: *“His former secretary of defense has said the nation, the republic would never survive another Trump term”*

EXAMPLE 5:

DAVID MUIR: The question was about you as president, not about Former Speaker Pelosi. But I do want Vice President Harris to respond here.

Kamala Harris : *“ to desecrate our nation's Capitol. On that day, 140 law enforcement officers were injured. And some died”*

EXAMPLE 6:

DAVID MUIR: Are you now acknowledging that you lost in 2020?

Donald Trump : *“They can't even speak English. They don't even know what country they're in practically.”*

EXAMPLE 7:

DAVID MUIR: Your time is up. Just to clarify the question, do you believe it's in the U.S. best interests for Ukraine to win this war? Yes or no?

Donald Trump : *“we have to stop all of these human lives from being destroyed.”*

3. Logos

EXAMPLE 1:

DAVID MUIR: We are going to get to immigration and border security during this debate. But I would like to let Vice President Harris respond on the economy here.

Kamala Harris: *“Project 2025 that the former president intends on implementing if he were elected again.”*

EXAMPLE 2:

DAVID MUIR: You also said you would use local police. How would you deport 11 million undocumented immigrants? I know you believe that number is much higher. Take us through this. What does this look like? Will authorities be going door to door in this country?

Kamala harris: *“crime in Venezuela and crime in countries all over the world is way down? You know why? Because they've taken their criminals off the street”*

EXAMPLE 3:

DAVID MUIR: Linsey, thank you. We have an election in just 56 days... Is there anything you regret about what you did on that day?

Donald Trump : *“they're coming in from all over the world, David, all over the world.”*

EXAMPLE 4:

DAVID MUIR: And I want to turn to the war in Ukraine.... How exactly would you do that?

And I want to ask you a very simple question tonight. Do you want Ukraine to win this war?

Donald Trump : *“We're in for 250 to 275 billion. They're into 100 to 150. They should be forced to equalize.”*

EXAMPLE 5:

DAVID MUIR: President Trump , thank you. I want to move on now to race and politics in this country... I want to ask a bigger-picture question here tonight. Why do you believe it's appropriate to weigh in on the racial identity of your opponent?

Donald Trump : *“I don't. And I don't care. I don't care what she is. I don't care. You make a big deal out of something. I couldn't care less.”*

Trump uses repetition to emphasize his indifference and logic. When he repeats phrases like “ I don't care” and “ I couldn't care less” .