

Persuasive Strategies Used by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in Their Campaign Speeches

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the persuasive strategies employed by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in their campaign speeches, guided by the theoretical framework proposed by Beebe and Beebe (2012). Through qualitative analysis of paragraphs extracted from two campaign speech transcripts, the study identifies the distinct persuasive strategies of each speaker. Joe Biden used causal reasoning, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, metaphors and similes, fear appeals, appeal to emotions of hope, appeal to emotions of courage, and shared myths, while Kamala Harris used deductive reasoning, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, fear appeals, appeal to emotions of hope, and appeal to emotions of courage.

Keywords: campaign speech, persuasive strategies, political campaign

INTRODUCTION

This study focused on analyzing the persuasive strategies utilized by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris during their campaign speeches, as they sought to convince the American people to vote for them as President and Vice President of the United States of America. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were selected for this study based on their successful campaigns in the 2020 United States presidential election. According to Lindsay (2020), Joe Biden and Kamala Harris secured a total of 81,283,098 votes, which accounted for 51.3 percent of the votes cast. In order to promote their presidency throughout the states, they delivered many campaign speeches in 2020. Persuasion plays a crucial role in political campaign speeches, as it enables candidates to effectively shape public opinion, gain support, and ultimately secure votes (Larson, 2004). Thus, the writer's purpose is to analyze the persuasive strategies utilized by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in their presidential campaign speeches during the 2020 election, while also examining the similarities and differences between them.

METHODS

The data was analyzed using a qualitative approach by the writer. The study utilized data from two speech transcripts: Joe Biden's DNC speech titled *Joe Biden 2020 DNC Speech Transcript* (Joe Biden, 2020) and Kamala Harris' campaign speech in Reno titled *Kamala Harris Campaign Speech Transcript Reno, NV October 27* (Kamala Harris, 2020). The data analyzed in this study specifically refers to the paragraphs found in these transcripts. The data was examined using the persuasive strategies theory by Beebe and Beebe (2012).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The writer found that Joe Biden used the strategies; causal reasoning, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, metaphors and similes, fear appeals, appeal to emotions of hope, appeal to emotions of courage, and shared myths in *Joe Biden 2020 DNC Speech Transcript* (Joe Biden, 2020). While Kamala Harris employed the strategies; deductive reasoning, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples,

emotion-arousing words, fear appeals, appeal to emotions of hope, and appeal to emotions of courage in *Kamala Harris Campaign Speech Transcript Reno, NV October 27* (Kamala Harris, 2020).

The Persuasive Strategies Used by Joe Biden in His 2020 DNC Speech

A. Causal Reasoning

Beebe and Beebe (2012) state that speakers employ cause-and-effect reasoning to establish a connection between multiple events and deduce that one or more of these events were the cause of the others.

Joe Biden effectively demonstrates a cause-and-effect connection between significant events and societal transformation. As a result, the listener is led to the realization that moments of sadness and loss have prompted a collective determination to reject hatred. Joe Biden employs causal reasoning to present himself as a competent leader capable of guiding the nation towards a more promising future, particularly during challenging periods.

B. Use Specific Evidence

Beebe and Beebe (2012) believe that using concrete examples helps speakers make their points more effectively.

When discussing Donald Trump's presidency and his handling of the United States, Joe Biden presented several alarming statistics to highlight Trump's inadequate response to the pandemic. Joe Biden highlighted the economic consequences of Donald Trump's presidency, which serve as compelling evidence of the detrimental impact caused by Trump's policies on the economy.

C. Use Evidence to Tell a Story

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), a speaker can enhance their persuasiveness by incorporating evidence into a story that effectively illustrates their point.

Joe Biden has developed a comprehensive plan for the economy that encompasses various crucial areas such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, and immigration. The rich detail in his story serves as evidence, offering listeners concrete examples of how his policies will come to realization. Joe Biden builds his economic plan around data. The specifics provide credibility to his speech and help the audience visualize a future where these goals have been realized, making his speech intriguing and engaging.

D. Use Concrete Examples

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), narrating a story or describing a topic in a speech might help the audience visualize it and create emotions.

The events in Charlottesville are seen as a turning point that calls for action against racism. Joe Biden's concrete examples can help the audience picture Charlottesville's events and appreciate the seriousness of the issue. Joe Biden's concrete instances also make racism in the United States seem urgent.

E. Use Emotion Arousing Words

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), the use of emotion-arousing words can effectively evoke emotional responses from listeners.

Biden strategically employs language to evoke emotions and foster a common spirit of unity

and urgency among his audience. Joe Biden effectively engages his audience on an emotional level by carefully selecting words that evoke strong emotions. This approach enhances the persuasiveness and impact of his speeches, enabling him to establish an intimate relationship with his listeners. By doing so, he invites them to join him in embracing his vision for America.

F. Use Appropriate Metaphors and Similes

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest using metaphors and similes in persuasive speeches to create a unique and emotional perspective. Metaphors can boost credibility and elicit emotions, according to Beebe & Beebe (2012).

Joe Biden's use of metaphors such as the words light and dark, which represents truth and negativity. Joe Biden effectively employs metaphors to enhance the impact of his message, allowing him to articulate intricate concepts with greater clarity. Metaphors play a crucial role in influencing listeners and enhancing the persuasiveness of his argument.

G. Use Appropriate Fear Appeals

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), speakers can affect audience behavior by conveying genuine fear. Fear appeals warn audiences of the dangers of ignoring the speaker's advice.

Joe Biden contrasted the leadership styles of former President Obama and the present president, emphasizing his preference for a different America. Joe Biden warns against re-electing the president. He contrasted former President Obama's leadership style with that of the current president to show his choice for an alternative America. Fear appeal is used to emphasize the president's unfavorable traits and potential negative effects. The goal is to persuade viewers to oppose his re-election.

H. Appeal to Emotions of Hope

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that utilizing emotional appeals can be an effective strategy for speakers to achieve their persuasive goals. One such appeal is to tap into the audience's sense of hope. In order to inspire hope, a speaker presents the audience with a vision of a more promising future.

Joe Biden makes a commitment to safeguard and uphold the interests of America, thereby instilling a feeling of security and confidence. He demonstrates a strong sense of optimism that he will serve as a president who actively prioritizes the safety and well-being of the nation. Afterwards, he delivers an inspiring message, emphasizing that every individual has a meaningful role to fulfill, regardless of the challenges they encounter. In his speech, Joe Biden effectively employs an appeal to emotions by conveying a message of hope, resilience, purpose, and optimism. This persuasive strategy can be quite compelling.

I. Appeal to Emotions of Courage

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), the speaker challenges the listener to behave bravely when he or she invokes feelings of courage.

Joe Biden emphasizes the importance of courage in confronting systemic racism and suggests that there is potential for substantial progress, even in difficult circumstances. He places a strong emphasis on the theme of courage, encouraging his audience to boldly face the obstacles that lie ahead and actively strive for advancement. Joe Biden skillfully taps into the power of courage by employing a combination of personal anecdotes and uplifting messages to inspire his audience to confront obstacles head-on and work towards a brighter tomorrow.

J. Tap Audience Members' Beliefs in Shared Myths

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that including myths in persuasive speeches can provide

the audience with emotional and motivational support, enhancing the speaker's message. Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that establishing a connection with the audience can be achieved by sharing the same beliefs.

Joe Biden frequently references the American ideals of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness, which are articulated in the Declaration of Independence. These principles are widely regarded as a shared myth or common belief within American society. Joe Biden employs a persuasive strategy aimed at cultivating a feeling of unity and a common sense of purpose among his audience. He enhances the persuasive impact of his speech by connecting his arguments to commonly held beliefs.

K. Multiple Strategies

a. Metaphors and appeal to emotions of hope

Joe Biden used metaphors and evoked hope. Metaphors can increase credibility and trigger emotions, according to Beebe & Beebe (2012). According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), speakers who appeal to hope give their audiences a hopeful attitude on the future.

Joe Biden employs the metaphor of "light" and "darkness," drawing inspiration from the wisdom of the civil rights movement. Biden positions himself as a potential future leader by associating himself with the concept of light. The speaker captivates the audience by presenting a vision of a more promising future, appealing to their sense of hope. His statement not only reinforces the previous metaphors but also strengthens his commitment to guiding America towards a positive and unified future.

b. Appeal to emotions of hope and appeal to emotions of courage

Emotional appeal can be beneficial for persuasion, according to Beebe and Beebe (2012). Hope and courage can be used. Using hope, a speaker promises a brighter future. However, appealing to courage inspires audiences to act boldly.

Joe Biden stressed the importance of the election and the decisions Americans must make. The country is at an inflection moment with risks and opportunities, making this election more crucial than past ones, he said. Joe Biden's quote suggests that positive change and growth are possible. Joe Biden then describes two paths: one of wrath, separation, and suspicion, and the other of healing, reform, unification, hope, and light. Joe Biden encourages the audience to choose the positive route over the harmful one.

c. Specific evidence and fear appeals

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), providing specific evidence is crucial in enhancing a speaker's persuasiveness. According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), using fear appeals requires cautioning the audience about the potential consequences they may face if they choose to ignore the speaker's recommendations.

Joe Biden discusses the current administration's COVID-19 pandemic. According to Joe Biden, re-electing the president would lead to high COVID-19 cases and deaths, small businesses closing forever, and working people struggling to make ends meet. Joe Biden said millions could lose insurance and prior condition protections. Healthcare, small companies, and working families were used by Joe Biden to illustrate the risks of status quo. In addition to fear appeals, Joe Biden quietly contrasted the current administration's activities with the potential for constructive change under new leadership, pushing the audience to consider what might happen if the president was re-elected.

d. Fear appeals, appeal to emotions of hope and appeal to emotions of courage

Fear appeals can warn audiences of the implications of ignoring the speaker's counsel,

according to Beebe and Beebe (2012). Beebe & Beebe (2012) suggest presenting a brighter future to inspire hope. Beebe and Beebe (2012) found that appealing to courage can inspire audiences to act.

Joe Biden successfully contrasts President Obama's and Trump's leadership approaches. He convincingly showcases his vision for a separate and transformational America. Joe Biden's portrayal suggests unfavorable outcomes if he stays in office. He then offers an optimistic perspective of America, emphasizing its potential for improvement. He uses adjectives like "generous," "strong," "selfless," and "humble" to paint a picture of a transformed America, inspiring optimism and possibility. Finally, Joe Biden inspires courage and urges decisive action to repair the country, touching the audience's emotions.

e. Concrete examples and appeal to emotions of hope

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), using storytelling or detailed descriptions throughout a speech might help the audience visualize the issue and evoke an emotional response. Beebe & Beebe (2012) suggest presenting a brighter future to inspire hope.

Joe Biden uses Charlottesville to address prejudice and give the audience a concrete example. Joe Biden then reaffirmed his dedication to a safer, happier, and wealthier society. He believes he can improve and change. This message may inspire frustrated global citizens.

f. Causal reasoning, metaphors, and appeal to emotions of courage

Beebe and Beebe (2012) define causal reasoning as utilizing cause-and-effect reasoning to link two or more occurrences and conclude that one produced the others. Metaphors can boost credibility and evoke emotions that non-metaphorical language cannot, according to Beebe & Beebe (2012). Beebe and Beebe (2012) recommend summoning bravery to inspire adventurous action.

Joe Biden emphasizes social progress. He remembers Gianna, George Floyd's daughter. John Lewis's death follows. He thinks important events influence society. Joe Biden employs metaphors to emphasize that despite the current predicament (the "dark moment"), there remains a core belief and optimism that development and positive change are achievable ("poised to make great progress again" and "find the light once more"). He challenges the crowd to elect him president to improve America. He urges the audience to address these issues bravely.

The Persuasive Strategies Used by Kamala Harris in Her Campaign Speech in Reno, Nevada

A. Deductive Reasoning

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), deductive reasoning involves beginning with a general premise and then using it to draw a logical conclusion for a specific case.

Kamala Harris criticized Trump's COVID-19 measures. She concluded that Donald Trump purposely ignores the virus, causing negative effects. Kamala Harris uses deductive reasoning to argue that Donald Trump ignored COVID-19, citing his ignorance. Her data shows that nearly eight million people have contracted the virus. She uses deductive reasoning to persuade the audience that Donald Trump does not value public health.

B. Use Specific Evidence

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that including specific evidence in an argument can help to strengthen it and make it more persuasive. The use of facts and statistics can help to achieve this.

Kamala Harris criticized the President's efforts to destroy Barack Obama's programs and accomplishments. Kamala Harris called this an irrational obsession. Given the public health and economic issues, Kamala Harris condemned such behavior. Kamala Harris uses facts and data to convince her audience that the present administration's reaction to crises is inadequate.

C. Use Evidence to Tell A Story

Beebe and Beebe (2012) say that using evidence to tell a story can create arguments that are less abstract and build greater emotional impact, therefore, the speaker's point can be more persuasive.

Kamala Harris used a story to show Trump's crisis response. Donald Trump's reaction to a journalist's wildfire questions eloquently illustrates his perspective. Kamala Harris contrasts Joe Biden and Donald Trump on climate change. She said Joe Biden prioritizes clean air and water to enhance the globe. She uses Trump's disregard for science to illustrate his viewpoint.

D. The Use of Concrete Examples

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that incorporating stories or vivid descriptions in speeches can effectively engage the audience by enabling them to visualize the speaker's message and evoke their emotions.

Kamala Harris effectively utilizes concrete examples to vividly illustrate the profound and destructive consequences of climate change on various communities throughout the United States. Kamala Harris effectively engages the audience's emotions and emphasizes the urgent need for action on climate change through the use of concrete examples.

E. Use Emotion Arousing Words

Beebe and Beebe (2012) suggest that incorporating words and phrases that evoke emotional responses from the audience can enhance a speaker's argument.

Kamala Harris' words convey sacrifice and effort. Her emotional language emphasizes John Lewis' civil rights work. Kamala Harris uses emotional phrases to engage her audience, appeal to their emotions, and strengthen her argument. This method stresses the importance of her topics and creates an emotional connection with the audience.

F. Use Appropriate Fear Appeals

Fear appeals can persuade the audience to change their behavior, according to Beebe and Beebe (2012).

Kamala Harris emphasizes the potential negative effects of repealing or dismantling the Affordable Care Act. The statement emphasizes the importance of the Affordable Care Act in providing healthcare to over 20 million people who could lose coverage if it is repealed. Without it, the audience may have trouble receiving important services, which could affect their health.

G. Appeal to Emotions of Hope

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), when a speaker appeals to the audience's emotions of hope, they are offering them a brighter future.

Kamala Harris encourages her listeners to believe in a harmonious, diverse, and equal America by presenting a vision of one. Kamala Harris promises a more peaceful future. Kamala Harris utilizes optimism to motivate her audience to believe in a cohesive America. Her positive rhetoric connects with her audience, making her message more powerful.

H. Appeal to Emotions of Courage

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), appealing to emotions of courage is a persuasive technique that encourages the audience to take bold actions.

Kamala Harris encourages the audience to speak up for their views by emphasizing that they have strength when united. Kamala Harris' reference to prior generations' sacrifices for voting rights reminds the audience of their struggles. Kamala Harris implies that the audience must behave boldly and honor ancestors.

I. Multiple Strategies

a. Specific Evidence and Emotion-arousing words

Beebe and Beebe (2012) believe that specific evidence strengthens an argument. Statistics can help. However, using emotion-arousing language might enhance the audience's emotional response to the speaker's argument.

Kamala Harris gave a state of the nation address, focusing on the pandemic. She proves the pandemic's severity by citing statistics on Americans who died. The pandemic has made it impossible for loved ones to be with the deceased, highlighting the emotional side of human connection and the necessity for physical intimacy at tough times. Kamala Harris concerns that COVID-19's contagiousness prevented some from attending their family's passing.

b. Specific evidence and Fear appeals

Beebe and Beebe (2012) state that specific evidence strengthens and persuades. Speakers use fear appeals to warn audiences if they don't follow their advice.

Kamala Harris addressed financial and healthcare issues facing the average American family. The pandemic and lack of money were among her economic concerns. Kamala Harris then emphasizes that if the audience re-elects Donald Trump, they risk having the Affordable Care Act repealed, denying pre-existing condition patients healthcare insurance.

c. Evidence to tell a story and Appeals to emotion of hope

Beebe and Beebe (2012) recommend using evidence in narratives to make arguments more emotional and less abstract. This can strengthen the speaker's argument. Speakers can also offer a brighter future by appealing to hope (Beebe & Beebe, 2012).

In Reno, where wildfires and extreme weather are occurring, Kamala Harris discussed the U.S. climate issue. Kamala Harris recounted how Donald Trump handled real-life problems. She shared Donald Trump's response to a journalist's wildfire queries. She then encourages the audience by citing Joe Biden's acceptance of environmental concerns' possibility for change.

CONCLUSION

In their campaign speeches, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris employ persuasive strategies as per Beebe and Beebe's (2012) persuasive strategies theory. The findings revealed that both Joe Biden and Kamala Harris effectively employed similar persuasive strategies, namely; the use of specific evidence, the use of evidence to tell a story, the use of concrete examples, the use of emotion arousing words, the use of fear appeals, appeal to the emotions of hope, appeal to emotions of courage, and the use of shared myths. They both also did not use inductive reasoning, credible evidence, new evidence, appeal to emotion of pride and appeal to emotion of reverence. Moreover, they also occasionally employ the use of multiple strategies in one data. Joe Biden employed two strategies that Kamala Harris did not utilize, which are; tap audience

members' beliefs in shared myths and metaphors and similes. Kamala Harris implemented a unique strategy that was not apparent in Joe Biden's speech.: the use of deductive reasoning.

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