A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S NEOLOGISMS AND BIDEN'S RHETORICAL STYLE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Fairclough (1995) to explore how political language is used as a tool of ideological construction and power enactment in the public speeches of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Six speeches three from each leader, were selected to capture a range of rhetorical contexts, including campaign launches, national conventions, and presidential addresses. The results indicate that Trump's discourse is marked by the use of populist language and the rejection of the traditional rules of political decorum with performative and disruptive neologisms strengthening the polarizing and anti-establishment identity. By contrast, Biden uses rhetoric based on the themes of unity, democratic tradition and institutional legitimacy, with inclusive language and intertextual references to historical American ideals. The findings reveal that both rhetorical modes construct distinct leadership personas: Trump as a populist outsider and Biden as a reconciliatory institutionalist. This study advances CDA by theorizing neologisms as ideological tools and by contrasting populist and democratic rhetoric across multiple speech genres.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis (CDA); political discourse; neologisms; rhetorical style; Donald Trump; Joe Biden; populism.

1.   Introduction

The role of language is not limited to communication but it is an instrument of imparting power and ideology (Luntz, 2007). Language is a strategic tool in discourse that influences the social reality and constructs it based on the perception of power, legitimacy and national identity (Chilton, 2004). Politicians often use discursive means, like metaphor, repetition, intertextuality, and especially neologisms to shape the debate on political issues, justify ideologies, and promote loyalty to in-groups, as well as ostracize out-groups (Musolff, 2016). These rhetorical elements are not simply style decisions, but are ideologically laden so that they enable leaders to make political identities and to control the opinion of the people (Fairclough, 1995). Here, the most significant linguistic devices of populist and post-modernist political rhetoric have been the so-called neologisms, which are coined words or phrases.

Neologisms are intentionally created and spread through the societal discourse with particular ideological goals, often as political leaders resort to their use to facilitate simplification of the problem, the reinforcement of polarized worldviews, and the incitation of emotions (Musolff, 2016). The paradigmatic example of such innovation in political communication is the case of Donald J. Trump. Such performative, provocative, and media-amplified coinages that make up his speeches include 'fake news', 'witch hunt', 'sleepy joe' etc., all of which are condensed vehicles of populist ideology and identity politics (Ott, 2017). Conversely, Joseph R. Biden Jr. utilizes a more traditional set of rhetorical tools that are based on institutional legitimacy, national unity, and moral responsibility appeals. His speech is more prone to the usage of inclusive pronouns, intertextuality of history, and phrases with an emotional appeal that strengthen democratic norms and continuity (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023).

2. Rationale and Significance of the Study

This study is placed within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (1995) to develop three dimensions by which political discourse is used as a tool of ideological construction and leadership representation. Studies have examined Trump's populist discourse (Kadim, 2022), Biden's democratic appeals (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023), and comparative approaches to presidential communication (Eissler et al., 2024). However, three important limitations remain. First, most studies focus on single events such as inaugurals or debates without tracing rhetorical strategies across multiple contexts. Second, although neologisms are frequently used, their study as systematically structured ideological devices is uncommon. Third, few studies combine micro-level textual analysis with macro-level ideological framing, as Fairclough's (1995) CDA framework recommends.

To address these gaps, this article conducts a comparative CDA of six speeches three by Trump and three by Biden delivered across campaign, convention, and presidential contexts. The research aims to address the following questions:

1. How does Trump's use of neologisms and lexical innovations reflect his ideological stance and political messaging?

2. In what ways do Trump and Biden respond to major socio-political issues through contrasting rhetorical strategies?

3. How do their respective rhetorical styles contribute to the construction of their leadership personas?

There has been an increasing scholarly interest in the rhetorical processes through which political leaders deploy authority, support, and ideologies. By situating the analysis within Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse, this study demonstrates how neologisms and rhetorical strategies serve as tools of ideological construction, identity formation, and political legitimation. In doing so, it contributes to the literature by (a) theorizing neologisms as key to populist discourse, (b) offering a comparative perspective on two divergent rhetorical traditions, and (c) extending CDA to multi-event presidential communication. In this domain, several analyses have been done to understand the rhetorical characters of Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

3. Literature Review

Comesaña Pérez (2021) used communicative functions introduced by Jakobson and CDA to demonstrate the use of the two discourses to show the differing visions of national identity. The advantage to this study is that it considers the aspect of multimodality: lexical and non-verbal signals but does not pay much attention to the aspect of neologisms as a structured ideological device. In a similar vein, Kadim (2022) using Van Dijk ideological discourse construct in the context of the Trumpian discourse provides a comprehensive description of the way the he strategically employs in-group/out-group binary structures, particularly, in anti-immigrant discourse. Although this study gives an idea of the exclusionary language, it is inclined to consider neologisms to be a secondary instrument in that construction.

In contrast, Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2023) concentrate on presidential rhetoric of Biden, with stylistic devices of metaphor, intertextuality, and contrast named as the means of fostering unity and institutional continuity. This discussion, which is based on the CDA framework by Fairclough, is valuable in that it places the discourse of Biden in the context of liberal-democratic traditions. Nevertheless, the study analyzed only one speech, the 2021 inauguration, which does not allow it to make generalizations about his overall rhetorical approach. Eissler et al. (2024) approach the topic differently as they conduct the analysis of the president persona in terms of both administrations. Even though their inference that institutional context determines rhetorical output irrespective of stylistic distinction is challenging, it may

undermine the role of discursive innovation and personal branding in constructing political identity.

The use of computational approaches by Jimenez-Preciado et al. (2025), is an advance in the methodology. The study reveals the lexical unsteadiness of Trump speech in Presidential debates, as opposed to the more consistent usage of Biden and Harris through the use of natural language processing (NLP). In its novelty, however, these quantitative results must be further interpreted within more interpretive frameworks in order to elaborate on how volatility and emotion operate rhetorically and ideologically.

Although the literature provides an analyzing of political discourse, there is a lack of systematic and theory-informed study of neologisms as the instruments of narrative framing, drawing boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, and making complex political ideologies accessible to the masses (Lakoff, 2008, 2014). Previous studies are based on single-event examinations (e.g., a campaign rally or an inaugural speech) and lack longitudinal comparisons of various rhetorical situations (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Comesaña Pérez, 2021). Such a restrictive approach precludes our tracking the discursive continuity or change of political identity across time. Despite the usage of both qualitative and computational approaches, there are very small numbers of studies that combine micro-level textual analysis and meso- and macro-level discourse practices as suggested in the three-dimensional model by Fairclough (1995).

Thus, this study implements the Fairclough (1995) framework of CDA to a collection of six addresses, three of which are given by Trump, and three are presented by Biden in different rhetorical contexts. It concentrates on the way rhetorical elements and, in particular, neologism are used as ideological means of forming the political identity, of legitimation of leadership, and of articulating the answers to major socio-political questions. This study focuses on language as a means of power and persuasion in high-stakes political communication by integrating textual, discursive, and social practice levels of analysis.

4. Research Design

The qualitative research design, based on the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is used in the present study to analyze how political identity, ideological positioning, and rhetorical strategy is constructed in the speeches of Donald J. Trump and Joseph R. Biden. CDA as a methodology is especially appropriate to examine the interaction of language and power and the role of discourse in constituting the sociopolitical world and in reflecting it (Fairclough, 1995, 2003, 2013). The research, in particular, embraces three-dimensional model of CDA introduced by Fairclough, combining the analysis of the text, discursive practice, and social practice. The textual level concentrates on such linguistic features as lexical items, grammar, modality and rhetorical devices. The dimension of discursive practice is the analysis of the texts consumed, created, and utilized especially in political and media areas. Lastly, the dimension of social practice connects the discourse to larger ideologies, institutional norms and socio-political trends.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select six speeches to ensure coverage of diverse rhetorical situations. The selection was guided by three criteria: genre and formality (campaign launch, convention speeches, presidential/international addresses), temporal coverage (2015–2025), capturing continuity and change in discourse, contextual scope (domestic vs. international settings). The analysis process was conducted through manual coding in order to identify and organise key rhetorical and ideological patterns in the speeches of Donald Trummp and Joe Biden. The coding combined both deductive and inductive approaches, aligning with Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. In the process of coding, new themes were introduced and incorporated into the coding scheme to represent an iterative process between the data and the purpose of the analysis. It was also advantageous in improving

the validity of the coding by having the opportunity to add and modify what was deemed important concerning the discourses sampled as well as in maintaining sensitivity in the analysis to features of political discourse that might go unnoticed.

This stratified methodology enables a broad picture of the role of the political leaders to create the image of leaders and ideological templates using language. The data range is six political speeches three by Donald Trump and three by Joe Biden to represent the variety of rhetorical occasions, such as campaign launch, international address, and formal inauguration. This cross-contextual selection allows analyzing the situational variability as well as rhetorical consistency in the discourse of each of the leaders. The speeches that will be analyzed are: The Announcement Speech of the Campaign -Make America Great Again (June 16, 2015) Speech at UN General Assembly -America First (September 25, 2018) Republican National Convention Speech (July 19, 2024) Philadelphia (April 25, 2019) Campaign Launch Speech Democratic National Convention Acceptance Speech (August 20, 2020) Inaugural Address (January 20, 2021) The speeches were chosen on the ground of their rhetorical importance and chronological distribution as they may be compared with each other in terms of the development of leadership identity and ideological narrative of each politician.

The discussion focuses on two major discursive attributes: neologisms and rhetoric strategies. The focus is on neologisms that serve as a framing device, markers of ideology, or branding element. The analysis of the rhetorical strategies is carried out in accordance with typology of political rhetoric based by Capone (2010). Among them is metaphor, hyperbole, presupposition, the use of pronouns, intertextuality, repetition, dichotomization (e.g., US vs. THEM framing). There is also a focus on stylistic and pragmatic factors and features that help to create a rhetorical personality of a leader: tone, modality, and personal or institutional voice. Framework of the study is shown in figure 1.
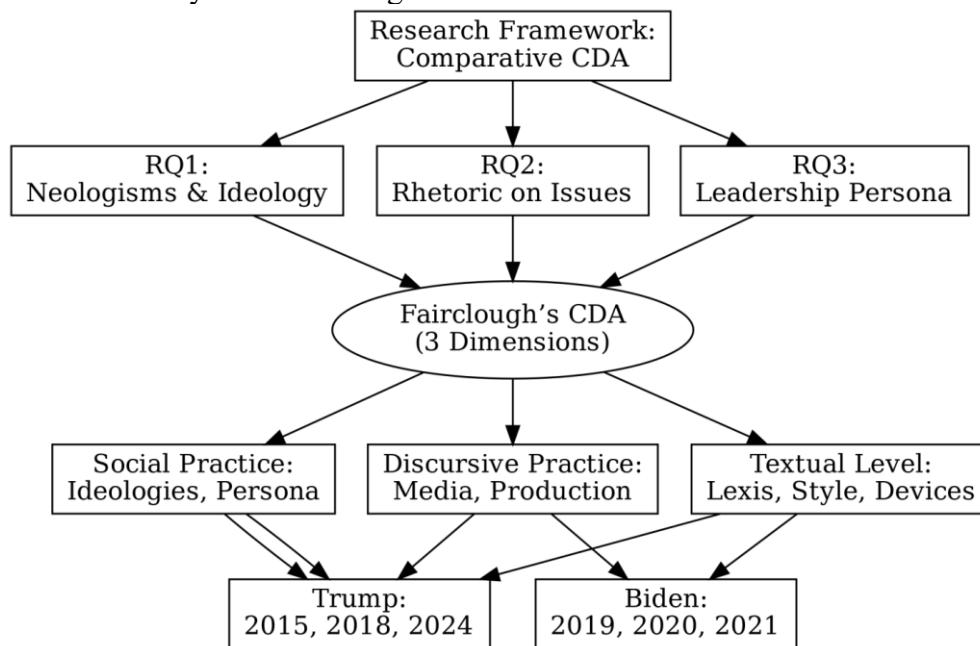

Figure 1. Framework of the study

In order to enhance the validity, credibility, and interpretive robustness of this qualitative comparative discourse study, triangulation was employed as a core methodological principle. In this study, triangulation operates at three interrelated levels: methodological triangulation, data triangulation and theoretical triangulation, each of which plays a pivotal role in strengthening the interpretive power of research. Methodological triangulation combined

Fairclough's CDA framework with manual coding, enabling both deductive categorization and inductive emergence of rhetorical themes. Data triangulation was achieved through purposive sampling of six speeches across different genres (campaign, convention, inaugural, international), temporal span (2015–2025), and contexts (domestic vs. international), allowing cross-contextual comparison of discursive strategies. Finally, theoretical triangulation integrated Fairclough's CDA with perspectives from rhetorical studies and political communication, ensuring that Trump's neologisms and Biden's appeals to unity were interpreted not only linguistically but also ideologically and rhetorically. This three-tiered triangulation enhanced the study's reliability by avoiding surface-level interpretation and capturing the complexity of presidential discourse across time and context.

All the data that were analyzed in this research are publicly available, and they were extracted out of official transcripts, and archived video records of speech. No humans were used, and no data identifiable to any person were collected so that the research was not subject to formal ethical review by the norms of most academic discourse research

5. Critical Discourse analysis of Trump's Speeches

5.1 Description

Trump's speeches strategically deploy textual features to consolidate authority and shape collective identity. The use of pronouns such as I and we create a dual persona, simultaneously projecting him as both a heroic leader and a representative of the people. Superlatives (tremendous, horrible), dichotomous words (America, globalists), modal verbs (will, must) underscore certainty and control. His syntax is also simple, repetitive, and helps to make the text easier to memorize and attract a populist audience. Rhetorical strength is enhanced through devices like parallelism, anaphora and figurative war metaphors. The references to religion and emotional appeals make his mission sacral. Thematic arrangement resembles classical rhetoric: personal story, policy, unity and a climactic, emotionally stirring conclusion to support ideological messages.

5.2 Interpretation

The speeches delivered by Trump are a part of an interdiscursive framework of populist, nationalistic, conservative, and media-oriented discourse. His rhetoric, based on talk radio, social media, and right-wing media such as Fox News, increases the themes of threat, decline, and restoration. The 2015 launch of his campaign re-uses media discourse on immigration as political theater. The RNC speech of 2024 turns an assassination attempt into a heroic survivor story, made to be consumed by television. This reveals his synthetic personalization and media logic in his language, i.e. repetition, simple phrases, and addressing the audience directly. Trump's rhetoric is a hybrid of the Reagan nationalism, anti-globalism, and Christian themes that are repackaged into news forms as populist political rhetoric.

The use of slogans by Trump to coin and reuse, including recontextualizing, such phrases as America First, Green New Scam, and illegal immigrant invasion is evidence of how the political neologisms serve as discursive tools that transfer from official speech events into social practice at large by means of media amplification. These phrases were initially presented in public forums such as UN speeches or campaign events and spread rapidly through media channels, party channels and social media. The Atlantic Council and Politico note that these slogans turned into rhetorical staples within the Republican Party and strengthened ideological consistency and antagonism. Their replication in the media and in the popular discourse through chants and memes and through media framing became part of the identity of his political base.

5.3 Explanation

Trump speeches in the setting of social practice serve as tools of populist nationalism in the era of crises in the world economy, inequality in society, migration, and mistrust of elites. In his

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rhetoric, he places nationalism before globalization, conservatism before liberalism and sovereignty before supranational governance. As an illustration, he states in his 2018 UNGA address, that America prefers independence over control, which is a reference to his rejection of neoliberal globalization and such institutions as the ICC. In the 2015 campaign speech, he demonizes immigrants, which reflects the stories of the right-wing media. In 2024, Trump uses the rhetoric of martyr, describing himself as a divinely selected person. His rhetoric indicates an economic protectionism, gendered power, religion, and moralization of nation-state as the supreme order.

Trump's neologisms function as condensed ideological signifiers, encoding complex worldviews into simple, repeatable phrases. Slogans like Make America Great Again and America First frame the nation as a victim of globalism, multiculturalism, and liberalism, necessitating restoration through nationalist-populist policy. These terms reflect a belief in a lost national greatness due to foreign influence, justifying protectionism and exclusionary politics. Similarly, phrases like principled realism and Green New Scam delegitimize international cooperation and environmental policy, presenting them as threats orchestrated by elites. These neologisms, as Fairclough's CDA suggests, are not neutral—they construct and normalize power relations, legitimizing Trump's ideological stance.

6. Critical Discourse Analysis of Biden's Speech

6.1 Description

On the textual level, the speeches of Biden are filled with deictic words such as we, our, and this moment to create unity and a sense of common identity, which is based on American democratic principles. He uses highly emotive words-soul, truth, light-lexically to place his agenda in a moral context. He constructs political struggle as a kind of ethical struggle through the binary opposition such as the opposition between light and darkness. Biden rhetorically employs the use of anaphora and brief phrases to induce an emotional appeal and clarity. He also makes use of historical intertextuality, mentioning Lincoln, Roosevelt and Heaney, to situate his liberal-democratic vision within American tradition and to create a patriotic narrative with an authoritative voice.

6.2 Interpretation

The speeches of Joe Biden are designed in institutional, political, and media contexts and are co-constructed with the help of speechwriters and media strategists. A mix of ceremonial, deliberative, and crisis genres, they can be called inter-discursive, as they combine personal narratives, policy talk, and myth-making about the nation. Biden tends to appeal to religious and civil rights imagery, appeal to American founding texts to justify his platform. His words are designed to be spread in the media on a broad scale: repetitive and emotionally appealing, with a slogan nature. Addressing a wide range of audience including Democratic voters and foreign observers, his speeches are polysemic, allowing different interpretations. This is in line with Fairclough who considered discourse to be a social occasion, which is strategically created to be consumed in dynamic ideologically-sensitive contexts.

6.3 Explanation

At the socio-political level, Biden's rhetoric responds to crises such as Trumpism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and racial unrest by reasserting hegemonic values of unity, democracy, and liberalism. He positions unity as a moral imperative, thereby legitimizing centrist politics while marginalizing radical alternatives. At the ideological level, Biden justifies neoliberalism by referring to inclusive capitalism and moralized economic justice. The mentioning of race and equality focuses on inclusion without addressing the issue of systemic racism. On the international stage, Biden returns to liberal internationalism, which makes the U.S. a moral leader on the global stage. In such way, his speech maintains institutional power and soft power

and disguises ideology preservation on the cloth of progress and unity. A comparative analysis of political discourse employed by both leaders is presented in figure 2.
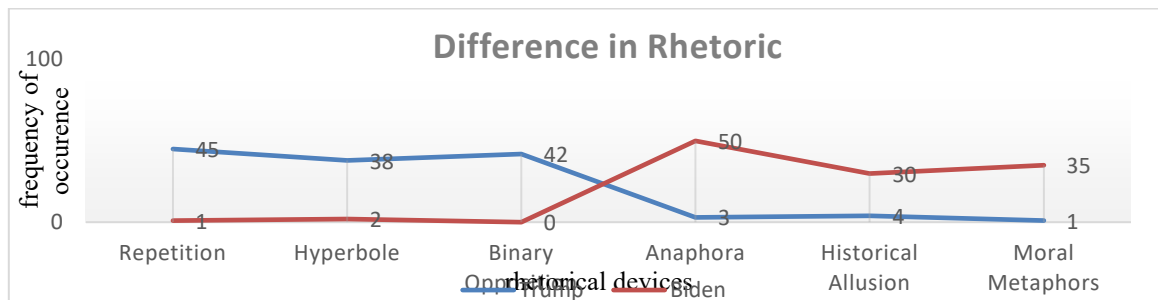

Figure 2. Comparison between Trump and Biden's speech style

Figure 2 illustrates the rhetorical differences between Trump and Biden. Trump relies heavily on repetition (45), hyperbole (38), and binary opposition (42), reflecting a combative, contrast-driven style. By contrast, Biden makes limited use of these devices (1, 2, and 0) but frequently employs anaphora (50), historical allusion (30), and moral metaphors (35), indicating a narrative and value-oriented style grounded in history and moral appeals.

7.   Discussion

The results of the study confirm and develop the existing literature on populist political discourse, especially the neologism strategy to construct ideological discourses. The newly invented and recycled terms created by Trump, including America First, Green New Scam, and Illegal Immigration Invasion, fit in with the findings of Wodak (2015) that right-wing populists employ simplified and affectively charged language to create a binary, us versus them. The neologisms are a demonstration of what Lakoff (2016) terms as metaphorical framing, which is the restatement of abstract policy elements in moral or confrontational language, which makes them more cognitively resonant with their audiences.

In contrast to the works on European populism, the discourse used by Trump is uniquely American in its nationalism-anti-globalism-consumer branding –similar to Luntz (2007), who sees the slogans as a political product, created to be repeated and followed. Furthermore, such researchers as Enli (2017) and Bonilla and Rosa (2015) emphasize the influence of media and social networks on the reinforcement of populist messages, which is also reflected in the way Trump slogans are spread through news sources and social networks. This paper supports Fairclough (2013) that discourse is both a product and a producer of ideology: neologisms used by Trump do not only describe the existing political reality but create a worldview based on sovereignty, exclusion, and mistrust of institutions, which are the main characteristics of modern authoritarian populism.

The comparative analysis shows that the rhetorical answers to socio-political problems that Donald Trump and Joe Biden offer are fundamentally different. Crisis framing, exclusionary sovereignty, and aggressive neologisms (such as the term Green New Scam) and Illegal Immigration Invasion, dramatize issues such as immigration and climate policy as an existential threat by Trump in his discourse. These results reflect the findings of Ahmadian et al. (2017) who also focus on the emotional intensity and populist dramatization of Trump as the major means of political mobilization. The same can be demonstrated by Holubnycha et al. (2020) and Eissler et al. (2024) that Trump creates a messianic image of leadership based on the tools of discursive construction of symbolic martyrdom, appealing to the decline of the nation as the reason to seek authoritarian answers.

By contrast, the rhetoric used by Biden, which is based on the appeals to unity, continuity of the institutions, and moral responsibility, has a liberal democratic tone. His intertextuality in history, his inclusive pronouns, and appeals to reconciliation slogans are consistent with Iftene

(2021) and Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2023), who identify the discourse of Biden in terms of healing, democratic values, and social justice. Where Trump escalates the divide by using provocative language, Biden brings about healing by emphasizing a common sense of empathy. These results confirm that the two narratives create vastly different national imaginaries and leadership identities, which are based on opposite discursive traditions and ideological worldviews even though they tackle similar socio-political problems. The comparative analysis also shows how each of the leaders and their rhetorical modes of speaking address socio-political matters. Trump's verbal actions are more prosecuting and provocative, thus contributing to polarization and construction of crises, as well as activation of nationalist discourses (Wodak, 2015). While on the other hand, Biden is more of a reconciler and embracer who presents himself as the leader who can bring back the hegemonic democracy of liberalism and trust in leaders and governments around the globe.

These findings contribute to the CDA literature in three significant ways. First, they extend Fairclough's three-dimensional model by showing how neologisms operate as ideological devices concise, emotionally charged phrases that connect micro-level textual selections with macro-level ideological strife. Second, the analysis highlights the importance of comparative CDA by comparing Trump and Biden and showing how their rhetorical disparities represent different leadership philosophies and create conflicting competing models of political legitimacy. While Trump destabilizes the political field through provocative slogans and crisis framing, Biden restores institutional authority through historical grounding and moral narratives. Third, the findings address a gap in political discourse studies by moving beyond single-event analyses to show how rhetorical strategies evolve across different genres such as campaign, convention, inaugural, and international addresses.

The implications extend beyond U.S. politics. For CDA, this study shows the necessity of combining micro-linguistic analysis (e.g., affixation in neologisms, pronoun use) with macro-discursive framing (e.g., populism vs. institutionalism) in order to capture how power and ideology are discursively enacted. For political communication, the results show how presidential rhetoric functions as a vehicle for identity construction and public persuasion. In an era of populist disruption and democratic contestation worldwide, the contrasting rhetorical logics of Trump and Biden exemplify the struggle between destabilizing and stabilizing modes of political discourse.

8.   Conclusion

This critical discourse analysis study reveals the fact that the political language is much more than a means of transferring information; it is a means of implementation of power and ideology construction. Presidential discourse is not a simple reproduction of a certain leadership, and individual's way of communication but a process that constructs and reflects ideology, identity and culture of politics. Thus, the study examines linguistic styles of Donald Trump and Joe Biden and the way they employ language as a tool of ideological construction and leadership representation, with particular attention to Trump's neologisms and Biden's rhetorical strategies. Drawing on the principles of Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA framework, six speeches across campaign, convention, inaugural, and international contexts were analyzed to address three research questions.

First, the analysis showed that Trump's neologisms and lexical innovations, such as *"America First"* and *"Green New Scam"*, operate as ideological signifiers. They simplify complex issues, dramatize crises, and reinforce a polarized worldview that positions him as a populist outsider. Through the analysis of Trump's linguistic features, such as neologisms, it has been unveiled that the Trump opposes legitimizing himself through formal, traditional means of communication and relies on performative oratory instead. Second, Biden's rhetorical strategies, centered on inclusive pronouns, historical intertextuality, and moral metaphors,

respond to socio-political crises by invoking unity, continuity, and institutional legitimacy. Biden versed in stability and common principles of democracy emphasizes that language is stabilizing and unifying. Third, these contrasting rhetorical choices construct divergent leadership personas: Trump as a disruptive, combative challenger to elites, and Biden as a reconciliatory defender of democratic traditions.

The study contributes to the field of political discourse analysis in three ways. It (a) theorizes neologisms as ideological condensation devices linking micro-textual features to macro-political narratives, (b) demonstrates the importance of comparative CDA for uncovering competing models of political legitimacy, and (c) extends analysis beyond single-event speeches to reveal discursive continuity and change across contexts.

At the same time, the study has limitations: the analysis is restricted to six U.S. speeches, and the focus is limited to verbal discourse. Future research could comprise: enlarging the sample of the politicians for the analysis; extending the analysis by incorporating media analyses of other than verbal data; or even conducting a comparative analysis of the politicians' rhetoric from different countries. Such extensions would deepen our understanding of how rhetorical practices shape public perception, democratic legitimacy, and the global contest between populist and institutionalist discourses.

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