

## **Exploring Discursive Strategies to Represent Power In The 2020 Final Presidential Debate between Donald J. Trump and Joe Biden: A Political Discourse Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Exploring Discursive Strategies to Represent Power in The 2020 Final Presidential Debate between Donald J. Trump and Joe Biden is a study that analyzes the topic of political discourse, particularly focusing on discursive strategies used by the two presidential candidates. This research aims (1) to analyze the discursive strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the final presidential debate; (2) to recognize the influence that these discursive strategies have on the 2020 final election results. The research applied a descriptive qualitative method, with the debate video as the data source. The data were utterances in the form of both candidates' words, phrases, and sentences. After being collected, the data were categorized and further analyzed based on Van Dijk's approach of CDA (2003), in which he proposed 25 categories of discursive strategies in political discourse.*

*The result of the study reveals some findings: First, out of 299 data of discursive strategies found in the debate, Donald Trump used 159 discursive strategies throughout the entire debate, with repetition as the most dominant one which was applied 17 times. Moreover, he did not apply any consensus and euphemism strategies. Meanwhile, Joe Biden only used 140 discursive strategies, with the number game as the most dominant strategy which appeared 20 times and he did not apply hyperbole in his utterances. Second, the writer found out that the two patterns of discursive strategies influenced the 2020 US Presidential Election: (1) frequency and effectiveness of using discursive strategies; (2) the representation of power that focused more on displaying the negative sides of opponents have a higher chance of winning an election.*

**Keywords :** *CDA, Political Discourse, Discursive Strategies, Presidential Debate*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The 2020 Presidential Election of America was one of the most discussed topics among politicians and world leaders. This huge attention was caused by the fact that America is a superpower nation with a huge influence in global economics, education, technology, and military. Therefore it is important to keep up with their political events, as it will indirectly determine the fate of other nations across the globe.

In a democratic nation like the United States of America, it is very important to win public's interest in a presidential election. Therefore, to prepare for such an election, each candidate has to prepare powerful

strategies for the debate that can attract the attention of voters. These strategies are crucial to determine their victory in the presidential election, as they will show how reliable and trustworthy the candidates are. One phenomenon that frequently occurs is the use of discursive strategies in presidential debates.

Discursive strategy is one of many strategies that politicians use in their speech, especially in a debate. It is basically a strategy used to control audience and to represent power in society through the discourse structures. According to Wodak and Reisigl (1999:6), discursive strategy is an intentional plan of tactics employed in discourses to achieve a particular social, political,

psychological or linguistic goal. This popular concept was first introduced by Van Dijk T. A (1997:33) as he emphasizes that the discursive structure can construct the ideological concept of the people as the medium to control the mind and belief. Generally, a control of one group towards another is described as power. Foucault (1986:22) also states that, power is ideologically represented through the language in discourse. Van Dijk T.A (1995:20) confidently defines social power in terms of control, which means that power is the act of taking control of others. In other words, when a speaker can control the audience's mind, the speaker will have the power to deceive their thoughts and to gain their trust.

In a tight competition, politicians have to show their power to influence the audience. This representation of power can be delivered through discursive strategies in discourse analysis, with the relation to its representation of power. Van Dijk T.A (2003:62-85) proposes several types of discursive strategies: *actor description, authority, burden, categorization, comparison, counterfactual, disclaimer, euphemism, evidentiality, argumentation, illustration, generalization, hyperbole, implication, irony, repetition, metaphor, national self-glorification, norm expression, number game, polarization, populism, presupposition, vagueness, and victimization.*

CDA, in addition, represents how power is illustrated in oral and written discourse, such as in the news and political events. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012:12) theorize that CDA specifically aims to investigate how power relations are constructed through the language use. Van Dijk T.A (1993:255) also emphasizes that representation of power is mostly found in public discourses such as media, education, and politics. Therefore, power representation can also be found in presidential debates.

Below is an example of the use of discursive strategies by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 Final Presidential Debate :



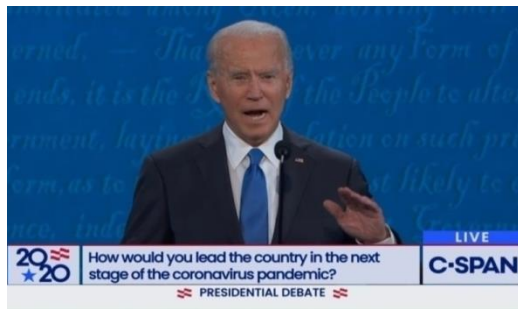
Picture source: C-Span YouTube

Table 1. Example 1 (26:54-27-17)

Speaker	Utterances
Kristen Welker	How would you lead the country during this next stage of the coronavirus crisis? Two minutes uninterrupted.
Donald Trump	.... we're fighting it and we're fighting it hard. There is a spike. <b>There was a spike in Florida and it's now gone. There was a very big spike in Texas. It's now gone. There was a very big spike in Arizona. It is now gone, and there was some spikes and surges in other places, they will soon be gone...</b>

Context : Kristen Welker, the moderator, asked both candidates about what they would do to stop the coronavirus. Donald Trump stated that it would soon be gone, by mentioning the cases in big cities like Florida, Texas, and Arizona.

The bold sentences above are examples of a discursive strategy called *repetition*. Van Dijk (2003:83) states that this strategy plays a huge role in emphasizing the good sides of the speaker. It is basically a strategy to emphasize a certain thing to the audience by repeating the same structures of words to increase the impact of its meaning. Here, Donald Trump used a discursive repetition strategy to assure the public that the virus would soon be gone and that he had the power to make it disappear just like how it did in other places. The repetition aims to assure the nation that everything would be fine.



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

Table 2. Example 2 (29:01-29:21)

Speaker	Utterances
Kristen Welker	Okay. Former Vice President Biden to you. How would you lead the country out of this crisis? You have two minutes uninterrupted.
Joe Biden	We're in a situation where there are a thousand deaths a day now. <i>And there are over 70,000 new cases per day. Compared to what's going on in Europe as the New England Medical Journal said, they're starting from a very low rate.</i> We're starting from a very high rate.

**Context:** After hearing Trump's answer on coronavirus matter, Joe Biden gave his response. He mentioned the amount of COVID-19 cases per day. He also compared it to the cases in Europe.

In his utterance above, we can obviously see Joe Biden used the discursive strategy called *number game*. It is a strategy of giving the evidence of what the speaker says. As Van Dijk (2003:79) emphasizes in his book, numbers and statistics are the primary means in our culture to persuasively display objectivity, because they represent actual facts against mere opinions.

Here, Joe Biden uses a number game discursive strategy by mentioning the number of coronavirus cases in the United States (*70,000 new cases per day*) to convince and strengthen his statement to the audience. The benefit of using this strategy is that the arguments will be undeniable. Moreover, reliable statistics also give the impression of professionalism and intelligence to audience.

In his statement above, Joe Biden also uses authority and comparison as additional discursive strategies. He mentioned *The New England Medical Journal* as the source of his information. According to Van Dijk (2003:63), it is a strategy of mentioning authorities to support a case. Moreover, a comparison strategy can also be found in Biden's utterance above, in which he compared the coronavirus situation in the United States with the occurring situation in Europe.

Based on the two examples above, it can be seen that Donald Trump and Joe Biden showed their power in each statement to control public's opinions, and to underestimate their opponents in the battle of arguments. Here, we can see how discursive strategies are portrayed in a presidential debate.

The 2020 final presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden takes place at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. The moderator of the debate is Kristen Welker of NBC News. The Commission on Presidential Debates also sponsors the debate preparation. This debate lasts for almost two hours and it covers six major topics: COVID-19, American families, race in America, climate change, national security, and leadership.

The writer believes that understanding a discourse is an important thing to discuss. The lack of linguistics knowledge in most people could lead them to choose the wrong leader, bringing a nation into chaos and suffering. Moreover, this analysis is also expected to describe how the use of discursive strategies can affect the result of an election. The writer is interested in seeing how Joe Biden used his words and speech to win such a huge scale of audience.

Based on the reasons and phenomenon above, the writer is interested in conducting a research on **"Exploring Discursive Strategies To Represent Power In the 2020 Final Presidential Debate between Donald J. Trump and Joe Biden: A Political Discourse Analysis"**.

## **II. METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

In this research, the writer uses the descriptive qualitative method. Lincoln and Guba (1985:424) state that the qualitative method deals with data in the form of words rather than numbers and statistics. The descriptive research attempts to reach the perfect description of people, objects, events, places, and conversation. It is also strongly supported by Creswell (2014:171) who insists that qualitative research could involve an analysis of words and utterances taken from transcripts, videos, recordings, etc.

### **1. Data Source**

Data source refers to the place or objects from which data is obtained.

#### *a. Substantial Data*

The substantial data source in this research is the utterances of Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential debate.

#### *b. Locational Data*

This research obtained the data from a debate video between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 election. The debate video is downloaded from *C-Span Youtube channel* on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020.

### **2. Technique of Collecting the Data**

Maxwell (1992:285) states, “all qualitative projects get their claim to be trustworthy from the ability of the researcher to account for the outcome”, therefore it is important to have a systematical technique in collecting data to obtain a reliable data.

The initial data collection process was done by downloading the full video from C-Span YouTube Channel and watching the entire debate repeatedly. The raw transcript was later verified by checking the official script on *Rev* (2021) online website.

The final process of collecting the data was done by observing every utterance in the transcript. In this research, the writer used the observational method proposed by Maxwell (1992:293) with a non-participant technique in collecting the data. The writer just observed the debate and was not actually involved in it.

### **3. Technique of Analyzing Data**

In analyzing the data, the writer used the distributional method. It is basically a method of analyzing data in which the indicator device is the language itself (Sudaryanto, 1993:101). The analyzed data are the utterances by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, which contain the discursive strategies, as proposed by Van Dijk (2003:62-85).

The initial data analyzing process started with observation of the data collected from the debate transcript. Then the writer identified which of the utterances applied the discursive strategies by Van Dijk. After the initial procedure was conducted, those data were classified based on the type of strategy that occurred, which then further analyzed using the discursive strategy theory by Van Dijk (2003:62).

The next stage of data analysis involves another observation. After the selected data were completely analyzed and classified into each type of discursive strategy, the writer identified both candidates' most used discursive strategies. This part aimed to seek the dominant discursive strategies by each candidate to identify their power representation.

As the final analysis stage, the writer concluded which type of discursive strategy works best to win an election. Then the writer tried to figure out how those strategies affect the final result of the 2020 Presidential Election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

### **4. Technique of Presenting Data**

According to Sudaryanto (1993:114) there are two methods and techniques of presenting data analysis. Those are formal and informal methods. In this study, the writer used a mix of both methods to represent the results of the analysis. The formal method includes tables and simple diagrams to present the result of the study. The informal method includes a descriptive explanation of each strategy that the writer found throughout the 2020 final presidential debate.

### III. RESULT

To avoid excessive discussion, the writer limited the focus only to the topics related to the problem's background and formulation. Therefore, the result of this research was analyzed based on the two research points:

- (1) The discursive strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 final presidential debate;
- (2) The influence of discursive strategies on the 2020 election results.

#### 1. Discursive Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 Final Presidential Debate

To examine the discursive strategies in this 2020 Final Presidential Debate, the writer looks up critically on the power that is represented in utterances by both candidates during the debate.

In this study, the application of discursive strategies by Donald Trump and Joe Biden is done by emphasizing the positive sides of the in-group (their own political party) and the negative sides of the out-group (the opponent's political party). The utterances of both politicians in this debate represent a certain power which draws a positive self-representation and negative other-representation. This power then becomes beneficial to them to influence the ideology of the citizens.

##### a. Discursive Strategies Used by Donald Trump

The study shows that Donald Trump used 23 categories of discursive strategies in order to represent his political power against Joe Biden to win the election. By using those strategies, Donald Trump draws the attention of audience in different ways. This is done by serving only the positive information which is beneficial for his in-group (Republican Party). On the contrary, harmful information is concealed. He also used discursive strategies to destroy the political power of the out-group (Democrat Party).

The following table is the percentages of the use of discursive strategies by Donald Trump to represent his power during the 2020 final presidential debate.

Tabel. 3. Discursive strategies used by Donald Trump

No.	Discursive Strategies	Fre- quency	%
1	Actor Description	8	5.03%
2	Authority	5	3.14%
3	Burden (Topos)	4	2.51%
4	Categorization	12	7.54%
5	Comparison	7	4.40%
6	Consensus	0	0.00%
7	Counterfactuals	7	4.40%
8	Disclaimers	7	4.40%
9	Euphemism	0	0.00%
10	Evidentiality	7	4.40%
11	Illustration	4	2.51%
12	Generalization	5	3.14%
13	Hyperbole	12	7.54%
14	Implication	5	3.14%
15	Irony	3	1.88%
16	Repetition	17	10.6%
17	Metaphor	6	3.77%
18	National Self-Glorification	10	6.28%
19	Norm Expression	2	1.25%
20	Number Game	9	5.66%
21	Polarization	6	3.77%
22	Populism	5	3.14%
23	Presupposition	9	5.66%
24	Vagueness	5	3.14%
25	Victimization	4	2.51%
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table above, it can be seen that the writer had collected 159 data from Donald Trump's utterances which contain the use of discursive strategies. The writer also found that Donald Trump applied mostly repetition discursive strategy to represent his power. He used this strategy to emphasize his arguments and reject the claims served by Joe Biden. On the other hand, he hardly applied *norm expression* discursive strategy and he did not apply *consensus* and *euphemism* in this debate.

##### b) Discursive Strategies Used by Joe Biden

The analysis showed that as one of the presidential candidates, Joe Biden also used discursive strategies in this debate. Slightly different from Donald Trump, Joe Biden

draws the attention of audience by serving the negative sides of the out-group (Republican Party) and avoiding sensitive topics to save the face of his in-group (Democrat Party). This was done by selectively using some of the discursive strategies.

Moreover, the writer found 140 data from Joe Biden’s utterances that contain the use of discursive strategies. The most dominant discursive strategy that Joe Biden used is a number game based on the analysis. He applied this strategy to strengthen his arguments with numbers and statistics. On the contrary, he barely applied *national-self glorification* and *polarization* discursive strategies and he did not use *hyperbole* to exaggerate his statements.

The percentages of the use of discursive strategies employed by Joe Biden to represent his power during the 2020 final presidential debate can be seen in the following table.

Table. 4. Discursive strategies used by Joe Biden

No.	Discursive Strategies	Fre- quency	%
1	Actor Description	7	5.00%
2	Authority	14	10.0%
3	Burden (Topos)	3	2.14%
4	Categorization	5	3.57%
5	Comparison	4	2.85%
6	Consensus	3	2.14%
7	Counterfactuals	5	3.57%
8	Disclaimers	5	3.57%
9	Euphemism	6	4.28%
10	Evidentiality	2	1.42%
11	Illustration	11	7.85%
12	Generalization	5	3.57%
13	Hyperbole	0	0.00%
14	Implication	4	2.85%
15	Irony	8	5.71%
16	Repetition	8	5.71%
17	Metaphor	4	2.85%
18	National Self-Glorification	1	0.71%
19	Norm Expression	8	5.71%
20	Number Game	20	14.2%
21	Polarization	1	0.71%
22	Populism	2	1.42%
23	Presupposition	4	2.85%
24	Vagueness	3	2.14%
25	Victimization	7	5.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

There are two things that the writer discovered from the findings above. First, Donald Trump used relatively more discursive strategy than Joe Biden did. 159 strategies were found in Donald Trump’s utterances. Meanwhile Joe Biden had only used the strategies 140 times throughout the entire debate. Second, both politicians showed different patterns in using discursive strategy. Donald Trump dominantly applied *repetition*, while Joe Biden employed the strategy of *number game* most of the time to display his intelligence and to lift up his image in the eyes of the American people.

## 2. The Influence of Discursive Strategies on the 2020 Election Results

After conducting the analysis, the writer noticed two significant patterns of discursive strategies that influence the result of the 2020 US Presidential Election. The first pattern includes the frequency of discursive strategies and their effectiveness.

The research showed that each candidate used discursive strategies in a different frequency. These differences in frequency had given each candidate a different effect on the audience’s perspectives, influencing the amount of votes they got at the end of the election.

The second pattern that influences the election result is the representation of power. The writer found that the candidate who focused on using discursive strategies to represent the negative sides of their opponent had a higher chance of winning the election. These two patterns significantly influence the final election result.

The result of 2020 Presidential Election showed Joe Biden won with 51.3% votes and Donald Trump only gained 46.9% of the votes. This proved that the candidate who represents his power to show the negative sides of out-group has a higher opportunity to gain more votes than the one who uses it to represent his positive side. As Van Dijk states (2003:62) discursive strategies can influence the minds of discourse recipients.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The discussion is specifically divided into two main parts: (1) the discussion of discursive strategies used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the 2020 final presidential debate; (2) the influence of these discursive strategies on the 2020 election results.

##### 1. Discursive Strategies Used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden

The analysis showed that both candidates used various discursive strategies as battle weapons in representing their power. Out of 299 data that were found, the writer only analyzed 46 of them (23 data by Donald Trump and 23 data by Joe Biden). This situation was inevitable because analyzing every single data will make this research seem too complex for a bachelor's degree thesis.

The discursive strategies of the selected utterances by both candidates which emerged in the analysis are presented below.

###### a) National Self-Glorification

As a candidate in a presidential election, it is important to show patriotism value in a speech or in a statement. One way to express that value is to use the discursive strategy of national self-glorification. It lets the audience see how much the speaker or writer of a discourse loves their country.

Here is one of the data by Donald Trump:



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

###### Datum 1

###### Context:

While talking about the issues of COVID-19, Donald Trump strongly opposed the idea of prolonging the lockdowns. He believed that the United States had so many cases because they had the best testing in the world. Therefore, distancing and the lockdowns would not help.

Kristen Welker	:	President Trump, what about-
Donald Trump	:	... We have to protect our seniors. We have to protect our elderly. We have to protect especially our seniors with heart problems and diabetes problems. And we will protect. <i>We have the best testing in the world by far. That's why we have so many cases.</i>

Data : 207/DT/Ng/43:26-44:08

###### Ideological construction from the discourse :

Donald Trump loves his country so much that he even boasts the fact that the United States has the best testing tools and procedures in the world.

Donald trump's utterance above shows how he highly glorified his nation by saying 'We have the best testing in the world by far. That's why we have so many cases'. In this statement, Donald Trump proudly declared that the United States had the best medical testing and doctors globally, compared to other countries that were far behind them in terms of dealing with the coronavirus.

This discursive strategy was done by explicitly stating the words which glorified the United States medical services. It was also done by creating reasoning, in which Donald Trump said, 'We have the best testing in the world by far. That's why we have so many cases'. With that statement, Donald Trump showed a national glorification of his country by showing off the good quality of medical equipments in United States.

###### b) Illustration

Both candidates used this strategy to give an example or description of a certain thing or situation so that the audience easily understood what was being discussed and they could relate to it. Donald Trump and Joe Biden used this strategy to show their deep understanding of a particular topic or term. In this case, Joe Biden used a lot of illustration and discursive strategy to make the audience emotionally relate to him.

Here is one of the data by Joe Biden:



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

**Datum 2**

**Context:**

The topic of environment was being discussed when the moderator talked about how people of color are much more likely to live near oil refineries and chemical plants. In Texas, there are families who worry the plants near them are making them sick. Both candidates were asked why those affected families should give their votes for them.

Kristen Welker : Vice President Biden, your response and then we're going to have a final question for both of you.

Joe Biden : My response is that those people live on what they call *fence lines*. He doesn't understand this. *They live near chemical plants that in fact, pollute, chemical plants and oil plants and refineries that pollute. I used to live near that when I was growing up in Claymont, Delaware and there are more oil refineries in Marcus Hook and the Delaware River than there is any place, including in Houston at the time. When my mom get in the car and when there are first frost to drive me to school, turning the windshield wiper, there'd been oil slick in the window.* That's why so many people in my state were dying and getting cancer. The fact is those frontline communities, it's not a matter of what you're paying them. It matters how you keep them safe.

Data : 126/JB/II/1:52:15-1:52:51

**Ideological construction from the discourse :**

Joe Biden understands the suffering of people who live near oil refineries and chemical plants because he once lived near that when he was a child.

American people are mostly living in a middle class to high class society, which means that not many people understood the term 'fence lines' and what it actually meant to live near one of those fence lines. To ease the audience's understanding, Joe Biden gave an illustration by saying, '*They live near chemical plants that in fact, pollute, chemical plants and oil plants and refineries that pollute*'. This illustration gave the audience a glimpse of how harsh life is for those people near the fence lines. Chemical plants and refineries were mentioned in Joe Biden's illustration of the *fence lines*, the audience automatically pictured a sight of thick smokes, dirty water, and air pollution in their heads. With this illustration, Joe Biden wanted the audience to see that he understands the suffering of the poor citizens who live near fence lines.

In addition to that, Joe Biden also used this illustration strategy to gain emotional connection with the poor citizens. He illustrated himself as someone who once lived near the fence lines. He gave another illustration, '*I used to live near that when I was growing up in Claymont, Delaware and there are more oil refineries in Marcus Hook and the Delaware River than there is any place, including in Houston at the time. When my mom get in the car and when there are first frost to drive me to school, turning the windshield wiper, there'd been oil slick in the window. That's why so many people in my state were dying and getting cancer*'.

With this additional illustration of the painful lives near the fence lines, Joe Biden built an emotional connection to the people who live near the fence lines. The audiences who are influenced with this discursive strategy will sympathize with Joe Biden, and eventually vote for him.

**c) Hyperbole**

This strategy is basically about exaggerating something in order to make a dramatic impression. Donald Trump exaggerated many things in his statements with the same purpose, here is one of the data taken from the debate:



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

**Datum 3**

<b>Context:</b>	
While talking about the issue of race in America, the moderator asked whether Donald Trump understood why Black parents fear for their children’s safety in the country. Donald Trump then answered to the question by showing off his achievement in Criminal Justice Reform to help the Black communities fight against unfair laws.	
Kristen Welker	: President Trump, same question to you, and let me remind you of the question. I would like you to speak directly to these families, do you understand why these parents fear for their children?
Donald Trump	: Yes, I do. And again, he’s been in government 47 years, he never did a thing.. Criminal justice reform, Obama and Joe didn’t do it. They might’ve wanted to do it. But if you had to see <i>the arms I had to twist to get that done</i> , it was not a pretty picture.
Data : 146/DT/Hb/1:31:03-1:31:13	
<b>Ideological construction from the discourse :</b>	
Donald Trump worked so hard to get the Criminal Justice Reform done, he sacrificed a lot of things to help the Black communities in the United States.	

The utterance above reveals how Donald Trump exaggerated his hardwork by

saying ‘*the arms I had to twist to get that done*’. He wanted to tell the audience how hard he worked to achieve the Criminal Justice Reform under his term. This exaggeration was meant to create a dramatic effect on the audience, so that everyone views Donald Trump as a hardworking president who is willing to ‘sacrifice his arms’ for the peaceful lives of Black communities in America.

With this *hyperbole*, Donald Trump lifted up the reputation of his in-group (Republican Party). On the other hand, Joe Biden who focused on stating the negativity of opponents, preferred not to exaggerate much words in this debate, thus he did not use any *hyperbole* strategy in this debate.

**d) Irony**

Both candidates used the dicursive strategy of irony in this debate to throw sarcasm toward their opponent. It was done by providing a contradicting fact to the ones uttered by the opponents. Here in this debate, Joe Biden used irony to prove that the statement by the out-group is not valid. This was done by providing a contradictive fact which is also completely different from what the opponent said.



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

**Datum 4**

<b>Context:</b>	
When the topic of North Korea was discussed, Donald Trump said there would be no war, because he had a good relationship with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un. Then Joe Biden ironically fired back at him by talking about Hitler.	
Donald Trump	: ... You know what? North Korea, we’re not in a war. We have a good relationship. People don’t understand.

	Having a good relationship with leaders of other countries is a good thing.
Kristen Welker	: President Trump, we have to move on, because we have a lot of questions to get to. Your response.
Joe Biden	: <i>We had a good relationship with Hitler before he, in fact, invaded Europe, the rest of Europe.</i> Come on.
Data : 166/JB/Ir/1:05:59-1:06:33	
<b>Ideological construction from the discourse :</b> Donald Trump's perspective of building good relationships with leaders of other countries is not a guarantee that there would be no war.	

In the data above, Joe Biden sarcastically disagreed with Donald Trump's mindset. It was mentioned before, that Donald Trump believed having a good relationship with leaders of other countries is a good thing. He believed that his actions of trying to be friends with Kim Jong Un, the North Korean leader, is a good step towards peace in order to prevent a war. Then, Joe Biden who disagreed with this mindset, struck him with an irony: *'We had a good relationship with Hitler before, he, in fact, invaded Europe, the rest of Europe'*.

With this irony, Joe Biden reminded people about the fact that United States used to be friends with Hitler a long time ago, but he then invaded everyone and started World War II. This fact is completely contradictive to Donald Trump's words in which he said it is a good thing to have good relationships with leaders of countries. Therefore, with this irony strategy, Donald Trump's statement was proven invalid. This strategy was also a good way of getting people to agree with Joe Biden's mindset. The historical record supported the irony and it is not something that Donald Trump can deny easily.

#### e) Vagueness

Vagueness helps a speaker cover up the embarrassing truth of their actions by responding with an unclear statement.

Here is one of the data:



Picture source: C-Span YouTube

#### Datum 5

<b>Context:</b> It was known that Donald Trump had never released his tax returns to American citizens since the day he became president. Joe Biden then accused him of having something to hide.	
Joe Biden	: I have released all of my tax returns, go look at them, 22 years of my tax return. You have not released a single solitary year of your tax return. What are you hiding?
Kristen W. Donald Trump	: President Trump- First of all, I called my accountants, underwrote it, <i>I'm going to release them as soon as we can.</i>
Data : 285/DT/Vg/51:28-52:40	
<b>Ideological construction from the discourse :</b> Donald Trump has nothing to hide in his tax returns, and he will soon release them.	

After Joe Biden accused him of not paying his taxes, Donald Trump's way of responding started to change. He initially used to respond with long statements, but after the topic of his taxes controversy was brought up, he only uttered one statement that says, *'I'm going to release them as soon as we can'*.

The statement was vague because it did not give a clear clue of when and how he was going to release his taxes. He did not mention any dates in which it would happen, and there was no guarantee that he would keep his promise. In this case, Donald Trump used *vagueness* to avoid further questions about his tax payments. He applied it to save his face from the embarrassing topic so that his image would remain positive in the eyes of the audience.

## 2. The Influence of Discursive Strategies on the 2020 Election Results

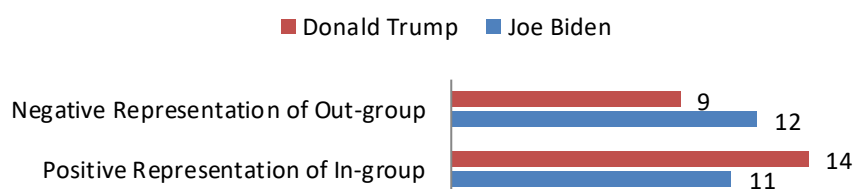
The writer found two patterns that influence the result of the election. The first pattern is frequency. Take a look at **Figure 3 (page 12)**. The highest frequency by Donald Trump is repetition, which helps a speaker emphasize good things about them and bad things about their opponent. However, the excessive use of *repetition* by Donald Trump could make him look less intelligent. Moreover, Donald Trump did not apply *consensus* and *euphemism*.

On the other hand, Joe Biden, who used fewer discursive strategies, managed to apply them a bit more effectively. He used

*repetition* in an adequate frequency, throughout the entire debate. In addition to that, Joe Biden also put more weights on *number game*. The statistics helped him to look more professional and intelligent, which lifted up his reputation as a politician.

The second pattern of discursive strategies that influence the election result is the representation of power. Donald Trump mostly represented his power in the debate by lifting up his reputation and his in group (Republican Party). On the other hand, Joe Biden seemed to be focusing his power more on the negative representation of the out-group by planting ideological constructions which downgraded Trump's reputation.

**Figure 1. Representation of Power by Both Candidates**

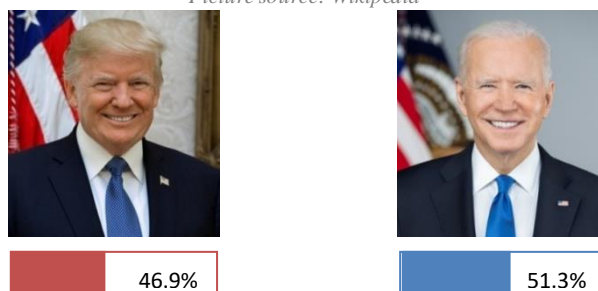


The result of this research shows that Joe Biden represented his power by mostly displaying the negativity of the out-group (Republican Party). From here, it is obvious that Joe Biden might easily win the election. As stated by Fowler (2013:23), the most

effective way is using negative strategy than positive strategy, in which it will downgrade other's position. By focusing his power more on negative representation of out-group, Joe Biden had basically won the audience of the debate.

**Figure 2. The Final Result of 2020 US Presidential Election**

Picture source: Wikipedia

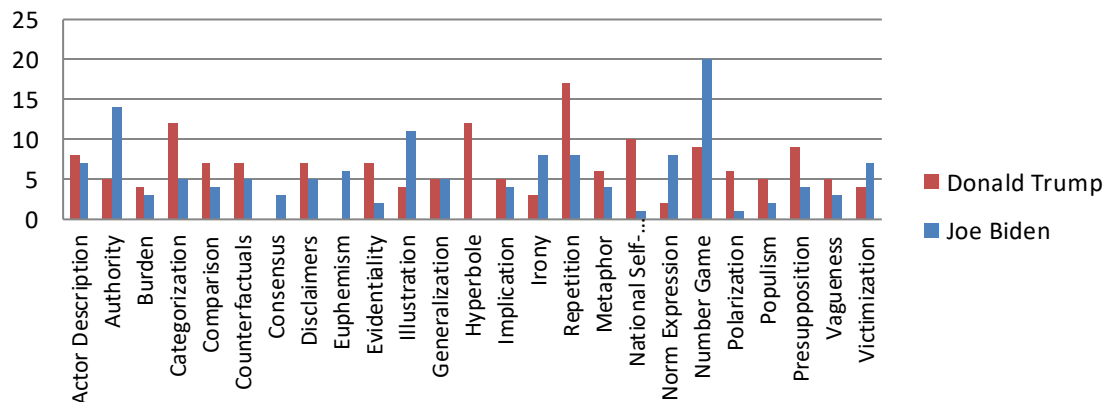


In January 2021, it was revealed that Joe Biden won the 2020 US Presidential election with 51.3% of the total votes. He became the 46<sup>th</sup> president of America with the most votes in history. This proves that: (1) the more effective a candidate uses their

discursive strategies, the more chances they have in winning the election; (2) the more a candidate shows negative representation of out-group, the chance of winning gets even higher.

## V. CONCLUSION

**Figure. 3. Frequency of Discursive Strategies used by Both Candidates in the 2020 Final Presidential Debate**



Based on the analysis, the conclusions are drawn as follows: Out of 299 data of discursive strategies found in the discourse analysis, Donald Trump used 159 discursive strategies throughout the entire debate, and Joe Biden applied 140 discursive strategies.

Each discursive strategy used by Donald Trump and Joe Biden contained ideological constructions that represented their power. These ideological constructions clearly showed the negative other-representation and positive self-representation. Their in-group was portrayed as a genuine party and innocent individuals. By presenting this positive self-representation, both candidates convinced the audience that they were worthy of being the next president of United States.

From this finding, it is known that the Donald Trump mostly applied *repetition* as discursive strategy to represent his power in the debate. He often applied the element of repetition as a discursive strategy because by repeating certain words in his statements, he asserted the strategy of positive self-representation and negative other-representation to be more explicit.

On the other hand, the finding also reveals that Joe Biden mostly applied *number games* as a discursive strategy to represent his power against Donald Trump and Republican Party in this debate. He frequently applied the number game discursive strategy because it

enhanced the quality of the information he mentioned in the debate. By showing numbers and statistics, his arguments were difficult to be denied.

After conducting this research, the writer also found out that two patterns of discursive strategies influence the 2020 Presidential Election.

The first pattern includes the frequency and effectiveness of using discursive strategy. The analysis has proved that Joe Biden, who was able to use his discursive strategy effectively to its maximum potential, won the election. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that Joe Biden only used 140 discursive strategies throughout the debate, but he was able to steal Donald Trump's political throne. This proved that it does not matter how many discursive strategies a person uses in a discourse, what matters is how they use them effectively.

The second pattern includes the representation of power by overall discursive strategy. It has also been proven by this research analysis that, in fact, Joe Biden who focused on representing the negative traits of his out-group, gained more votes than Donald Trump who focused on representing the positive sides of himself and his in-group. This finding was also supported by Fowler (2013:23), that the most effective way is using negative strategy than a positive strategy.

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