



## Ethics in Political Discourse in the Light of Critical Discourse Analysis: Trump vs. Biden

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### Abstract

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#### Keywords:

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Norman Fairclough, Political discourse.

Maintaining ethics has always been one of the crucial concerns of different scholars all around the globe. Considering the direct impact of political leaders' attitudes on people's minds, decision-making, and behavior, maintaining ethics by politicians in society is specifically emphasized. Moreover, the battleground has given way to the cultural, social, and ideological arena in recent years. In a global village, the attitude of leading politicians has extensive side effects, locally to globally, depending on how political players use their language's power to influence people's minds. This qualitative research investigated the maintenance of ethics by the two candidates of the US Presidential Election, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, in the first presidential debate on September 29, 2020. The framework applied in this research was the Faircloughian three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) model. The results showed the failure of the two representatives of the red and blue parties to maintain ethics during the debate. More significantly, regarding ethical discursive structure, Joe Biden performed worse than Donald Trump in this chaotic debate. Although, Trump's performance cannot be considered ethical. Moreover, this paper interpreted and explained the social effects of their speeches.

#### اخلاق در گفتمان سیاسی در پرتو تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی: ترامپ در مقابل بایدن

حفظ اخلاق همواره یکی از دغدغه های مهم دانشمندان مختلف در سراسر جهان بوده است. با توجه به تأثیر مستقیم نگرش رهبران سیاسی بر ذهن، تصمیم گیری و رفتار مردم، حفظ اخلاق توسط سیاستمداران در جامعه به طور خاص مورد تأکید قرار می گیرد. علاوه بر این، میدان جنگ در سال های اخیر جای خود را به عرصه فرهنگی، اجتماعی و عقیدتی داده است. در یک دهکده جهانی، نگرش سیاستمداران برجسته، بسته به اینکه بازیگران سیاسی چگونه از قدرت زبان خود برای تأثیرگذاری بر ذهن مردم استفاده می کنند، اثرات جانبی گسترده ای دارد، در سطح محلی تا جهانی. این پژوهش کیفی به بررسی حفظ اخلاق توسط دو نامزد انتخابات ریاست جمهوری آمریکا، دونالد ترامپ و جو بایدن، در اولین مناظره ریاست جمهوری در ۲۹ سپتامبر ۲۰۲۰ پرداخته است. چارچوب مورد استفاده در این پژوهش، تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی سه بعدی فرکلافی بود. مدل (CDA). نتایج حاکی از شکست دو نماینده احزاب قرمز و آبی در حفظ اخلاق در جریان مناظره بود. مهمتر از آن، در مورد ساختار گفتمانی اخلاقی، جو بایدن در این مناظره پر هرج و مرج عملکرد بدتری نسبت به دونالد ترامپ داشت، هرچند رفتار و گفتار ترامپ هم اخلاقی نبود. همچنین، این مقاله به تفسیر و تبیین آثار اجتماعی سخنان آنان پرداخته است.

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## Introduction

Scholars from various fields, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and politics, have always been greatly concerned with ethics and different concepts of morality, mainly because of the crucial and direct impact of ethics on every facet of human life. During periods, scholars with different viewpoints have defined ethics in various ways. One of the eminent philosophers, Levinas (1905-1995), offered a unique philosophical definition of the “self” and “other” and the ethical responsibility of the “self” to respond to the “other” before responding to the “self.” Along with this definition, the effect of politicians’ attitudes on peoples’ minds, behavior, and decision-making is undeniable. Shapiro, a professor of political economy at Brown University, and Levi Boxell and Matthew Gentzkow, professors at Stanford University, (2017) worked on the effects of othering and polarization on society as a sign of unethical behavior of politicians. They released the result of their research to show that in the last 40 years, in comparison with other countries, including the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden, rapid growth in political polarization among Americans has been reported, as a result of Democratic and Republican political leaders’ attitude. Shapiro’s research pointed out that individuals’ behavior and interests are directly affected by their political identity, and to develop political compromises and have an excellent public policy, individuals and politicians, must respect each other. It clears the significance of maintaining ethical concepts by political leaders.

On the other hand, it is crystal clear that politicians’ ideology shows itself through their discourse. In Van Dijk’s view, ideology is a series of ideas making the foundation of different theories, such as economic, political, and religious theories. He believed that ideology has two levels; first, the Cognitive level, which refers to basic mental objects like belief, knowledge, perception, and idea, and second, the social level, which refers to higher social relation structures like organizational structures or parliamentary democracy (Van Dijk, 1999). Discourse as a social action is determined through social norms and values and is influenced by power relations and historical procedures (Wodak, 1995). Many discourses are ideologically biased, mainly when people express their beliefs as group members (Van Dijk, 2000). Consequently, the content of such ideologically biased discourses constitutes social events, shaping public and social representations and ideologies (Sokhandan et al., 2023).

Among different discourses, political discourse is one of the most complex forms of human activity. In recent years, politics refers to people's lives conducted in organized communities rather than the battleground of conventional political parties. Significantly, politicians' way of speaking reveals their political ideology and affects their intended audience's ideological status (Beard, 2000). Altogether, the main focus of studying political discourse is on the messages generated by influential participants of political positions, such as presidents, prime ministers, government members, or political party representatives. A critical analysis of political discourse aims to show the various ways political leaders behave with people in society through the power of their language (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). Fairclough (1989), in his book, *Language and Power*, expressed that CDA aims to investigate how power is sustained through discourse in relationships that lack transparency. The aim is to raise awareness about power imbalances, social injustices, and other societal inequalities by bringing them to the public's attention to prompt corrective action. In Fairclough's point of view, the main ideas in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are manipulation, hidden ideology, bias, power of language, and discursive structures.

The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed an extreme increase in the ideological viewpoints of political parties. This ever-growing trend is more conspicuous between the two political parties, Republicans and Democrats (Bacon, 2018). . When people become polarized, they tend to have less empathy for others, are less tolerant of opposing views, and may exhibit more hostility towards those who hold different opinions. This can result in a weakening of social bonds and democratic participation (Bruter & Harrison, 2009). In highly polarized countries, hardly ever all members of a society can compromise over fundamental values, especially the time they are affected by the attitude of their political leaders because polarized mindsets and attitudes of political leaders have a directly powerful influence on political, social, and economic aspects of people's life (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). The point is that conflicts over religious, cultural, political, and moral issues have been growing increasingly in contrast with the former economic disputes.

Consequently, cultural wars by politicians are getting more substantial than physical wars. Needless to say, the growth in culture wars is impossible except through political actors' discourse. Therefore, this sick society's policies may inadequately lead to social issues (Carothers &

O'Donohue, 2019), such as increased racial prejudice, risk of war, genocide, and violent behavior (Newman, 2002 & Sunstein, 2002).

This study investigated how much the two US presidential candidates in the 2020 first presidential debate upheld ethical principles, using the Faircloughian CDA model for critical discourse analysis. Fairclough defined CDA as a social practice and suggested that the text and the procedure of production and interpretation of a text should be analyzed together in both immediate and the more remote conditions in which a text is produced (Fairclough, 1989). This widely-heard debate gives the opportunity to examine the moral concepts maintained by the candidates.

### Research Question

Regarding the aim of this study, the researchers proposed the following research question:

**RQ:** To what extent do the two candidates in the Presidential Election of the United States of America observe ethics in their languages in the first presidential debate on September 29, 2020?

### Method

This study aimed to use the Faircloughian CDA model to analyze the discourse of the current and former presidents of the USA, Biden and Trump, and evaluate how they adhered to ethical standards in their communication. Critical discourse analysis is employed to compare and contrast their discourse and determine the extent to which they demonstrated ethical behavior. The selected framework portrays a descriptive, qualitative, and comparative analysis, incorporating content analysis and comparative design. Tables and figures intend to enhance the clarity of the findings. To achieve the study's objectives, and gather data, the researcher first extracted the two candidates' speeches which had signs of unethical meanings from the text form of the intended debate in 2020. Then, they were categorized based on the selected framework. The chosen sentences were compared and contrasted by applying the Faircloughian CDA model.

To make the theoretical framework used in this research clearer, it is needed to explain that despite some differences, the main goal of almost all critical discourse analysts is to illustrate the relationship between language, power, ideology, and inequalities in societies, aiming to denaturalize the hidden power relation. Critical discourse analysis scholars bring a social and linguistic analysis of discourse together. Thus, in critical discourse analysis, scholars can

simultaneously analyze discourse at the micro-level of social structure and the macro-level of social action. In his early work, Norman Fairclough, a prominent scholar in the field of CDA, proposed a step-by-step guideline for critical discourse analysis scholars (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough's CDA model is the foundation of critical discourse analysis because it is the first theoretical framework that provided future CDA scholars with some practical guidelines. Fairclough (2003) argued that language is a fundamental part of social life, and the dialectic relation between language and social reality is made of every social event.

On the other hand, the significance of the Fairclough CDA model is the vital definition of the relationship between language and power (Fairclough, 1989). He defined three elements of discourse: text, interaction, and social context. Through his approach, researchers can analyze various discourses through this framework based on three dimensions: Description, Interpretation, and Explanation.

**Description:** the first dimension refers to the formal characteristics of a text, including vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures.

**Interpretation:** the second dimension refers to the relationship between text and discursive interaction. Because each text is a product of a complex procedure, interpretation tries to interpret this relationship, not just the text itself.

**Explanation:** the last dimension pertains to how interaction and social context are related by examining the social factors influencing the production procedure, interpretation, and impact of communication.

Fairclough's (1989) model aims to move beyond simply describing the text and instead focuses on interpreting and explaining why and how the text is presented in its social and cultural context.

## Results

The initial aspect of the Faircloughian 3D model pertained to the formal characteristics of the text, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. Fairclough (1989) provides scholars with ten basic queries and some sub-questions, the answers to which can contribute to analyzing a text.

### -Vocabulary

1- What experimental values do words have?

Which categorization systems are being utilized?

Can certain words be considered ideologically contested?

Can rewording or over wording be found?

What meaningful ideological connections exist between words in terms of their meaning?

2-What relational values do words have?

Can euphemistic expressions be found in a text?

What are markedly formal or informal words?

3-What expressive values do words have?

4- Are metaphors used?

### **-Grammar**

5-What experimental values do grammatical features have?

Can we say that the agency's communication is not clear?

Are the processes straightforward as they appear to be?

Do they use nominalization excessively?

Is the construction of sentences in active or passive voice?

6-What relational values do grammatical features have?

Can you explain the type of modes being used?

Are there significant characteristics of relational modality?

Are "we" and "you" used, and if yes, in what manner?

7-What expressive values do grammatical features have?

Can we identify fundamental characteristics of expressive modality?

8-What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?

### **-Textual structures**

9-what interactional conventions are used?

Is it possible for a participant to influence or dictate the turn-taking of other participants?

10-What larger-scale structures does the text have?

The meanings of three terms, experimental, relational, and expressive values, are defined to enhance the clarity of the questions and framework. Experimental value pertains to how a text producer's experience of the natural and social world is reflected in the text. Relational value relates to the perceived social connection between the text producer and its audience. Expressive value refers to the text producer's assessment of social realities.

### **Description: Discourse as Text in Terms of Ethics in the First Presidential Debate**

The first presidential debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump was one of the most chaotic debates in the United States, according to the news broadcasters such as BBC, Politico, and Chinese Global Times. The two candidates repeatedly attacked each other's character with interruptions and insults. The present evaluation of the presidential debate, using Fairclough's model, aimed to assess how many ethical words were used by the candidates and identify any unethical terms of behavior displayed during the debate; the researchers have analyzed the unethical aspects meticulously.

### **-Vocabulary**

According to the Faircloughian CDA model, the text of the first presidential debate is analyzed on semantic and syntactic levels. Almost 80 times, Trump and 77 times Biden uttered words, sentences, or paragraphs containing unethical comments; the signs of hostile remarks are apparent in less respectful sentences uttered aggressively by the Democrat and Republican opponents. For instance, they repeatedly accused each other of being a liar, not having a plan, not keeping their word, and so on. Along with insulting words and disrespectful sentences, making fun of the other candidate and ridiculing the other candidate can be counted as another immoral attitude, such as attacking other one's intelligence, actions, or words several times during the debate. In addition to the previous items, accusing the other and making the other interlocutor guilty without bringing clear evidence are other signs of immorality, which are seen much more than other unethical items in this chaotic debate. Items like accusing the leading member of the opposite party of being racist, not caring about people, being irresponsible, having no plan for the future, destroying the whole country, hurting American people by not making correct decisions, or attacking the family

members of the other one to make a fortune by abusing their situation were some of the examples. The frequency of each unethical item is shown in the Tables separately.

**Table 1***Insulting Words in the First Debate*

<b>Insulting words</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
Shut up, Liar, Ridicules, Fool, Puppy, and Clown...	5	11	16

**Table 2***Less-respectful Comments in the First Debate*

<b>Less respectful words or sentences</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
Nobody cares; he doesn't know what he is talking about, I'm not here to call out his lie, and I'm not going to listen to him.	4	9	13

**Table 3***Ridicule the Other One in the First Debate*

<b>Make fun of the other one</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
You graduated last in your class, not first in your class. You are months behind me. A lot of people died, and a lot more are going to die, Unless he gets a lot smarter a lot quicker.	9	15	26

**Table 4***Accusation in the First Debate*

<b>Accusation</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>	<b>Total</b>
accusing their opponent of being racist, not caring about people, being irresponsible, having no plan for future, destroying the whole country, hurting American people by not making the correct decision	76	64	140



Table 5 shows the frequency of ideologically contested words containing unethical signs in terms of percentage.

**Table 5**

*Frequency of Ideologically Contested Words (Experimental Values)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>
<b>Insulting words</b>	31.2%	68.7%
<b>Less respectful comments</b>	30.7%	69.2%
<b>To ridicule the other one</b>	34.6%	57.6%
<b>To accuse the other one</b>	54.25	45.7%

In the vocabulary part of analyzing a text based on the Faircloughian CDA model, the frequency of rewording, synonym, antonym, and hyponymy is another sub-question regarding experimental values, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Frequency of Ideologically Meaning Related Words (Experimental Values)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Biden</b>
<b>Rewording</b>	59.5%	40.4%
<b>Synonyms</b>	53.3%	46.6%
<b>Antonyms</b>	50.0%	50%
<b>Hyponymy</b>	75%	25%

Using euphemistic expressions, uttering formal or informal words, and being friendly or unfriendly are questions in the Faircloughian CDA model's relational values to determine to what extent the two presidents observed ethics in their language. In the first presidential debate, no euphemism was used by the two candidates mainly because the speakers wanted to have clear-cut ideas, address the exact social and political issues straightforwardly, and have the most influence on their audience. Conversely, euphemisms are typically employed to enhance the gracefulness and courteousness of a speech. However, no euphemistic terms can be identified in this turbulent debate's hostile atmosphere.

Clearly, from the beginning of the debate, both candidates intentionally tried to be informal in their speech; maybe they followed this attitude during the debate to show their intimacy, to be reliable for their audience, and also to show that they are completely friendly with people and with each other. The hostile remarks began soon due to the unethical environment of the debate. A few sentences are selected here to demonstrate the informal, unfriendly, and also antagonistic manner of their speech:

- Biden: Will you shut up, man?
- Trump: Let me shut you down for a second, Joe, just for one second.
- Biden: He is Putin's puppy.
- Trump: You're the worst president America has ever had.

Being informal and soon becoming unfriendly and aggressive is seen almost equally in the speech of the two candidates several times in the first presidential debate.

### **-Grammar**

The researchers reviewed Fairclough's various questions to determine to what extent grammatical points could demonstrate the maintenance of ethics by the two candidates. By focusing on the sentences which contain more unethical meanings, the researchers deduced that:

All kinds of SV, SVO, and SVC sentences were used several times in unethical sentences. Still, SV sentences were used less than the others, and SVC sentences attributing something to another person are present much more in unethical sentences.

All kinds of processes were used in the first presidential debate in terms of ethics:

### **Material Process**

- In 47 months, I've done more than you've done in 47 years, Joe. (Trump)
- He never keeps his word. (Biden)

### **Relational process**

- They had the slowest economic recovery since 1929. (Trump)
- He's Putin's puppy. (Biden)

### **Verbal**

- You call them super predators, and you've called them worse than that. (Trump)
- The fact is that everything he's saying so far is simply a lie. (Biden)

### Existential

- During the Obama-Biden administration, there was tremendous division. There was hatred. (Trump)
- I'm not here to call out his lies. (Biden)

### Mental

- I know the suburbs so much than you. (Trump)
- He's just afraid of counting the votes. (Biden)

### Behavioral

- He's wrong. (Trump)
- He's a fool on this. (Biden)

In unethical words, both interlocutors used more active sentences to express their meanings directly, to have the most effect on their audience, but a few passive sentences were used, either. Sentences selected as less ethical sentences meaningfully contain negative meanings, and almost all of them are unfriendly. No adequate or meaningfully necessary nominalization is seen in unethical sentences. The text comprises inside references, which show textual and contextual links and backgrounds. For example, in several sentences based on inside backgrounds, Biden and Trump tried to call their opponent down.

As evident in Table 7, regarding relational values in the grammatical part, Trump 90% and Biden 88% have used mostly declarative sentences in unethical sentences, alongside imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences to call down their opponent.

**Table 7**

*Frequency of Modes (Relational Values)*

Items	Trump	Biden
All unethical sentences	130	144
Declarative sentences	117	128
Imperative sentences	5	6
Exclamatory sentences	0	1
Interrogative sentences	8	9

Both candidates had positive evaluations of the time they were responsible and negative assessments of when the other was in charge. For example:

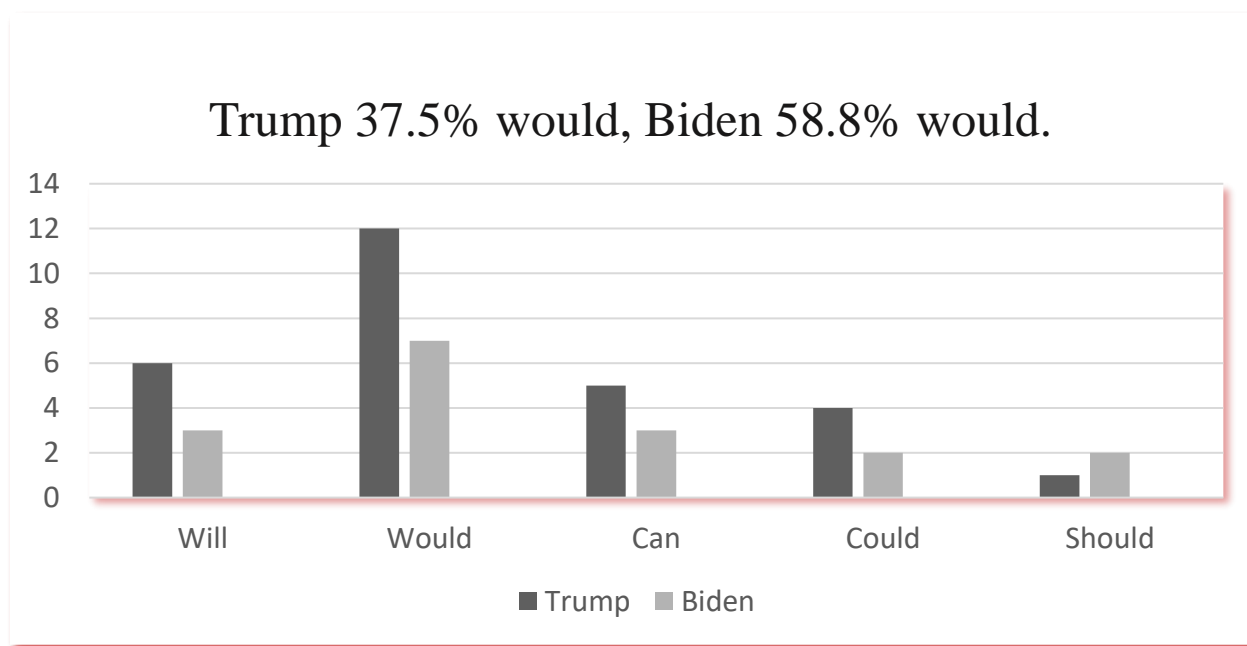
**Trump:** “Hey, Joe, let me just tell you, Joe. In 47 months, I’ve done more than you’ve done in 47 years, Joe. We’ve done things that you never even thought of doing. Including fixing the broken military that you gave me, including taking care of your debts.”

**Biden:** “We handed him a booming economy; he blew it.”

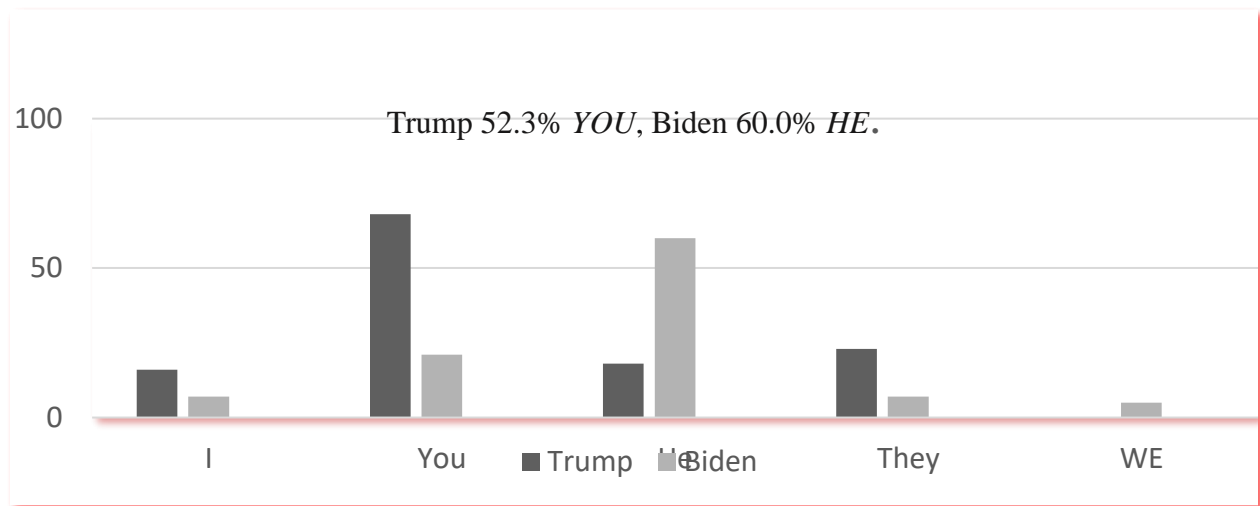
In this framework, there are two types of modality: relational modality, which indicates the speaker’s level of authority, and expressive modality, which pertains to the degree of truthfulness. The modal verb that appears most frequently in unethical sentences made by the two candidates during their speeches is “would,” which indicates probability. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of usage for different modal verbs.

**Figure 1**

*Frequency of Modals (Expressive and Relational values)*



Pronouns YOU and HE were used more in unethical sentences to blame the other. Biden has used *He* 60 times, *You* 21 times, and *They* seven times. Trump has used *He* 18 times, *You* 68 times, and *They* 28 times. 52.3% of pronouns in Trump’s speech were *You*, and 60% in Biden’s speech were *He*, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2***Frequency of Pronouns (Relational Values)*

As shown in Figure 2, Biden used “He” more than “You” because Biden mostly tried not to speak with Trump directly but mainly ignored him and tried to accuse Trump when he was talking to the executive, Chris Wallace, or people at home. Again, this can be considered another sign of unethical manners of Biden.

### -Textual Structure

In the textual structure part, the ninth question of the current framework refers to the interactional conventions and control of the turn of others. Mainly debates are held by a moderator, but Chris Wallace failed to control the debate’s rules in this debate. He repeatedly asked both candidates, especially Trump, to respect and obey the debate’s rules, which both sides had agreed to, but 128 times, Trump interrupted Biden, while Biden did it too, but much less than Trump.

Finally, the tenth and last question of description dimension is: what larger scale structures does the text have? Text structures are, Description- Explanation text, Sequence- Process text, Problem- Solution text, Cause- Effect text, Compare- Contrast text, and Time order- Chronological text. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) explained that political discourses have multiple functions and cannot be neatly classified into a single text structure. Instead, political debates consist of various parts, with the persuasive aspect falling into the problem-solution text structure and the critical aspect belonging to the cause-effect text structure.

**Interpretation: Discourse as a Discursive Practice in the First Presidential Debate**

Discursive Practice deals with the production of a text and researchers' analysis of the process, which impacts a text's display, consumption, distribution, transformation, and interpretation. The second dimension of the selected CDA model emphasizes how the audience perceives the discourse and the potential impact it could have on society. In this debate, each candidate represented a political party in the United States of America. It had a widespread reflection on news broadcasts all around the globe. The Poynter Institute, an institute for Media Studies and a non-profit journalism school in Florida, United States-described this debate on September 30, 2020, as the worst presidential debate ever, a hot mess, a dumpster fire, and the most unwatchable debate in presidential history. In this report, Poynter reported some sentences from famous people in the United States: ABC News's George Stephanopoulos said it was the worst presidential debate he had ever seen. Holt's colleague Savannah Guthrie said her jaw just had dropped like so many in that country, and she added it had not been a typical debate, not a standard example of American democracy. CBS's Gayle King said it has been painful to watch. Washington Post highlighted: "Actually, the first presidential debate was terrific." The Conversation wrote: "The first presidential debate was pure chaos." BBC asked members of the BBC voter panel about the debate and then had a heading on September 30, 2020: "The loser is us, the American people."

Moreover, BBC had a report on September 30, 2020: "How did the world's media react?" for example, The Guardian in the UK described it as "a national humiliation." French newspaper Liberation reported: "Chaotic, childish, grueling." Italian La Repubblica's US correspondent reported: "Never had American politics sunk so low." And "Chaotic, rowdy, and based on mutual contempt." Russia's one broadcaster wrote: "one-and-a-half-hour exchange of insults." in the end, a state-run Global Times described it as: "The most chaotic presidential debate ever."

**Explanation: Discourse as a Social Practice in the First Presidential Debate**

Discourse as a social practice, which identifies how individuals communicate with others, can reveal necessary information about their characteristics, such as their individuality, social status, political beliefs, and cultural identity. The third dimension in this framework deals

with what text producers perceive from the real world and how their perception affects their personality and attitude. In this debate, the way the two candidates performed reveals how they think about their culture. Considering the number of interruptions, aggressions, insults, and impolite reactions toward their opponent, along with negative body language signals like Trump's frowns or Biden's sneers and mocking several times, clear that maintaining ethics in their speech, especially the time they are under mental pressure or they are not under normal situations, is not easy for them. However, some situations like debates are good situations to evaluate the candidates' patience, politeness, and morality because maintaining ethics in a competitive environment of debates is not easy but necessary.

### Discussion

The current researchers investigated the maintenance of ethics by Trump and Biden in the first presidential debate in 2020 to show how the two representatives of the Blue and Red parties of the USA used the power of their language to have an impact on people and as a way of communication, to what extent their discourse can affect public opinion. Choice of vocabulary and the use of specific sentences or styles is a way to attract people's attention and get their support in the election to vote for them, enhance their legitimacy, or eliminate their particular opponents by the power of their discourse. The unethical parts of Trump and Biden's speeches in this research were analyzed based on Fairclough's CDA model to show their choice of vocabulary, grammatical points, and textual structures, in terms of experimental, relational, and expressive values, alongside interpretation of their speeches and its effects on people and different Medias all around the world, and explanation of their attitude based on their performance during the debate. CDA offers scholars ways to find a relationship between discourse and society, text and context, alongside language and power (Fairclough, 2001 & Luke, 1996, 2002). Moreover, CDA enables scholars to analyze social and linguistic microanalysis (Luke, 2002). The Faircloughian model allows researchers to investigate language use in social contexts. The main goal of CDA scholars, held in common, is denaturalizing hidden hierarchical power relations in societies by demonstrating inequalities and social imbalances. CDA must cover social discourses to explain a discourse from different views between micro and macro analysis (Luke, 2002). To gain social justice, the aim of CDA, analytical techniques with a developed social theory must

be joined (Fairclough, 1989; Widdowson, 1998). Finally, Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001) defines discourse as a process of social interaction utilizing texts and, simultaneously, a discursive and social practice. For Fairclough, CDA analyzes a text and its production procedure and attempts to discover the relationship between a text, its procedure, and social circumstances (Jakes, 1997). In Fairclough's point of view, CDA has two intrinsic elements, the relationship between the text and interaction and the relationship between interaction and sociocultural contexts. Based on what CDA scholars and especially Fairclough believed, the researcher tried to analyze the first debate to uncover the unethical signs in the speech of these two political leaders in descriptive, interpretive, and explanative dimensions. However, it is worth mentioning that applying all questions proposed by Fairclough does not help describe the intended issue in all texts. In this study, the researchers applied and answered all questions and sub-questions proposed by this model. Still, some of the applied questions were not helpful in finding signs of immorality. However, all questions and sub-questions were answered, even if they were not beneficial to the aim of the study. On the other hand, to have a better and more comprehensible conclusion, analyzing body language and the speakers' reflections and acts is essential, which has not been addressed in this framework. Therefore, the analysis of their reactions and actions depends on the perception and taste of researchers; in a way, this research is done.

The findings of the research reveal the specific choice of the vocabulary of the two candidates, the grammatical way of their speaking, and their manner in respecting the debate's rules, alongside their body language and reactions, and the social impact of their performance on American people, national Media, and international broadcasts.

### Conclusion

The importance of maintaining ethics and the impact of the unethical attitudes of political leaders on people's minds, attitudes, and ideologies are evident. This study discussed different ideas in the literature regarding critical discourse analysis. It signified some research findings to show the national and international side effects of political players' words to clarify the significance of this research. The current study aimed to understand the discursive structures of the 2020 presidential debate through Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to demonstrate the extent of



maintaining ethics by the leading representatives of the Democratic and Republican Political Parties, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, considering their behavior as a sign of their Party's attitudes. Debate, by its nature, is argumentative, and maintaining ethics in a discussion is almost hard but necessary. Based on the selected framework, the current research showed to what extent both candidates argued ethics in their speeches and how they used the power of their language to impress the American voters to support them. However, the results revealed that both candidates failed to maintain ethics in their speeches. Biden performed worse than Trump because of the higher frequency of using insulting words, less respectful words, making fun of his opponent, and several accusations, besides several times of smirks and not talking straightforwardly to Trump in their conversation. While the repetitive interruption of Trump repeating his words again and again to distract Biden, and accusing Biden and his family members several times, do not let us consider Trump less immoral than Biden. The research raises an important question about the general attitude and manner of the Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States of America. It would be fruitful to pursue further research on other representatives of these political parties in the same tense situations to reach a more comprehensive conclusion to address the issue and help policymakers to find ways to avoid factions in politics turning into systematically engineered conflicts to control and manage communities, locally to globally.

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