

A Discourse Analysis of Selected US Presidential Debates of the 2016 and 2020 Campaigns

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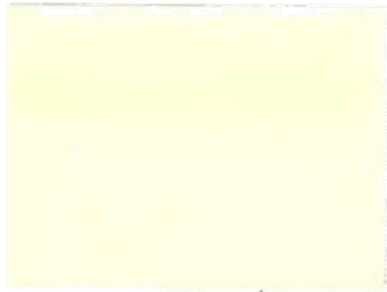
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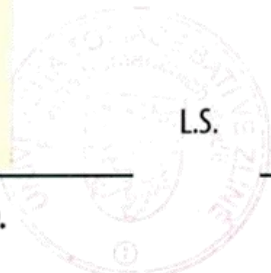
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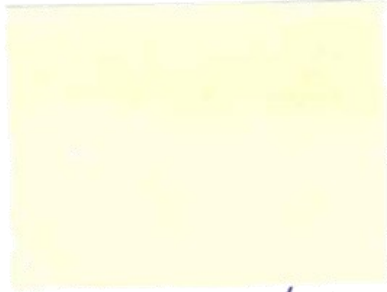
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na problematiku jazyka a analýzu diskurzu ve vybraných amerických prezidentských debatách v roce 2016 a 2020. Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část.

Teoretická část popisuje vývoj rétoriky napříč historií, význam jazyka a jeho stylů, dále se přímo zaměřuje na jazyk v politice a politický diskurz a v neposlední řadě charakteristikou prezidentských debat a obsahuje stručný popis vybraných amerických prezidentských debat. Tato část se také zabývá snahou politiků zapůsobit, co nejpřesvědčivěji s cílem zaujmout svým projevem, co nejširší publikum pomocí používání zájmen a metafor. Poznatky z teoretické části jsou poté využívány i při analýze.

Praktická část se věnuje analýze vybraných amerických prezidentských debat. Konkrétně se zaměřuje na jazyk a diskurz. V závěru práce jsou specifikovány zjištěné poznatky.

Klíčová slova: rétorika, jazyk, politický diskurz, metafora, prezidentská debata, zájmena

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on language and discourse analysis of selected American presidential debates 2016 and 2020. The thesis is divided into the theoretical and practical part.

The theoretical part describes the development of rhetoric throughout history, the meaning of language and its styles, focuses on the language of politics and political discourse, and last but not least characterizes presidential debates and provides a brief overview of selected US presidential debates. Furthermore, this part deals with the effort of politicians to be as convincing as possible in order to attract the widest audience by using metaphors, pronouns, and persuasive tools. The knowledge from the theoretical part is then used in the analysis.

The practical part is dedicated to the analysis of selected American presidential debates. Specifically, it focuses on language and discourse. At the end of the thesis, conclusions are specified.

Keywords: rhetoric, language, political discourse, metaphors, presidential debate, pronouns

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I declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
I THEORY	10
1 RHETORIC.....	11
1.1 THE BEGINNING OF RHETORIC.....	11
1.2 ANCIENT GREECE	12
1.3 ANCIENT ROME	13
1.4 THE MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE	13
1.5 THE MODERN ERA AND RHETORIC IN 20 TH AND 21 ST CENTURIES.....	14
2 LANGUAGE AND ITS STYLES.....	15
2.1 SPOKEN AND WRITTEN STYLE	16
2.2 FORMAL AND INFORMAL STYLE	17
3 POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEORY.....	18
3.1 POLITICAL COMMUNICATION	18
4 DISCOURSE.....	20
4.1 POLITICAL DISCOURSE	21
4.2 POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	22
4.2.1 Metaphors.....	23
4.2.2 Pronouns.....	24
5 PERSUASION.....	26
6 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE.....	27
6.1 DONALD TRUMP	27
6.2 HILLARY CLINTON	28
6.3 JOE BIDEN	29
II ANALYSIS	30
7 INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS	31
8 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES OF 2016 AND 2020	32
9 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE OF 2016	33
9.1 HILLARY CLINTON’S RHETORICAL STYLE	33
9.2 DONALD TRUMP’S RHETORICAL STYLE	37
10 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE OF 2020	41
10.1 JOE BIDEN’S RHETORICAL STYLE	41
10.2 DONALD TRUMP’S RHETORICAL STYLE	44
CONCLUSION	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	50
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	55
LIST OF FIGURES.....	56
LIST OF TABLES.....	57

INTRODUCTION

Presidential debates play a significant role in deciding the public who they want to vote for. Participants of presidential debates use persuasive strategies that help them in influencing and attracting voters. The aim of candidates is of course to win the election. Since presidential debates are an important part of the election, candidates try to show their strengths and on the other hand to show their opponent's weaknesses. Political discourse is typical for presidential debates. Every participant has his different personality and thus his own rhetorical style. Their rhetorical style also depends on the values and ideologies of the parties. Presidential debates are defined by rules and include characteristic features such as six segments that deal with different topics. American citizens support their candidates during the whole presidential campaign and they are curious how their favourite candidate will manage the presidential debates.

The thesis analyses the discourse of American presidential debates and focuses on the language of the participants. The aim of this thesis is to find out what aspects are typical for the selected presidential debates if there are any similarities or differences among them and what strategies the candidates use to persuade the voters.

In the theoretical part, the history of rhetoric is introduced and there are mentioned the most important milestones in its development. Next, the definition of language is characterized and this chapter also deals with its styles – spoken/written and formal/informal. Then, the focus is moved exactly on politics and the analysis of discourse. This chapter deals with typical aspects such as pronouns, metaphors, and persuasion that are an important part of the discourse and also presidential debates. Lastly, the course of presidential debates is described as well as brief information about all candidates who participated in these selected debates.

The practical part includes the analysis of two selected debates. Each debate is briefly characterised and analysed in terms of the rhetorical style of the candidates. Finally, the conclusion follows which recapitulates the analysis and compares both debates and the rhetorical styles of participants.

I. THEORY

1 RHETORIC

McKay (2020) states that according to Aristotle, rhetoric means the ability to find certain ways of persuasion in a certain situation. Richards (2007, 13) characterizes rhetoric as an art of convincing individuals. The main aim is to influence people's opinions as well as to persuade the reader or the listener that the only right opinion is that which is being given by a speaker or writer. Toye (2013) mentions that rhetoric helped to lay the basis of civil society and plays a role in democracy, thus persuasive public speeches are needed. He also claims that the term rhetoric includes both writing and speech since speeches are sometimes constructed on written texts. According to him, rhetoric is not only a text and language because it is associated with technical means through which rhetoric is expressed to the audience. (Toye 2013)

Richards (2007, 20-21) points out that rhetoric is focused on persuasion, however, it is also a way how to develop an argument. She mentions that Aristotle's opinion of rhetoric was to help people in making decisions. According to Aristotle and Roberts, rhetoric is divided into three parts – deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. Deliberative rhetoric tells us what to do or what not to do whereas forensic rhetoric deals with attacking or defending someone and epideictic rhetoric focuses on paying tribute to something or censuring. (Aristotle and Roberts (2004, 15)

Galperin mentions that typical attributes of the spoken language include colloquial words *y'all*, *wanna*, contractions e.g., *won't*, *isn't*, and direct address to the audience e.g., *ladies and gentleman*. He states that political speeches can be divided into two categories: parliamentary debates and speeches at meetings, congresses, and election campaigns. The usage of stylistic devices depends on the conditions of communication. To make sure the audience will remember the main points of the speaker's speech, repetition is often used. (Galperin 1981, 288-289)

1.1 The Beginning of Rhetoric

According to Perelman and Sloane, the beginning of rhetoric originates in Ancient Greece as a civic art in the 5th century BC. The aim was to teach Greek students how to use tactics of rhetorical persuasion, however, later these tactics were used for communication between Greek and Roman citizens. Before AD 96, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian wrote *Institutio oratoria*. Although this book was considered as one of the most influential books of rhetoric, at that time it was known as a book focusing on education. (Perelman and Sloane, 2019)

Rhetorical tradition as it was described by Quintilian targeted to produce speakers who can speak immediately in any situation (Fahnestock 2011, 90).

Adeodato mentions that in the fifth century BC, rhetoric was associated with Corax of Syracuse and Tisias. Corax is considered as a founder of rhetoric along with Tisias who was his pupil. As a lawyer, he claimed there was a need of improvement of the art of speaking in the law courts. (Adeodato 2020) Rhetoric was the most important point in education in Western Europe. Corax of Syracuse stated that speeches are made up of three main parts – an introduction, an argument, and a conclusion. (Foss and Trap 2002, 4-5)

1.2 Ancient Greece

Toye (2013) describes the Sophists as teachers of rhetoric however, they did not teach only rhetoric but offered an intellectual preparation. According to Foss and Trap (2002, 5), a Sophist was a teacher of wisdom. McKay states that the main aim of the Sophists was travelling and teaching young men how to speak and debate. Since the reputation of sophistry was harmed, the sophists' reception in Athens was unpleasant. The Sophists faced criticism, Plato along with Aristotle accused them of being manipulative and using emotions to influence people. (McKay 2020) Despite this fact, the Sophists had a big impact on rhetoric which is confirmed by the fact that the reputation is known later in the association of sophistry with fallacious or devious reasoning (Foss and Trap 2002, 5). Although the rhetoric described by Plato and Socrates was more focused on discourse and the Sophists concentrated on the connection of verbal skills and learning, the perfect idea of rhetoric by Plato and Socrates was similar to what the Sophists proposed. In the end, Plato and Socrates found a way how to connect truth and rhetoric. (Perelman and Sloane 2019)

According to Foss and Trap (2002, 7), Plato's student Aristotle established a system that should have helped with the effectiveness of rhetoric. Although Aristotle was Plato's student, he did not share only the same opinions and thoughts as his teacher. McKay (2020) states that, unlike Plato, Aristotle rather focused on persuasion because he was aware that not everyone can follow only logical and scientific arguments. Perelman and Sloane (2019) mention that Aristotle implemented three means of persuasion – ethos, pathos, and logos. Varpio claims that ethos appeals to the author, pathos focuses on the reader, and logos deals with an argument. Ethos shows the audience if the author is trustworthy and also if the argument is credible, thus it appeals to the author's personality. Pathos copes with emotions, beliefs, and values as well as the argument. Logos is about logic, it tells the audience if the

argument is formed well or not. These three aspects are called the rhetoric triangle, they should appear in the text and be balanced. (Varpio, 2018)

1.3 Ancient Rome

McKay (2020) states that the development of rhetoric in Ancient Rome was slower than in Ancient Greece. The Roman rhetoric was different in many aspects, it was not based on logic as in Ancient Greece, but it focused on stories, metaphors, and stylistics. Cicero was the first Roman rhetorician and pointed out that a person to be persuasive should have knowledge in history, politics, art, literature, etc. Toye claims that according to Cicero, politicians used rhetoric to gain more power by getting support in public meetings. At that time, rhetoric was only for men, thus rhetoricians tried to show their masculinity through their postures, gestures, and tone of voice. (Toye 2013)

According to McKay, another significant rhetorician of that time was Quintilian who opened a school of rhetoric where he realized the rhetorical training for students. He mostly paid attention to technical features of rhetoric and he claimed that the rhetorical training should begin immediately after birth. Quintilian made an effort to explain the Five Canons of Rhetoric. These Five Canons are *inventio* – the invention of the argument, *dispositio* – arrangement of the argument, *elocutio* – style of the argument, *memoria* – the process of memorizing the speech, and *actio* – the delivery of the speech. (McKay, 2020)

1.4 The Middle Ages and Renaissance

McKay (2020) mentions that in the Middle Ages (500 – 1500), rhetoric went through a change and it was more focused on religion rather than politics. Foss and Trap claim that rhetoric in this age was associated with letter writing, preaching, and education because Christianity became more and more powerful. Thus, rhetoric was marked as pagan art. It was believed that rhetoricians who were Christians naturally delivered speeches more effectively. (Foss and Trap 2002, 8) St. Augustine, who was one of the Church Fathers, decided to make an effort to come up with a book about rhetoric that was intended for the Christian orator (Perelman and Sloane 2019).

Foss and Trap (2002, 9) state that rhetoric turns into a part of the Trivium besides logic and grammar. Rhetoric became a practical art that established the basis of education. McKay (2020) claims that during the period, universities were established, and students learned a theory of rhetoric. Toye (2013) mentions that a lack of written texts during that time led to memorization of these texts, and in poetry allegory mainly occurred.

According to Foss and Trap, rhetoric during Renaissance (1400 – 1600) focused mainly on humanism which was the first significant attribute of this period and rhetoric. Francesco Petrarcha one of the most known Italian humanists along with others believed that rhetoric is a more important discipline than philosophy since people were connected with the world through language. During that period, rationalism appeared as a second important attribute. Rationalists aimed to connect science and truth, thus they stated that rhetoric was subordinate to logic. (Foss and Trap 2002, 9-10) Rhetoric experienced a re-birth because texts by Cicero and Quintilian were re-discovered and rhetoricians produced many books about rhetoric (McKay 2020).

1.5 The Modern Era and Rhetoric in 20th and 21st Centuries

McKay states that rhetoric in the modern period continued during the age of the Enlightenment which took place in the 17th and 18th centuries. There was another shift in rhetoric, rhetoricians focused again on politics instead of religion. In the 18th and 19th centuries, universities across Europe and America established whole departments where students studied rhetoric. (McKay 2020)

Foss and Trap mention there were three trends in rhetoric that characterized the modern period – the epistemological, belletristic, and elocutionist. They characterize epistemology as “the study of the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge” (Foss and Trap 2002, 10). They also state that George Cambell is one of the best examples of epistemological tradition. According to Foss and Trap, Cambell determined three forms of evidence: mathematical axioms, consciousness, and an intuitive sense. The belles lettres movement was associated with the French term *belles lettres* and referred to the aesthetic qualities of literature. The third rhetorical trend of this era was the elocutionary movement. (Foss and Trap 2002, 10-12) Perelman and Sloane claim that elocution is described as a study of how to teach reading aloud, this means it is mainly focused on oral interpretation. It should have helped preachers, lawyers, and other public speakers to improve their delivery styles. (Perelman and Sloane 2019)

During the 20th century, Perelman and Sloane state that American universities made an effort to reestablish rhetoric. Nowadays mass media take a huge part in our lives. This caused another shift in rhetoric. They point out that recent rhetoricians move the focus from the speaker or writer to the listener or reader. (Perelman and Sloane 2019) The new media such as film, radio, and television became an influential means of persuasion (McKay 2020).

2 LANGUAGE AND ITS STYLES

According to Adachi, Salzmänn, and Stanlaw, language is a part of our lives so it appears almost in every situation. Everyone speaks some language but we think about it only if we do not know much about it. Anthropologists agree that people refer to some languages as primitive because sounds or sound combinations are unclear and they are different from languages they have already known. Some people also think that if the society of citizens is not as industrialized as others, the grammar of these languages has to be automatically poor. (Adachi, Salzmänn, and Stanlaw 2012, 2-5)

Adachi, Salzmänn, and Stanlaw mention that it is normal for some languages to be less grammatical but it does not mean that the language is not effective as some other language. The vocabulary of some languages is small because people who use this language do not need complex vocabulary, thus they only use words that are necessary for them. Another problem is that sometimes one language is considered to be better than another and this happens when two or more languages are used in the same area of the world. Language is often associated with social status, intelligence, etc. This is the reason why languages, dialects, accents, and other attributes exist because according to them people are classified into particular groups within a society. (Adachi, Salzmänn, and Stanlaw 2012, 5-6)

Widdowson claims that language is characterized according to analytic terms – grammar which tells us about the structure of sentences, and dictionaries help us to understand the meaning of the words. In everyday communication, people also produce a paralanguage, this includes tone of voice, stress, pauses as well as facial expressions, and gestures. (Widdowson 2007, 3-8) Davies and Elder state that the description of the language falls into several categories – the study of the sounds of language, language structures, and meaning (Davies and Elder 2006, 26).

Roach describes phonetics and phonology as a study of speech sounds and how they are realized (Roach 2017, 1). According to Davies and Elder, languages are realized by sounds and that is the reason why languages sound different from each other. They describe morphology as a study of the structures and meaning of words and the way they are formed. The minimal unit of a word that conveys meaning is a morpheme, thus morphology also studies relationships among morphemes. Syntax is a study that deals with how a sentence is formed. (Davies and Elder 2006, 36-39) Adachi, Salzmänn, and Stanlaw state that every speaker is aware of the syntax of his/her native language, thus they know the structure of a sentence as well as relationships between sentence elements (Adachi, Salzmänn, and

Stanlaw 2012, 63). Davies and Elder claim that semantics is a study of the meaning of the words so it is also one of the important parts of the language. If someone wants to talk about the sentence structure, semantic roles are necessary. Semantic roles are also associated with grammatical relations, which are also a part of syntax. (Davies and Elder 2006, 43)

2.1 Spoken and Written Style

According to Bright (n.d.), the spoken style began perhaps a million years ago with the beginning of society whereas the written style has its roots in Mesopotamia in 3200 BC. Ferraro and Palmer state that spoken style is not as precise as written, because the person does not have enough time for choosing the words whereas in written style a writer controls the pace of choosing words. Speech can be precise too but the speaker has to be more prepared. They also mention that spoken language is more effective because while speaking the speaker can affect the intonation, pitch, volume, pauses, etc., and these attributes more influence the audience. (Ferraro and Palmer n.d.) Another advantage of the spoken style is that the speaker sees if the audience pays attention through eye contact thus, the speaker directly addresses the audience and this means that the spoken style is more personal (Beebe 2018, 172).

Ferraro and Palmer characterize spoken style as a way of communication where a speaker uses short sentences, fewer syllables, and self-referencing pronouns. Sentences in spoken style can also be incomplete (Ferraro and Palmer n.d.). Beebe claims that short words and phrases are typical for the spoken style of language which states to be less varied and precise. He claims that in written style, writers do not use pronouns such as *I* or *you*, the usage of these pronouns is more likely realized by speakers. Personal contact influences the choice of verbal style. According to Beebe, another major difference is that the spoken style is less formal. In case the speaker memorizes his or her speech, phrases and words are more complex than they would be without memorizing so it is more formal than in everyday conversation. Repetition is considered as another major difference. Spoken style should be more repetitive, so the audience properly understands what the speaker says. (Beebe 2018, 172-173)

Bright mentions that written style is considered to be more prestigious because it is used in literature, politics, and educational institutions. On the other hand, he states that written style is not considered as personal as a spoken language. (Bright n.d.) Chafe and Danielewicz (quoted in Fahnestock 2011, 90) also believe that the written styles tend to be more varied than in spontaneous communication. They state that informal hedges (such as

kind of and *sort of*) are typical for spoken style whereas in the written style they do not occur. Fahnestock claims that another difference between spoken and written style is that speakers more likely to use all-purpose pronouns (*this, that, it*) in order to make references to the previous text. (Fahnestock 2011, 90)

2.2 Formal and Informal Style

According to Potter, the audience is the most important part while deciding the use of formal or informal style. He characterizes informal style as communication with people a person knows very well. (Potter 2019) Akmajian et al. state that the informal style is typical for chatting with friends or communicating with family so the usage of informal style occurs in relaxed, casual situations where the speech is spontaneous and rapid (Akmajian et al. 2010, 285). Nordquist mentions that typical features of this style are contractions, slang, abbreviations, etc. Grammatical prohibitions, sentence fragments, and incomplete sentences are also common in an informal style. One of the features of informal style is brevity so the speech goes straight to the point and is grammatically efficient. (Nordquist 2020)

Akmajian et al. claim that the subject and the auxiliary verb can be dropped thus this is another feature. Even though the subject and auxiliary verb are dropped, the intention of the sentence is clear because of its tag. The subject is missing but the information is understandable. Subjects and auxiliary verbs are often contracted. In informal style the deletion of the verb *be* is common as well as single-word instances which are derived from sentences where other words are deleted. (Akmajian et al. 2010, 286-290)

On the other hand, as Nordquist states formal style is more complex and includes longer words and sentences, and no slang. It does not include personal emotions, a passive voice is rather used than an active voice and abbreviations are used in a limited way. (Nordquist 2019) As Akmajian et al. claim there are many language styles that every speaker uses without not realizing the usage. In a situation where formal language is required the speaker automatically uses a language that is supposed. According to them, this shift is natural, hence, people do not notice which style they use in the given situation. The most common reason why speakers use formal language is that they appear on serious or important occasions such as a job interview or meeting an important person. (Akmajian et al. 2010, 284-285)

3 POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEORY

Politics and political theory have their origins in ancient China and Greece where philosophers sought a way to organize society. However, they did not want to create a just structured society, they wanted to ensure that people have a better life. One of the most significant philosophers of that time was Confucius. He focused on the connection of Chinese moral values with political theory whereas administrators were advising a leader. It is a way how to defend their interests and explain their claims. (The Politics Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained 2013, 12-18)

According to Aristotle (quoted in The Politics Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained 2013, 12), politics is a discipline in which men set rules and goals. He was against engaging women, foreigners, and slaves in politics because according to him they did not have the right to rule others. Perloff claims that politics is described as a debate among people with different power. People who appear in politics express their opinions in terms of trying to change society (Perloff 2017, 8).

Dryzek, Honig, and Phillips propose that political theory is associated with humanistic study and political science. Politics tries to maintain democracy and justice. The field of political theory is divided into five segments – theory, criticism, diagnoses of norms, practices, and political action. Political theory is connected to law especially to constitutional law and there is not just one approach or methodology. (Dryzek, Honig and Phillips 2008, 4-6)

As Dryzek, Honig, and Phillips mention the book *A Theory of Justice*, written by John Rawles, was one of the most influential publications associated with political theory. In his book, he describes how democracy should be portrayed together with political, economic, and social justice. (Dryzek, Honig, and Phillips 2008, 9) Freedon, Sargent, and Stears claim that a principle of political theory consists of agreement and disagreement. In countries where democracy occurs, the agreement of the main democratic attributes such as freedom, democracy, or solidarity is important. In a democracy, politics is about problems and their solutions, the agreement is important for political cohesion and without the disagreement, there would be only administration of consensus. (Freedon, Sargent, and Stears 2013)

3.1 Political Communication

Jamieson and Kenski mention Harold Lasswell as one of the first founders who defined political communication and he claimed that the definition of politics and political

communication is a study of “who gets what, when, and how” (Laswell quoted in Jamieson and Kenski 2017, 2). Political communication is described as “the presentation and interpretation of information, messages or signals with potential consequences for the exercise of shared power” (Jamieson and Kenski 2017, 2).

According to Denton and Woodward (quoted in McNair 2011, 3), the speaker’s aim is to affect the political environment and this is characterized as political communication. McNair claims that the purposeful communicative behavior of politicians can influence the attitudes of the audience. An important part of political communication is the media through which it is transmitted. In order to be successful, the audience has to be interested in the message which is being given so the message has to be effective and well processed by the speaker. Political communication is not only verbal or written, visual elements such as dress, hairstyle, and make-up are a part of the communication as well. These all attributes create a political identity. (McNair 2011, 3-4)

Perloff (2017, 12) mentions three definitions that help understand what political communication means. Perloff points out a definition by Pye. According to him, political communication is “the flow of messages and information that gives structure and meaning to the political process” (quoted in Perloff 2017, 12). Another definition by Blumler (quoted in Perloff 2017, 12) characterizes it as two sets of parties such as politics and media. The last definition Perloff states as important is described by Jamieson and Kenski. According to them, political communication is an activity with involves citizens, politicians, the public, media, political campaigns, etc. (Jamieson and Kenski quoted in Perloff 2017, 12). Perloff himself defines political communication as an activity in which leaders, media, and citizens use their language and symbols in order to influence individuals and society. (Perloff 2017, 12) Farwell proposes that politicians focus only on political communication instead of strategic communication because politicians need to convey the message to the audience thus, they do not want to use definitions or the course of the communication (Farwell 2012).

4 DISCOURSE

According to Nordquist (2020), discourse is a unit of language which contains more than one sentence and describes the flow of communication and context in which the language is used. The study of discourse is focused on the language form and function in communication and deals with how the larger units of language contribute meaning. Baker and Ellence (2011, 31) state that discourse has multiple meanings but it mainly refers to any language used and more to spoken language. Discourse can be also related to some topics, attitudes, or genres. Nordquist points out that discourse is associated with situational knowledge and also semantic factors are involved. According to him, discourse is an action between two or more people and refers to knowledge between those people and a situation of communication. (Nordquist 2020)

Renkema and Schubert claim that discourse focuses on verbal communication and is associated with other disciplines such as linguistics, rhetoric, stylistics, etc. They also state that discourse has many functions and they divide discourse into three main types – informative, narrative, and argumentative discourse and all together with their typical attributes are a part of *the Organon model*. According to Renkema and Schubert, *the Organon model* consists of symbols, symptoms, and signals whereas the function of the symbol is to transmit information, the symptom's function is an expression and the signal's function is persuasion. It is also a relationship between a sender, a receiver, an object, and discourse is a two-way instrument – for a speaker (writer) and a hearer (reader). The argumentative discourse is a part of political speeches. (Renkema and Schubert 2018, 1-69)

Renkema and Schubert mention that discourse is distinguished from spoken and written communication and they mention several differences between them. The first difference is that discourse of written communication takes more time than spoken and the second difference is that in written communication the writer does not have contact with the reader. Another difference is that discourse of the spoken communication is a shared situation between the speaker and the hearer where the information is also transmitted by postures, gestures, intonation, etc. (Renkema and Schubert 2018, 72-73)

Widdowson claims that discourse is a complex communicative process and it is a way to express ideas or convey a message. The receiver interprets the text in order to understand it so the discourse tells what the speaker (writer) means by the text and what the hearer (reader) comprehend by it. (Widdowson 2007, 6-7)

4.1 Political Discourse

According to Baker and Ellence (2011, 31), political discourse is a kind of language used in a political context. Renkema and Schubert propose that a very important attribute in political discourse is the face-keeping principle which means that politicians do not want to lose their face. Thus, they have to prepare solid arguments when convincing their opponents. Political discourse involves the need for modification and the need for persuasion. The need for modification is divided into three parts – the hedging strategy, euphemism, and strategic ambiguity. The hedging strategy is used if politicians want to avoid the responsibility and it also tells if the person is uncertain about something. The euphemism is a more criticized part of the need for modification because softening of the context makes the addressees' attitude mild. Strategic ambiguity is used if it is necessary that other people can understand the utterance in different ways. The need for persuasion is a very significant part of the political discourse because politicians want to manipulate and change the meanings of messages. (Renkema and Schubert 2018, 318-319)

Renkema and Schubert claim that it is possible to analyze political discourse according to three typical strategies. They state that the first strategy is coercion along with resistance that tells about the explicitness of a coercive character. Resistance does not have to be realized only by politicians but also by lower groups of society, for instance during demonstrations. Secondly, legitimization and delegitimization appear in the political discourse through discursive strategies by which politicians use voters' values, convictions, etc., and on the other hand, their opponents are delegitimized by accusation or blaming. Thirdly, representation and misrepresentation take place in political discourse because politicians can influence the distribution of information and also misrepresent the information by not paying attention to conversational maxims such as maxims of quantity or manner. (Renkema and Schubert 2018, 321-322)

According to Fairclough, political discourse is not just about arguments but also about decisions that deal with some current situations because politics is mainly about decisions making. Besides argumentation, political discourse also involves genres that are not argumentative such as narrative, description, and explanation. Fairclough points out that emotions are often taken as something bad in political discourse. He agrees that not all emotions are good but they support the argument when logos appeals to pathos thus the audience is more affected. (Fairclough 2012, 1-15)

Beard claims that the important part of political discourse is metaphor and metonymy (Beard 2000, 19). Chilton and Schäffner state that political discourse is theoretically and empirically realized only if discourse structures are associated with properties of political structures. According to them, political discourse is contextual rather than textual because the context of the political text includes specific features such as the understanding of the situation, the setting, circumstance, goals, opinions, participant roles, etc. (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 203)

4.2 Political Discourse Analysis

Baker and Ellence claim that as discourse has several meanings, political discourse analysis can be also interpreted in many ways and nowadays there has been a shift from qualitative to quantitative analysis, and focuses is on larger texts (Baker and Ellence 2011, 31).

Wodak (2011, 39) states that an analysis of discourse should help us with understanding how politics is executed. It is also a way how politicians evaluate what they do and why. According to her, the discourse refers to a macro-topic (relating to a general topic instead of a specific).

Chilton and Schäffner mention (2002, 206), in order to understand political discourse, is important to explain what political cognition is. Political cognition is related to the acquisition, uses, and structures of political situations, events, and actors. Topics of political cognition are associated with political beliefs, political judgment, decision making, public opinion, the perception of political candidates, and furthermore. An analysis of political discourse helps us to explain the production and understanding of the political text so it is important to take into account the relationship between shared beliefs – political representation and personal beliefs and then the interpretation of this relationship with structures of discourse. (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 225)

According to Beard (2000, 24), the importance of three which means that a word or phrase is repeated three times and it make a bigger effect on the audience is significant. Fairclough (2012, 20) points out that nowadays two approaches are distinguished to analyzing political discourse. The first one is described by Chilton who says that political discourse is not mainly argumentative focuses on cooperation and conflict. Whereas the second approach which is established by Wodak is based on fields of action and their relationship with political sub-genres and argumentations is according to her a way of strategy. (Fairclough 2012, 20)

Fairclough states that the semiotic aspect plays an important role while analyzing the political discourse. By semiotic aspect is meant texts – both spoken and written but also a body language, image, music, etc. Genre, style, and discourse are part of the semiotic aspect. Genre is described as a semantic way of acting whereas style is a means of being and social identities. (Fairclough 2012, 82-83)

Widdowson (2007, 4) characterizes a *text* as a use of language. According to Wodak (2011, 39), the *text* is exclusive and precise and realizes in a discourse. It is only understandable if the sense of the text is related to more general knowledge. (Wodak 2011, 39) De Beaugrande and Dressler (quoted in Alba-Juez 2009, 6-7) state that text consists of seven criteria – cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality and are part of the political discourse analysis.

Widdowson states that cohesion is “the identification of connections that are linguistically signalled” (Widdowson 2007, 45). Alba-Juez says that cohesion refers to the relationship between syntax and text, thus conjunctions, ellipsis, or anaphora are used there. Whereas coherence is associated with the meaning so it points out the features of knowledge that are implied by the use of language and also influences the acceptance of the message by the audience. Intentionality deals with the purpose of the message and acceptability means how the message is accepted by the audience. Informativity is related to the quality and quantity of the information whereas situationality emphasizes that the most important part of a text is the situation in which the text is produced in. Intertextuality is significant because of two facts – a text is always linked to a preceding one and texts are categorized by the genre. (Alba-Juez, 2009, 6-7)

Wodak proposes that the linkage of some texts can be realized through the main arguments of texts, the topic, main actors, etc. Recontextualization occurs when an argument of the text is realized different context and then some corresponding attribute is added to a new context. Topos is a part of argumentation that defends a process of leading from an argument to a conclusion. Influencing other’s opinions and attitudes, debating and arguing is included in political knowledge. Tactics and strategies, analyzing weak and strong features are also a part of this knowledge. (Wodak 2011, 40-46)

4.2.1 Metaphors

According to Beard (2000, 19), metaphors are an important part of the language of politics. He describes a metaphor as the use of word or phrase which compare one thing to another.

In politics, metaphors take inspiration in sport and war, and metaphors that are associated with box are mainly used especially during elections because they show toughness and aggression. Candidates also consider election as a battle between two parties, thus they use a conceptual metaphor *politics is war*. In the USA, metaphors from baseball are also highly popular. Metaphors that are often used are related to the topic of winning and losing, enemies and opponents. (Beard 2000, 19) Charteris-Black claims that during presidential debates politicians tend to use a conceptual metaphor such as *nation as family* and a journey metaphor that interprets the process of change (Charteris-Black 2011).

Politicians use metaphors that interpret their ideologies, not just values (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 13). Batko points out that through metaphors the audience imagines the conveyed message easier and faster. Metaphors can be a useful persuasive tool if the speaker knows when and how to use them. (Batko 2017, 53-54)

4.2.2 Pronouns

Beard claims that another important part of political discourse and its analysis is pronoun reference. The use of the pronoun *you* or *yours* gives the reader a feeling that it is referred directly to him/her because the reader is addressed personally. On the other hand, the pronoun *we* symbolizes that all the people are together in something so the reader gets a sense of collectivism. (Beard 2000, 24)

According to Cap and Okulska, politicians decide what pronouns they use based on their ideologies and identities. In political discourse, pronouns *I* or *we* are most likely used and *us* is also more preferred than *them*. If politicians want to avoid complete responsibility, they use the pronoun *we* whereas pronoun *I* shows us that the speaker wants to get people's allegiance. First and second-person pronouns are a part of situational context and refer to other people in the debate but third-person pronouns are used as anaphors. If a participant repeats the third-person plural possessive *their* it means that this pronoun represents all citizens in their country. (Cap and Okulska 2013, 304-310)

Chilton and Schäffner point out that participants want to be better than others so they change positive-face and negative-face strategies. These strategies are about using the first person plural pronoun instead of the singular and also using or avoiding reference to some face-threatening elements. (Chilton and Schäffner 2002, 13) Their speaking strategies also include personal references and pronouns. A significant feature of presidential debates is the way how politicians address each other. The main addressee of the debate is not another

candidate but the audience thus the debate is constructed in order to make an impression on the audience. (Cap and Okulska 2013, 297-304)

5 PERSUASION

According to Lucas, to be persuasive, the speaker has to develop special skills in order to communicate clearly and briefly. The speaker who wants to persuade the audience needs to build up a strong relationship with the audience and show them that his credibility. Language is a powerful tool of persuasion so it has to be used responsibly. Lucas states that politicians also try to affect the audience's emotions however emotions which politicians appeal to must be appropriate to the topic. Persuasion is a complex and challenging way of public speaking. The success of a persuasive speech is considered if people in the audience who were opposed change their opinion based on a speaker's speech. To achieve this goal, the speaker must give a speech that shares the values, and attitudes of the audience. Since is not possible to influence every single person in the audience, the speaker has to know what his/her target audience is. (Lucas 2008, 324)

Lucas mentions that four aspects are significant in terms of persuasion – credibility, evidence, reasoning, and speaker's language. The term credibility is characterized as “the audience's perception of whether a speaker is qualified to speak on a given topic” (Lucas 2008, 353). On the other hand, evidence is described as using supporting materials which show that the speaker can prove or disprove something. However, the reasoning is the conclusion that is based on the evidence thus the speaker has to avoid using fallacies which are the errors of reasoning. (Lucas 2008, 368)

Stephen claims that a common strategy used for persuasion is called the rule of three. Lists of three are used for completeness and wholeness and they are also more memorable. (Stephen 2017) Dlugan also mentions that the rule of three is an important technique for speeches because it helps the speaker to convey a message, emphasize it, and the audience memorizes it. The rule of three can be described as three related elements which are used to express some message. (Dlugan 2009)

6 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

According to Haapala, Palonen, and Wiesner, debates are the most common way how to analyze politics. They characterize the debate as a discussion where two sides trying to persuade each other and interpreting the pros and cons of a problem. The aim of debates is to ask and answer questions, influence other participants to change their opinions, and focus on current problems. (Haapala, Palonen, and Wiesner 2017, 3-16) Ordway and Wihbey state that presidential debates are considered to be a significant tool of persuasion and they are important events in the USA. The first debate is considered to be the key one since the public decides according to it who they want to vote. (Ordway and Wihbey 2016)

Desilver (2020) mentions that presidential debates attract a lot of people's attention. He also agrees that presidential debates are really useful and informative for the voters. Epstein explains that the presidential debate is 90 minutes long and divided into 6 segments, one segment takes 15 minutes and it deals with a different topic. The moderator begins each segment with a question. Every participant has two minutes for answering the question and then the candidates respond to each other. In the final presidential debate in 2020 between Trump and Biden another rule was added – muting the microphones because both of them interrupting each other so the participants do not interrupt each other and the debate is well arranged. The second debate of the 2020 campaign was canceled due to Donald Trump's Covid-19 diagnosis. (Epstein 2020)

6.1 Donald Trump

Donald John Trump who became the 45th president of the USA is a developer and businessman. His parents are Frederick Christ Trump and Mary MacLeod. After he got his bachelor's degree in economics, he started working in his father's business later called the Trump Organization. He established the company Trump Entertainment Resorts which is associated with hotels and casinos. He also became the CEO of the Trump Organization. In 2015 he announced his candidacy as a Republican nominee in the presidential election in 2016. He promised to be the president of all American people. He was criticized for making inflammatory and racist and sexist insults. However, his supporters appreciate that he says what he really thinks so they are pleased about his honesty and courage. (Duignan 2021) Renshon points out that Donald Trump had no experience in politics before he became president. Trump settled his own personal style which included ostentation, risks, combativeness, and rhetorical sleight of hand. (Renshon 2020)



Figure 1: Donald Trump and his 2016 presidential campaign slogan

(Source: <https://konecna.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/donald-trump-trademarked-a-ronald-reagan-slogan-and-would-like-to-stop-other-republicans-from-using-it.jpg.png>)

6.2 Hillary Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton is a lawyer and politician who served as a U.S. senator and secretary of state. She is the eldest child of Hugh and Dorothy Rodham. After her graduation, she entered Yale Law School and she started to be interested in family law and problems affecting children. Later, she became a teacher, and also she developed programs whose aim was to help children. However, her career as a lawyer was successful since she was considered to be one of the most influential lawyers in the USA. In 2015, she announced herself to be the Democratic nominee in the USA presidential election. Because of her scandals with emails that came to light during her candidacy, she tried to point out that her opponent Donald Trump had no political experience and she had doubts about Trump's temperament. She gained support mainly among women however she was defeated by Trump. (Caroli 2021)



Figure 2: Hillary Trump and her 2016 presidential campaign slogan (Source: https://dynaimage.cdn.cnn.com/cnn/c_fill,g_auto,w_1200,h_675,ar_16:9/https%3A%2F%2Fcdn.cnn.com%2Fcnnnext%2Fdam%2Fassets%2F161107103157-04-hillary-clinton-1106.jpg)

6.3 Joe Biden

Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr. is the 46th president of the United States who defeated Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. After he got his law degree, he worked as an attorney, and later he was elected to the U.S. Senate. When he became Barack Obama's vice president, he played a significant role in the administration and helped to overcome several budget crises, and also shaped U.S. policy in Iraq. Biden announced his candidacy in April 2020 and focused on low-income communities, climate change legislation, and affordable child care. Since Trump was criticized in terms of solving the pandemic, Biden gained a sizeable lead over Trump. (Javaid 2021) According to Jeakle, his ability to make people believe that they matter to him and his connection with people is his biggest strength (Jeakle 2020).



Figure 3: Joe Biden and his 2020 presidential campaign slogan (Source: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Eeb_40YU8AA3A2D.jpg)

II. ANALYSIS

7 INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS

As the bachelor's thesis proposes, the best way to analyse presidential debates is by means of political discourse analysis. The aim of the analysis is to identify the language that candidates used in American presidential debates of the 2016 and 2020 campaigns and find typical characteristics. For the purpose of my bachelor's thesis, I have focused only on the first presidential debates of 2016 and 2020 because the first presidential debates are the most important for voters. I have selected these two debates in order to analyse them and compare their similarities and differences. Both debates are available online on YouTube. For the analysis, I also used the transcripts of both debates that are also provided on the internet.

For the practical analysis, I defined several aims that I am going to deal with. I am going to focus on the language of both participants in each debate, how they answer the questions that the moderator asks, and how they react to each other. I am going to analyse the strategies that every participant uses in these debates in order to be persuasive and attract as many voters as possible. My aim is also to analyse what language means they choose while they are speaking, and how they use personal pronouns and metaphors.

The practical part will be divided into two main chapters. The first chapter is going to be focused on the first presidential debate of 2016 and the second chapter is going to deal with the first presidential debate of 2020. Both these chapters are going to pay attention to the rhetorical styles of all candidates. Finally, I am going to compare the language of both debates and the rhetorical style of Donald Trump during these two debates and I am going to provide all the results I detected.

8 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES OF 2016 AND 2020

Presidential debates play an important role for voters who are not sure who to vote for because thanks to presidential debates they can discover what are the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. The voters are also interested in opinions and plans that both candidates have about the future of the country. They want to know what will change when they give them their votes.

It is a tradition that presidential debates are hosted at universities. Both debates took place in September at universities that are located in New York and Ohio. Both debates were moderated by American journalists. The first presidential debate of 2016 was moderated by Lester Holt and the first presidential debate of 2020 by Chris Wallace. The candidates of the presidential election in 2016 were a Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and a Republican nominee, Donald Trump. In the presidential election in 2020, Donald Trump participated as an incumbent Republican president and Hillary Clinton as a Democratic nominee. Topics of the debates dealt with the current problem of America.

Presidential Debate	2016	2020
Date:	September 26, 2016	September 29, 2020
Host:	Hofstra University	Case Western Reserve University
Location:	Hempstead, New York	Cleveland, Ohio
Moderator:	Lester Holt	Chris Wallace
Participants:		
Democratic:	Hillary Clinton	Joe Biden
Republican:	Donald Trump	Donald Trump
Topics:	The Economy Trade The Federal Deficit Race Relations The War on Terror The foreign policy of the United States	The Trump and Biden Records The Supreme Court Covid-19 The Economy Race and Violence The Integrity of the Election

Table 1: The first presidential debates of 2016 and 2020 (Source: the author's table)

9 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE OF 2016

This debate was divided into 6 parts – every part focused on a different topic and took approximately 15 minutes. At the beginning of every part, the moderator introduced the topic and both participants had two minutes for their answers. Afterwards, the discussion between both candidates follows. All questions that were discussed in the debate were discrete and not shared with the commission or campaigns. Candidates spoke in front of a podium but there was no audience, thus applause could be heard mainly at the beginning and end of the debate. The topics of the six parts dealt with the economy, trade, race relations, the foreign policy, the federal deficit, and the war on terror. The candidates also shared their experience in the political and business field. Hillary Clinton's performance was suggested to be better than Donald Trump's performance. According to a group of analysts consisting of Decker, McManus, and Lauter (2016), Hillary Clinton won all the parts of the debate. People expected a lot from this debate and that is the reason why this debate was the most-watched debate in history.

9.1 Hillary Clinton's Rhetorical Style

Hillary Clinton's style is often characterized as cold and masculine instead of feminine while presenting in media. In contrast to Trump, her rhetorical style consists of a wide vocabulary, she makes long sentences and is more informative. In the past, Clinton did not use emotions which can be a consequence of her being a lawyer. When she speaks, she uses long and complex sentences, personal pronouns, and modality features. Unlike Trump, Clinton focuses on her vision of the future and she is more positive. Clinton also aims at similar features of her and the voters. Her strategy for persuading people is by intertextuality, repetition, and personal pronouns. At the beginning of the debate, she wants to be polite and friendly and maybe to show respect and interest to her opponent thus the very first thing she says in this debate is:

(1) *"How are you, Donald?"*

In this debate, she wants to appeal more to the emotions of voters so she says things that show her being more open about herself and her life. That is the reason why she makes a note that the day of this debate is her granddaughter's birthday together with the vision of the country and future of America because both for her granddaughter and citizens of America she wants a country where all would like to live.

(2) *“The central question in this election is really what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we’ll build together. Today is my granddaughter’s second birthday, so I think about this a lot.”*

Clinton also pays attention to people who have problems and how she can help them if she wins the election. This is also a part of her strategy of appealing to emotions. She aimed at particular groups of people – families, women, and immigrants.

(3) *“And I want us to do more to support people who are struggling to balance family and work.”*

Another difference between her and Trump is their opinion about African-Americans and Latinos. Clinton talks about everything in a positive way so her choice of language does not appeal to fear as Trump but to solidarity.

(4) *“Too many young **African-American** and **Latino** men ended up in jail for nonviolent offenses, and it’s just a fact that if you’re a young African-American man and you do the same thing as a young white man, you are more likely to be arrested, charged, convicted and incarcerated.”*

In case, Trump attacked her and her answers, she defends herself by saying arguments about things that she did well. Trump often points out that she has been in politics for 30 years and did nothing but she always opposes and disagrees with his arguments.

(5) *Clinton: Well, I’ve been a senator, Donald...*

Trump: You haven’t done it. You haven’t done it. [Interruption]

Clinton: And I have been a secretary of state...

Trump: Excuse me. [Interruption]

Clinton: And I have done a lot.

Clinton’s rhetorical style that shows her sympathy with a certain group of people such as women or immigrants is also a part of her ideology. She tries to be persuasive and influential because she stands for unity and loyalty and that is the reason for her slogan “Stronger Together”.

(6) *“So we have to **bring communities together** in order to begin working on that, as a mutual goal.”*

Clinton makes differences between Trump and her father who was also a businessman. However, according to her, her father really cared about people from the middle class whereas Trump deprived thousands of people of their job. This was also a persuasive strategy because she wants to persuade people that he is not the right candidate. After all, his business went bankrupt many times.

(7) “I have a different experience. My father was a **small-businessman**. He worked really hard.”

(8) “And when we talk about your business, you've taken business **bankruptcy** six times. There are a lot of great businesspeople that have never taken **bankruptcy** once. You call yourself the **King of Debt**.”

She is often interrupted by Trump thus their sentences often finish in ellipsis.

(9) “Look, there are differences...”

(10) “There are...”

There was modality in her statements that indicates a persuasion effect and it is a way how to claim political authority. It is an important persuasive technique because modals reflect the power both candidates have.

(11) “We also **have** to make the economy fairer.”

(12) “We **can** have enough clean energy to power every home. We **can** build a new modern electric grid.”

She quite often uses the second-person pronoun *you* in order to emphasize that citizens play an important role in the election. Instead of pronoun *me*, she uses the pronoun *we* more often because she wants to make a bond with the public. For instance, she used the pronoun *us* when she wanted to express solidarity with citizens:

(13) “I want **us** to invest in you. I want **us** to invest in your future.”

Speaking of pronouns, Clinton uses the first person pronoun *I* when she refers to herself and for the purpose of stressing her distinguishing identity of Americans and how to make their lives better.

(14) “And so what **I** believe is the more we can do for the middle class, the more we can invest in you, your education, your skills, your future, the better we will be off and the better we'll grow.”

Clinton often addresses Trump by his full name, because she uses exclusive *we* during this debate to make a reference to her and her opponent.

(15) “Finally, **we** tonight are on the stage together, **Donald Trump and I**.”

In her two-minute segment about the economy, she uses the term *trumped-up trickle-down* in order to mock her opponent. She says *trickle-down* because she wants to point out that in this economy, politicians do not care about common people thus, this system cannot work. She associates this bad image of the *trickle-down* economy with an image of Donald Trump. The meaning of this term is that if Donald Trump manages these policies, the economy will be in danger.

(16) *“I call it **trumped-up trickle-down**, because that’s exactly what it would be. That is not how we grow the economy.”*

Metaphors are used by Clinton as a tool of persuasion. She uses a conceptual metaphor *nation as a family* because people live in a country together and it is up to them to choose what country they want to live in and at the same time they decide what future they want to build.

(17) *“The central question in this election is really **what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we’ll build together.**”*

She uses another conceptual metaphor when she considers *politics as war*, in her answer she admits the possibility that she can lose the election because she is aware that the voters are the key to winning the election.

(18) *“**This election’s really up to you.** It’s not about us so much as it is about you and your families and the kind of country and future you want.”*

Clinton also interprets the economy in the past as an *abyss* and by that, she points out that the future can be only better and bad days are behind them if they learn from the mistakes of the past.

(19) *“Now, we have come back from the **abyss**. And it has not been easy. So we’re now on the precipice of having a potentially much better economy, but the last thing we need to do is to go back to the policies that failed us in the first place.”*

Clinton’s rhetorical style also includes anaphora that she uses in order to emphasize certain ideas. It is also a way how to make the public remember what is being said.

(20) *“**We can** deploy a half a billion more solar panels. **We can** have enough clean energy to power every home. **We can** build a new modern electric grid.”*

She also negatively makes a reference to Trump, when she accuses Trump during the Great Recession of being one of the people who were happy about the housing crisis and she cites what Trump said in the past because she wants to remind what he said.

(21) *“He said, back in 2006, “Gee, I hope it does collapse, because then I can go in and buy some and make some money.” Well, it did collapse.”*

To sum up, Clinton’s rhetorical style was not as negative as Trump’s and her choice of words was appealing for positive emotions. During the debate, she was calm and did not interrupt her opponent. She answered the questions clearly and on the topic and she was very informative but she needed some time to decide what she wanted to say. This was also a consequence of her being interrupted by Trump. It was obvious that she used a language that should attract the voters she aimed at, especially women, minorities, and families. Her

rhetorical style included emotions and focused on the future and the vision that everything can be better if the American citizen as a country will be united.

9.2 Donald Trump's Rhetorical Style

His rhetorical style was direct because he answered the questions immediately and the typical aspect of his rhetorical style was attacking the opponent. He used the principle of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation and made references to other politicians. In his answers, he often distinguished between *him* and *them* and *we* and the *politicians*. He quite often points out that Hillary Clinton is in politics for many years thus she has the chance as other politicians to solve problems that America is going through but she does nothing.

(1) *“And, Hillary, I'd just ask you this. You've been doing this for 30 years. Why are you just thinking about these solutions right now? For 30 years, you've been doing it, and now you're just starting to think of solutions.”*

He says that politicians care only about things that are associated with them. He wants to show that unlike Clinton he knows the solutions to problems and that Clinton has no plan. He often talks about his job to prove that he is not a politician but mainly a businessman and that is the reason why he is a better candidate than Hillary Clinton. During this debate, he often points out how successful he is.

(2) *“Well, for one thing -- and before we start on that -- my father gave me a very small loan in 1975, and I built it into a company that's worth many, many billions of dollars, with some of the greatest assets in the world, and I say that only because that's the kind of thinking that our country needs.”*

Since the first topic of this debate deals with achieving prosperity, Trump in his answer prefers to point out things that are bad in order to show the voters that he is aware of these problems and he has a plan how to improve them. He also accuses Clinton and other politicians of causing these problems.

(3) *“And it's politicians like Secretary Clinton that have caused this problem. Our country has tremendous problems. We're a debtor nation. We're a serious debtor nation. And we have a country that needs new roads, new tunnels, new bridges, new airports, new schools, new hospitals. And we don't have the money, because it's been squandered on so many of your ideas.”*

Instead of being positive, he prefers to give the impression of fear. This can be his strategy that he also uses in business. He adopts fear as a form of persuasion. When speaking about

races and immigrants, he also uses the strategy of fear when he points out that many people have been shot since Obama became a president and unlike Clinton, he accuses mainly illegal immigrants of this violence that needs to be stopped.

(4) “*We have gangs roaming the street. And in many cases, they're illegally here, **illegal immigrants**. And they have guns. And **they shoot people**.*”

While speaking, Trump often begins sentences with a subordinate clause and uses compound sentences. For instance, when he talks about the segment dealing with the topic of achieving prosperity, he says:

(5) “***When they sell into us**, there's no tax.*”

On the other hand, when he interrupts his opponent he uses only short sentences and utterances because he knows that he does not have enough time to express his whole opinion.

(6) “*Yeah, for 30 years.*” [Interruption]

Trump's rhetorical style included uncommon words that are not typical in everyday communication such as *tremendously* to show that he is intelligent and his vocabulary is wide.

(7) “*Under my plan, I'll be reducing taxes **tremendously**, from 35 percent to 15 percent for companies, small and big businesses.*”

When I looked at how Donald Trump responds to the moderator, I noticed that there are some typical words Trump uses such as the phrase *believe me*. By that, he tries to interpret himself as an American citizen, not a businessman or politician. He wants to assure the audience that he knows what is best for America and the American people that is why his campaign slogan during the presidential election was “Make America Great Again”.

(8) “*When ISIS formed in this vacuum created by Barack Obama and Secretary Clinton, and **believe me**, you were the ones that took out the troops.*”

To start with metaphors, he used a metaphor associated with *hell* because according to him, people especially minorities in cities such as Chicago have to live in a dangerous environment. He also considers the country as a company that someone must *run* and he believes that the right leader is himself.

(9) “*We have a situation where we have our inner cities, African-Americans, Hispanics, are living in **hell**, because it's so dangerous.*”

(10) “*It's because it's about time that this country had somebody **running** it that has an idea about money.*”

Speaking of the rule of three, Trump often repeats what he has said because he wants the audience to remember what he says and he points out the problems so people understand

that he is aware of it and he tries to show that he knows how to solve this problem, unlike his opponent. Repetition also occurs when Trump points out that his opponent did something wrong.

(11) *“I will **bring** -- excuse me. I will **bring** back jobs. You can't **bring** back jobs.”*

(12) *“**That** was more than a mistake. **That** was done purposely. Ok? **That** was not a mistake. That was done purposely.”*

Especially in the first part of the debate, anaphora was used in order to emphasize some situation and force the opponent to admit that what he said is the truth.

(13) *“**You go** to New England, **you go** to Ohio, Pennsylvania, **you go** anywhere you want, Secretary Clinton, and you will see devastation where manufacture is down 30, 40, sometimes 50 percent.”*

(14) *“**It's a great thing** for the middle class. **It's a great thing** for companies to expand.”*

Trump also makes references to Barack Obama in a negative way to show what problems were caused during Obama's presidency. He mentions the debt that America has and in terms of race problems, he points out how many people were killed because of danger in the cities.

(15) *“In fact, almost **4,000** have been killed since Barack Obama became president.”*

He also refers to the previous president, Clinton's husband, that he made unsuccessful trades and the approval of NAFTA even calls as the *worst trade* in the history of America and describes the bad results that this approval caused.

(16) *“He approved NAFTA, which is the single **worst trade deal** ever approved in this country.” [Interruption]*

Trump makes a reference to Clinton in order to associate her person with negative things such as her email scandals especially when Clinton accuses Trump of doing bad things. When the opponent attacked him, he tried to make an advantage from it.

(17) *“I will release my tax returns -- against my lawyer's wishes -- when she releases her 33,000 e-mails that have been deleted. As soon as she releases them, I will release.”*

During this debate, he addressed Hillary Clinton as Secretary Clinton so he wanted to point out that unlike him she is a politician and in his answers, he often blamed politicians for doing bad things. However, especially at the end of the debate, he addressed her only as Hillary.

(18) “**Secretary Clinton** and others, politicians, should have been doing this for years, not right now, because of the fact that we've created a movement.”

(19) “As far as child care is concerned and so many other things, I think **Hillary** and I agree on that.”

In conclusion, Trump used simple language because he aimed at a large audience. His language also included vivid examples and discourse markers. In order to protect himself, he tried to disturb the coherence and cohesion of the debate. During the whole debate, Trump very often interrupted his opponent because he wanted to control the debate and be dominant. He used interruptions and questions to disturb the other participant but he also wanted to add humour to the debate. In this debate, Trump talked for a longer time than his opponent so it helped him to express his ideas and opinions in detail but he did not always respond on topic. Trump is known for his direct, and straightforward style so it means that Trump did not have problems answering the questions directly without having extra time to think about what he wanted to say.

10 THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE OF 2020

Before the debate started, Joe Biden was considered to have a significant lead because the campaign of Donald Trump had financial problems. Donald Trump reacted to this by claiming that Joe Biden was not in the best health condition. Again, the debate was also divided into six parts which dealt with topics such as Trump's and Biden's records, the Covid-19 pandemic, race and violence in cities, the economy, election integrity, and the Supreme Court. The course of the debate was the same as the first debate in 2016 but the time of each part was not upheld because Trump interrupted Biden many times. The moderator warned Trump about respecting the rules of the debate. According to analysts (Agiesta, 2020), Biden provided better performance than Trump who was also accused of saying false statements during the debate.

10.1 Joe Biden's Rhetorical Style

Joe Biden's rhetorical style is well-organized and decisive. At the beginning of the debate, Biden is slower at answering questions. Biden tries to stay positive during the whole debate. In his vocabulary, words like *united* and *people* because he pays attention to the voters. Biden also has to face insults and comments about his family by Trump but Biden still acts calmly and positively. In his two minutes segments, he does not have enough time and space to express his opinions because of Trump's interruptions. Thus, he starts talking about the topic but he often has to defend mainly himself because Trump attacks him during his answer. Biden accuses Trump of not being responsible especially about a situation dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. He refers to him negatively in order to persuade the public that Trump is the one who does not pay enough attention to the seriousness of the disease.

(1) *Biden: When he was presented with that number, he said, "It is what it is." Well, it is what it is because you are who you are. That's why it is. The President has no plan.*

He makes an advantage of it and thus Biden appeals to the audience by telling them that if he becomes a president he will have a prepared plan on how to fight the pandemic and he will distribute the vaccine as soon as possible.

(2) *"Because he doesn't have a plan. If I were running it, I'd know what the plan is."*

Biden tries to stay calm and direct and he mainly looks at the camera or the moderator. He uses language that empathizes with the audience. He is more successful in convincing the

public. He appeals to emotions because he expresses solidarity with families who lost their loved ones.

- (3) *“How many of you are in a situation where you lost your mom or dad and you couldn’t even speak to them, you had a nurse holding a phone up so you could in fact say goodbye?”*

His language aims directly at the American citizens. Instead of the pronoun *I*, Biden uses the pronoun *we*. He prefers to talk in plural form because he wants to point out that unity is important and that he is a part of the American citizens, not just a politician who cares about himself.

- (4) *“In fact, **we’re all Americans**. The only way **we’re** going to bring this country together is bring everybody together. There’s nothing **we** cannot do, if **we** do it together. **We** can take this on and **we** can defeat racism in America.”*

Speaking of pronouns, when Biden tries to attack Trump, he does not use the pronoun *you* but he uses the pronoun *he*. Thus he does not talk directly to Trump, but he pays attention to the audience.

- (5) *“Now, what’s at stake here is the President’s made it clear, **he** wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. **He’s** been running on that, **he** ran on that and he’s been governing on that.”*

Biden is often attacked by Trump and does not have enough time and space to interpret his arguments. Because of these attacks, Biden uses fillers more than Trump. He attacks Biden immediately when he does not agree with what Biden said. Thus, Biden does not expect it and sometimes Biden seems to be confused and does not know what to say.

- (6) *“Well, it’s hard to get any word in with this clown.”*

Hyperbole often occurs in Biden’s answers because he wants to show the people how serious problems are. This was a persuasive strategy by which he emphasizes the important parts of his utterances. By hyperboles, he highlights negative things that he associates with the image of Trump.

- (7) *“**Everybody** knows he’s a liar.”*

Biden describes Trump as a liar but also as a *racist* president. Because Biden aims his campaign during this presidential election at specific groups of people, he wants to make sure that these groups will not support Trump. Thus, his strategy of persuasion is to associate Donald Trump with bad things.

- (8) *“This is a president who has used everything as a dog whistle, to try to generate **racists** hatred, **racist** division.”*

Another significant linguistic aspect is the usage of the Arabic expression *inshallah*. It can be a strategy to show Muslims in America that he is opened to every religion. This expression means in Arabic *If God wills*. On the other hand, the usage of this expression can be disrespectful to Muslims because in the context Biden uses this word, it can be taken as a sarcastic note. Biden says *inshallah* in response to Trump's unreleased tax returns. However, the word *inshallah* can also mean *If it ever happens*.

(9) *Trump: Millions of dollars. And you'll get to see it. And you'll get to see it.*

Biden: When? Inshallah?

Speaking of metaphors, Biden also considers the presidential election as a war. But Biden is ready to accept both – victory or defeat and uses the contrastive pair of verbs *win* and *lose*. Biden does not say that if he would lose the elections were a fraud.

(10) *“When the votes are counted and they're all counted, that will be accepted. If I win, that will be accepted. If I lose, that'll be accepted.”*

Biden uses repetition in the same way as Trump. The usage of repetition occurs when Biden tries to mock his opponent or when he emphasizes some important information. For instance, he uses anaphora as a rhetorical effect.

(11) *“He doesn't know how. He doesn't know how to do that.”*

When he is forced to defend himself and keep his positive image, he also uses the rule of three in order to put even more emphasis on what he says.

(12) *Biden: That is not true.*

Trump: What did he do to deserve it? What did he do with-

Biden: None of that is true.

Trump: to deserve \$183,000?

Wallace: Sir, you've asked him a question, let him answer it.

Biden: None of that is true.

Biden also quite often uses an anadiplosis because he repeats a word or phrase at the end of the sentence and the beginning of the following sentence. He uses it in order to emphasize his ideas and opinions but also as a persuasive tool. Anadiplosis occurs mainly in the first segment that deals with the topic of the Supreme Court.

(13) *“Number one, he knows what I proposed. What I proposed is that we expand Obamacare and we increase it.”*

“Now, here's the deal. The deal is that it's going to wipe out pre-existing conditions.” Even though he is interrupted by Trump all the time, he is smiling and trying to answer the questions. Biden quite often reacts to Trump and tells him if he can stay quiet. It seems that

even though Biden expected that Trump will interrupt him during these presidential debates, Biden is quite tired of being interrupted every time he tries to express his opinions. This is one of his many reactions to Trump's interruptions:

(14) *"Will you shut up, man?"*

When Biden addresses Trump, in some cases, Biden uses the word *president* especially when he talks about something negatively so he tries to make a negative association with Trump. This is a part of a strategy how to persuade people why not to vote for Trump.

(15) *"The **President** has no plan. He hasn't laid out anything."*

(16) *"You're the worst **president** America has ever had."*

In conclusion, Biden talked less than Trump because he was more interrupted by him. In his answers, he used short sentences but he answered the topic. However, he also interrupted Trump but not too often. Since Biden had to face the interruptions by Trump, fillers in Biden's rhetorical style occurred. Many of his sentences ended in ellipsis thus, his answers seemed chaotic many times. For emphasis and as a persuasive tool, Biden used repetition and hyperbole. His positive rhetorical style is also associated with his presidential campaign slogan "Our Best Days Still Lie Ahead". By his slogan, he wanted to point out that if he is a president of the USA, there is a bright future waiting for all American citizens and the prosperity of the country is going to be better than ever.

10.2 Donald Trump's Rhetorical Style

During the presidential candidacy in 2020, Donald Trump's rhetorical style has not changed so much. However, he is straightforward and even more interrupts his opponent. He refuses any criticism and persuasively defends himself. Trump often reacts aggressively and emotionally. While he speaks, he is louder and more confident than Biden. In the debate, he makes eye contact with Biden and looks at him most of the time. From the beginning, he states that if he does not win the election he will blame the voting process. He causes doubts among the public so he still uses the strategy of appealing to fear as he did in his previous candidacy. As in his candidacy in 2016, he uses more negative language and he is the most positive about his own achievements. Trump dominates the debate but not always in a good way because of his interruptions the debate is chaotic. To influence and persuade the public, Trump focuses on using pronouns. The most used pronoun by Trump was *I*. The pronoun *I* is used mainly when he needs to defend himself.

(1) *"The only thing **I** haven't done a good job, and that's because of the fake news, no matter what you say to them, they give you a bad press on it."*

When Trump attacks Biden, he says the pronoun *you* so he is direct and he talks exactly to Biden. This strategy is a part of showing a negative image of Biden. When he talks about the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic, he claims that if Biden was the president, the situation would be a way worse in order to persuade the audience that he is not the right candidate.

(2) *“And if **you** were here, it wouldn’t be 200, it would be two million people because you were very late on the draw. **You** didn’t want me to ban China, which was heavily infected. **You** didn’t want me to ban Europe.”*

Another linguistic aspect that I am going to mention is fillers that are used when Trump needs some time to think about the question and to decide what he wants to say. The word *well* is the most used filler by Trump:

(3) *“**Well**, I’ve spoken to the companies and we can have it a lot sooner. It’s a very political thing because people like this would rather make it political than save lives.”*

Metaphors are a significant part of Trump’s rhetorical style. When he talked about the economy, he uses a metaphor in which he considers himself as a *builder* because he often emphasizes the verb *build* and points out that the economy is strong and the unity of people is important. He also suggested that if people support him, they can achieve anything together.

(4) *“If you would have had the charge of what I was put through, I had to close the greatest economy of the history of our country. And by the way, now it’s being **built** again and it’s going up fast.”*

When he speaks about Biden, his vocabulary includes negative words that he emphasizes in metaphors. Again, he focuses on a positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. While talking about his opponent, Trump pays attention to prove to the public that Biden is not going to be successful as a president. When talking about the Covid-19 pandemic, Trump even considers Biden to be a *destroyer* of America thus, when he talks about Biden he uses a negative metaphor.

(5) *“He will **shut it down** again. He will **destroy** this country.”*

Trump characterizes the presidential election as a war because there are two parties and both of them try to attract as many voters as possible so he interpreted Republicans against Democrats as opponents in a war and thus uses a metaphor associated with it. When he talks, he distinguishes between Republicans and Democrats according to how they want to fight the pandemic and also talks about them in a negative way.

- (6) *“If you look at Pennsylvania, if you look at certain states that have been shut down, they have **Democrat** governors, all, one of the reasons they shut down is because they want to keep it shut down until after the election on November 3rd.”*

Because Trump wants to show himself in a positive way to the voters, he often uses a metaphor when he considers himself to be a *great leader* because according to him, he did a great job while being a president. He also cites other people who said something good about him in order to prove what he says and he also uses the rule of three:

- (7) *Trump: Many of your Democrat Governors said, “**President Trump did a phenomenal job.**” We worked with the Governor. Oh really, go take a look. **The Governors said I did a phenomenal job.** Most of them said that. In fact, people that would not be necessarily on my side said that, “**President Trump did a phenomenal job.**”*

The last type of metaphor I am going to mention is a metaphor associated with *crime*. When discussing the topic of race problems in America Trump many times accuses Biden of things he did and he tries to make people believe that a person who is responsible for what happened in America is Biden. He points out that he called African-Americans super predators and treated them like nobody else before.

- (8) *“You did a **crime** bill, 1994, where you call them **super predators.**”*
 (9) *“You call them **super predators**, and you’ve called them worse than that. Because you look back at your testimony over the years, you’ve called them a lot worse than that.”*

Trump uses repetition when he wants to emphasize the meaning of the utterances. The main purpose of using repetition is pointing out things that he has done in a good way and on the other side when he tries to mock his opponent. Sometimes he repeats the whole sentences but more often he used repetition of the part he wanted to emphasize. In this example, the rule of three occurs:

- (10) *“We won the election. Elections have consequences. **We have the Senate, we have the White House, and we have a phenomenal nominee respected by all. Top, top academic, good in every way. Good in every way.**”*

He also uses epistrophe because he repeated the phrase at the end of his sentences.

- (11) *“You don’t know what’s **on the ballot.** Why is it **on the ballot?** Why is it **on the ballot?** It’s not **on the ballot.**”*

As I mentioned, when he attacks his opponent he starts talking about Biden negatively and as a part of his strategy, he repeats part of the sentences to create a negative image about the other participant.

(12) *“Well, you’re certainly going to **socialist**. You’re going to **socialist** medicine-“* Trump sometimes talks directly to the moderator instead of Biden. This was quite disrespectful because it seems like Trump tries to pretend that Biden is not at the same stage as him. The moderator Chris Wallace points out that Trump is discussing with Biden not him.

(13) *Wallace: You’re debating him not me. Let me ask my question.*

Interruptions play an important role in this debate. Trump interrupts his opponent much more than he interrupted Hillary Clinton in his previous candidacy. Trump does not allow Biden to even finish his two minutes segments. He uses every situation when he can disagree with Biden but interruptions and attacks were part of Trump’s strategy. Trump was many times warned by Chris Wallace to stay quiet during Biden’s two minutes segments and speak only in his segments:

(14) *“In that segment, you each are going to have two uninterrupted moments. In those two interrupted minutes, Mr. President, you can say anything you want.*

Speaking of interruptions, when Trump disagrees with Biden, he wants to show Biden in a negative way to the audience in his interruptions, and for instance, he accuses Biden to be a *liar*. Trump does not just attack his opponent but quite often he also mocks him:

(15) *“But you agree. Joe, you’re the **liar**. You graduated last in your class not first in your class.”*

When Trump addresses his opponent, he uses his name Joe. Despite the fact Trump accuses Biden of doing nothing during his 47 years as a politician, he does not address him as a vice president but simply as *Joe*.

(16) *“**Joe**, you’ve had 308,000 military people dying because you couldn’t provide them proper healthcare in the military. So don’t tell me about this.”*

In conclusion, Trump’s rhetorical style was focused mainly on positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. He did not allow Biden to express his opinions because he interrupted him all the time. Trump’s rhetorical style was aggressive and direct. He wanted to be the one who controlled the course of the debate. Trump used the pronoun *I* when he defended himself and talked about what he achieved. On the other hand, the pronoun *you* was negatively associated with Biden. Another important aspect was the usage of metaphors

by that he persuade the audience that he is the right candidate whereas Biden is the bad one. He also used the rule of three as a persuasive tool.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to analyse the discourse of presidential debates of 2016 and 2020 campaigns. I focused on their rhetorical style and linguistic aspects that mainly occurred during the debates. I paid attention to the usage of pronouns, metaphors, and persuasive tools that the candidates used. I pointed out the most significant features of the rhetorical styles of candidates. The qualitative research was carried out by discourse analysis of the first debates of the 2016 and 2020 campaigns.

The theoretical part explained how the rhetoric developed and illustrated the most significant styles of language. The theory also focused on political discourse and the most typical aspects of the rhetorical style of politicians.

The practical part of the work was based on the analysis of rhetorical styles of candidates and features described in the theoretical part by analysing the presidential debates of the 2016 and 2020 campaigns. The analysis discovered that both of these debates have some similarities and differences. All of the candidates' goal was to persuade the public to vote for them. They were using different strategies according to their political parties and their personalities. The analysis proved that candidates tried to give a good account of themselves and attract as many voters as possible.

It was surprising to see how every candidate uses the typical aspects of presidential debates such as using pronouns, metaphors, the rule of three, and persuasion. Every participant used the same aspects but in a completely different way. Whereas the first debate of the 2016 campaign was calm and continuous despite the interruptions by Trump, the first debate of the 2020 campaign was chaotic. The moderator of this debate did not control the course of this debate because Trump became more dominant. During this debate, Trump's style became even more aggressive and he wanted to show his power. Candidates in both debates used a language that matched their ideologies and values. Democratic candidates were more focused on the future and showed positive thinking whereas Trump as a Republican candidate used negative language.

The analysis also detected how candidates reacted to the question of the moderator and how they addressed each other as well as the words they used positively or negatively.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

U.S. United States

USA United States of America

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Donald Trump and his 2016 presidential campaign slogan</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Figure 2: Hillary Trump and her 2016 presidential campaign slogan</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Figure 3: Joe Biden and his 2020 presidential campaign slogan</i>	<i>29</i>

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The first presidential debates in 2016 and 202032