



Critical Discourse Analysis of Discursive Strategies Utilized in President Joe Biden's Inaugural Speech

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Abstract: This paper presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of Joe Biden's inaugural address, using a qualitative research methodology to examine the discursive strategies employed to shape his self-presentation and critique opposing perspectives. Through a detailed analysis of the speech, the study identifies how Biden's use of topicalization emphasizes key themes of democracy and unity, positioning him as a unifying force while subtly critiquing previous administrations. By drawing historical parallels and addressing contemporary challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice, Biden constructs an image of resilience and forward-thinking leadership. The "Number Game" strategy enhances his rhetoric through quantitative comparisons, highlighting current issues and the perceived failures of past leadership. Polarization emerges as a central discursive technique, contrasting his administration's values with those seen as hindering national progress. Biden's use of illustration and victimization lends credibility and ethical weight to his narrative, while strategies such as lexicalization, metaphors, modality, and populism further reinforce his favorable self-image. By employing qualitative methods, this research uncovers how these rhetorical strategies are utilized to shape public perception and align Biden's vision for the nation with progressive and inclusive values. The study demonstrates how Biden's inaugural address strategically navigates political narratives to project leadership and foster national unity.

Keywords; CDA, Political Discourse, Discursive strategies, Inaugural speech, Joe Biden

1. Introduction

Inaugural speeches serve as a significant rhetorical tool for presidents, establishing their vision, political ideology and approach. These speeches are carefully crafted to resonate with an audience, both domestically and internationally, to promote unity, assert authority, and outline a roadmap for governance. An inaugural speech allows the president to set the tone for their administration, address the nation's current challenges, and articulate their vision for the future. President Joe Biden's inaugural speech, delivered amid a polarized political climate and unprecedented socio-economic challenges, provide a rich site for Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis examines how language is used to construct social realities and power dynamics. It is particularly relevant in political discourse, where language is a powerful tool for constructing ideological positions, persuading audiences, and legitimizing policies. This research focuses on the discursive strategies employed in President Joe Biden's inaugural speech to understand how he navigates the complex socio-political landscape of contemporary America. By employing CDA, this study seeks to establish in-group legitimacy and challenge the legitimacy of out-groups. This dichotomy is achieved through various discursive strategies. The current research aims to investigate

these discursive strategies in detail to understand how Biden's speech not only address immediate political concerns but also shape the broader discourse on governance and national identity. By focusing on how Biden establishes in-group legitimacy and challenges out-group legitimacy, this study will contribute to the understanding of the role of language in political leadership and discourse construction. This research is guided by two primary objectives: to identify the specific discursive strategies employed in Biden's inaugural speech and to analyze how these strategies work to legitimize his administration while delegitimizing opposition groups. The findings will provide insights into the relationship between language, power, and politics in presidential discourse.

1.2 Problem Statement

Several studies in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have explored inaugural speeches, yet the majority of research in political discourse has concentrated on other forms of political communication (Sardabi, Biria, & Azin, 2014). Although much attention has been given to U.S. presidential speeches, particularly in terms of their rhetorical and grammatical structures, there is a gap in examining these speeches through a philosophical lens, particularly using Van Dijk's (2005) ideological square model. This model highlights the use of discursive strategies at both the micro and macro levels, with a focus on how political figures portray themselves positively while framing others negatively. While numerous scholars, such as Chilton (2004), Fairclough (1998), and Wodak (1989), have explored how political discourse shapes public opinion, few have focused specifically on the application of Van Dijk's model to U.S. presidential inaugural addresses. Existing research has predominantly analyzed U.S. presidents' speeches from grammatical and rhetorical perspectives (Ursic, 2021; Ahmed & Amir, 2021; Mustafa, 2023), but the critical analysis of ideological framing and discursive strategies, particularly in President Joe Biden's inaugural speech, remains limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by applying Van Dijk's ideological square model to analyze the discursive strategies used in President Joe Biden's inaugural speech. It will explore how these strategies contribute to constructing a positive self-representation and a negative portrayal of the other, thereby expanding the scope of CDA in the field of political discourse analysis.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To investigate the specific discursive strategies of President Joe Biden's presidential inauguration speech.
- To examine how President Joe Biden's inaugural speech establishes in-group legitimacy and challenges out-group legitimacy.

1.4 Research Questions

- What specific discursive strategies does President Joe Biden employ in his inaugural speech?
- How does President Joe Biden's inaugural speech use language to establish in-group legitimacy while simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of out-groups?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of language in politics and academia has recently grown (Moody et al., 2021). This study is significant because it offers a critical examination of the discursive strategies employed by President Joe Biden in his inaugural speech. By focusing on Biden's use of language to establish in-group legitimacy and challenge out-group legitimacy, the study contributes to the broader field of political discourse analysis. Understanding these strategies is crucial, as inaugural speeches are pivotal moments that set the tone for a presidency and influence public perception. Furthermore, this research enhances our comprehension of how political leaders use language to construct social realities, establish authority, and influence public opinion. The findings will provide insights into the ways political language shapes narratives, reinforces ideologies, and potentially polarizes or unifies audiences. This study will also benefit linguists, political scientists, and communication scholars by offering a nuanced analysis of the interplay between language, power, and politics in contemporary U.S. presidential rhetoric. Additionally, by examining Biden's speech, this study contributes to the understanding of political communication in a post-Trump era, providing a comparative perspective on how different administrations employ rhetoric to achieve political goals. The study's findings could serve as a reference for future research on political

discourse, particularly in analyzing shifts in rhetorical strategies and their impact on democratic processes and governance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a tool for investigating the power structures embedded in language use. According to Fairclough (1989), CDA is concerned with how language operates within social practices, particularly focusing on the relationship between language and power. Scholars such as Wodak (2001) and van Dijk (2008) have emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of CDA, arguing that it not only analyzes linguistic choices but also investigates their ideological functions within particular sociopolitical contexts.

Political discourse is inherently strategic, aiming to influence public perception, frame political narratives, and maintain or challenge power relations (Reisigl&Wodak, 2001). According to Chilton (2004), political discourse employs various strategies, such as legitimization, de-legitimization, persuasion, and manipulation, to achieve its objectives. For instance, legitimization strategies often involve the use of positive self-presentation and appeals to shared values to establish a sense of in-group solidarity, while de-legitimization strategies may include negative other-presentation and the portrayal of out-groups as a threat to shared values. These strategies are critical in shaping public opinion and reinforcing the speaker's authority and ideological stance.

2.2 Establishing In-Group Legitimacy VS Challenging Out-Group Legitimacy

One of the primary objectives of Biden's inaugural speech is to establish the legitimacy of his administration and to foster a sense of unity among the American people. According to van Dijk's (1998) model of ideological discourse analysis, political leaders often establish in-group legitimacy by highlighting shared values, common goals, and historical continuity. In his inaugural speech, Biden employs these strategies by referencing the resilience of American democracy, the importance of unity and healing, and a collective commitment to overcoming the challenges facing the nation. By emphasizing themes of inclusivity, democracy, and a return to normalcy, Biden seeks to create a sense of belonging and solidarity among his supporters.

Simultaneously, Biden's speech seeks to challenge the legitimacy of the out-group, which includes those associated with the previous administration or perceived as threats to democratic norms. Wodak (2001) notes that de-legitimization in political discourse often involves negative other-presentation, which frames the out-group as morally or socially inferior. In his speech, Biden frequently contrasts the values of unity, democracy, and truth with the divisiveness, misinformation, and extremism associated with his political opponents. By doing so, Biden not only consolidates his position as a legitimate leader but also positions his administration as the rightful defender of American democracy against internal threats.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Abd (2020). explored the application of the intentionality standard in Joe Biden's inaugural speech. The study focuses on how Biden employs the seven textual standards—cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality—to improve the communicative efficacy of his discourse. The analysis demonstrates that Biden's speech is constructed with deliberate attention to intentionality, ensuring both cohesion and coherence, while also effectively employing speech acts and observing conversational maxims. (Abd 2020). Renaldo et al. (2021) conducted a critical discourse analysis of Joe Biden's inaugural address, focusing on the assumptions that reveal his core beliefs. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory and Dijk's presupposition framework to distinguish three types of presuppositions: lexical, existential, and active, with lexical presupposition being the most prevalent. Arifin's study focuses on Biden's political views on immigration, healthcare, racism, democracy, and climate change (Renaldo et al., 2021). Amir (2021) investigated President Joe Biden's persuasion methods and concealed beliefs as revealed in his inauguration address on January 20, 2021. The research examines aspects such as "the rule of three," previous allusions, and biblical instances using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm, which holds that ideologies are entrenched in texts and that texts are open to many interpretations (Fairclough, 1995). The research indicates that the address's overriding theme emphasises deriving strength from America's great history and advocating for a return to classic American ideals such as tolerance, togetherness, and love (Amir 2021).

Handayani and Pranoto (2023), an examination of President Biden's speech tactics, particularly in the context of the Russian-Ukraine conflict, is presented. Employing Theo Van Leeuwen's theoretical framework, the authors conduct a qualitative descriptive analysis to uncover the portrayal of social actors in the speech. The study highlights 13 instances in which Biden's speech employs tactics to downplay the actions of the Russian government. Notably, no clear strategies of exclusion have been identified. Instead, the analysis outlines four key strategies of inclusion: Differentiation – Differentiation, Assimilation – Individualization, Objectivities – Abstraction, and Association – Disassociation. Among these, Differentiation – In differentiation emerges as the most prevalent, with the remaining strategies appearing in different extents. This research is valuable to political discourse analysis, underscoring the subtleties of rhetorical methods in critical international political contexts (Handayani&Pranoto, 2023).

Mahfoud and Khaldou, (2023) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis on President Biden's initial speech regarding the Ukraine conflict. They utilized van Dijk's Ideological Square Model to investigate the speech's ideological nuances and messages. Drawing from a source provided by the American Presidency Project, the speech, spanning 13 minutes and 50 seconds and comprising 1984 words, was scrutinized by the researchers. They identified eight discursive strategies employed by Biden, all aimed at justifying severe sanctions against Russia while positioning himself and his allies as champions of liberalism, humanitarianism, and democracy. Conversely, Russia was portrayed as the aggressor in the conflict (Mahfoud&Khaldou, 2023). In light of the above empirical studies on presidential discourse, there remains a gap in the analysis of Joe Biden's inaugural speech using Critical Discourse Analysis. While previous studies have explored the rhetoric of past presidents, Biden's speech was delivered during a period of unprecedented national challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, political polarization, and social unrest. Conducting a CDA of his speech is crucial to understanding how discursive strategies are employed to promote unity, restore democratic values, and address the crises at hand. This analysis contributes to the body of research on the political discourse in the United States context.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the discursive strategies in President Joe Biden's inaugural speech. The primary data consists of the official transcript of Biden's inaugural speech on January 20, 2021, sourced from reputable government and media websites. The analysis uses Van Dijk's (2005) Ideological square model of CDA, which includes textual analysis to identify specific discursive strategies, and Biden uses these strategies to construct in-group legitimacy and challenge out-group legitimacy.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Biden Speech Analysis

This section analyzes the discursive devices utilized by President Joe Biden in his inaugural speech. In addition to discursive devices, the analysis also focuses on inclinations that reflect the fundamental dichotomy of Us vs. them. The discursive devices are ideological tools that direct the audience's perception and lead them towards polarization and sharp dichotomy.

4.1.1 Topicalisation

Topicalization is a discursive strategy emphasizing critical information in a conversation or text. This can take the form of titles or headings, or it may be conveyed through abstract themes that encapsulate the essence of the entire discourse. Since then, it has become customary for incoming presidents to deliver a speech during their inauguration. In his speech, President Joe Biden employs the discursive strategy of topicalization to construct a narrative that enhances his self-presentation while delineating a negative portrayal of others. Central to this strategy is his emphasis on democracy and unity, which he repeatedly invokes to position himself as a unifier and a defender of democratic values. This not only strengthens his image positively but also implies a contrast with forces of division and conflict, critiquing the previous administration and those opposing his views without confrontation. By acknowledging the challenges America faces, including the pandemic, racial injustice, and political extremism, and emphasizing the nation's resilience, Biden simultaneously presents himself as a realistic and optimistic leader. This nuanced acknowledgement of challenges also highlights past failures and challenges, particularly those inherited from past leadership, casting a shadow on previous administrations without explicit attribution of blame. Furthermore, Biden's inclusive rhetoric, encapsulated in phrases like "I will be a President for all Americans," showcases his commitment to transcending partisan divides, enhancing his portrayal as an inclusive leader. His alignment with revered figures and events in American history, such as Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, lends

his presidency a sense of continuity with the nation's cherished values and struggles, further solidifying his positive self-image. Conversely, this alignment indirectly positions those who oppose these values or have contributed to the current challenges in a negative light. Biden's advocacy for values like truth, dignity, and respect, while avoiding direct attacks or divisive language, implicitly sets his administration against those perceived to have compromised these values, thereby constructing a negative portrayal of others. Through these strategic uses of discourse, Biden reinforces his leadership qualities while indirectly critiquing opposing views or actions. This is a testament to the nuanced application of topicalization in political rhetoric.

4.1.2 Number Game

The number game uses statistics or numerical data to enhance the credibility of the speaker's beliefs or ideas in an argument. According to Van Dijk (2005), figures and statistics are often used in contemporary society to convincingly demonstrate neutrality and frequently define news reporting in the press. Joe Biden deploys a number game strategy in his inaugural speech to increase persuasiveness and credibility such as;

Table 1: Use of Number Game by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract 1: "A once in a century virus that silently stalks the country has taken as many lives in one year as America lost all of World War II."
Extract 2: "Millions of jobs have been lost; hundreds of thousands of businesses closed."
Extract 3: "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us."
Extract 4: "Here we stand, where 108 years ago, at another Inaugural, thousands of protesters tried to block brave women marching for the right to vote."
Extract 5: "I ask you to join me in a moment of silent prayer to remember all those we lost this past year to the pandemic, those 400,000 fellow Americans."
6: "We all understand the world is watching, watching all of us today."

President Joe Biden employs the "Number Game" discursive strategies in his inauguration address to construct a storyline emphasizing self-representation and implying an unfavorable representation of others. When discussing the COVID-19 epidemic, Biden adds that it has caused a similar number of deaths in one year as America experienced during World War II. This analogy emphasizes the seriousness of the problem and emphasizes the significance of his leadership in this challenging situation. This phrase also implies the insufficiency of the previous administration's handling of the epidemic. Moreover, Biden's acknowledgement of the substantial economic impact of the epidemic, resulting in the loss of millions of jobs and the closure of hundreds of thousands of enterprises, serves a double objective. It highlights the requirement for leadership in tackling these difficulties, presenting Biden as a competent leader. It also indirectly criticizes the economic governance of the previous administration throughout the epidemic. Biden demonstrates his alignment with the enduring fight for racial justice by acknowledging a "demand for racial justice that has been developing for approximately 400 years." This positions him as an empathetic leader who is aware of past injustices. This statement indirectly condemns previous institutions and governments that have prolonged racial injustice. Furthermore, Biden establishes a connection between his presidency and the historical struggle for gender equality by evoking the challenges encountered by women's rights campaigners 108 years ago. In doing so, he highlights the contrast between the advancement of equality and the resistance to change in previous times. The speaker's request for a little period of quiet contemplation to honor the 400,000 Americans who have perished due to the epidemic is a moving and significant point in the speech. The portrayal of Biden in the text is characterized by empathy and respect as he pays tribute to the lives lost and recognizes the seriousness of the issue. Additionally, it indirectly criticizes the previous administration's management of the epidemic. Furthermore, Biden's assertion on the international observation of the inauguration emphasizes the worldwide importance of this occasion and implies a revitalized favorable position for the United States under his guidance. This is a nuanced criticism of the former government's global standing or conduct, suggesting a necessity for adjustment. Biden employs quantitative facts and historical allusions to craft a storyline that underscores the necessity of his leadership while evaluating previous actions and administrations. This tactic enables him to portray himself in a favorable light and convey a poor perception of others without engaging in confrontation, a fundamental element of his rhetorical style in the speech.

4.1.3 Polarization

Polarization is the process of classifying individuals into two groups: the ingroup and its supporters, who are associated with desirable qualities, and the outgroup, who are associated with bad attributes (Rashidi&Souzandehfar, 2010; Van Dijk, 2005). Data reveals that Joe Biden's inaugural speech discourse is imbued with polarization implicitly or explicitly, which can be traced in the following excerpts:

Table 2: Use of Polarization by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract 1 "The people—the will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded. We've learned again that democracy is precious, democracy is fragile."

Extract 2 "So now, on this hallowed ground where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one Nation under God, indivisible, to carry out the peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries."

Extract 3 "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer."

Extract 4 "And now, a rise of political extremism, White supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat."

Extract 5 "To overcome these challenges—to restore the soul and secure the future of America—requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy: unity. Unity."

6 "I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy these days. I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real."

Extract 7 "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart."

Extract 8 "We can see each other not as adversaries, but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect."

Extract 9 "For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos."

Extract 10 "Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war. And we must reject the culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured."

Joe Biden employs the approach of polarization in his speech to establish a narrative that clearly distinguishes between his administration's principles and the difficulties presented by the current circumstances. This approach is seen in his consistent focus on the values of democracy and unity, continually highlighting that "the will of the people has been heard" and campaigning for "unity," which is considered difficult to achieve in a democratic society. These statements serve the purpose of not only portraying Biden and his administration in a favorable manner as advocates of important American principles but also of establishing his leadership as legitimate by comparing him to historical figures and events, such as Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation. Biden's presidency is associated with a historical reference highlighting a legacy of transformation and unwavering determination. In contrast, Biden uses this rhetorical technique to portray the opposing forces and beliefs. He discerns and denounces actions and convictions that oppose his vision for America, particularly emphasizing "an increase in political extremism, White supremacy, [and] domestic terrorism," thus establishing a boundary between his administration's objectives and the elements he regards as harmful to the nation's advancement. In addition, Biden establishes a context of hardship by recognizing and comparing previous challenges with his present endeavors. This juxtaposition suggests that America's difficulties are a consequence of previous acts or the existing state of affairs, which his leadership endeavors to correct. By juxtaposing historical problems with contemporary actions, this approach strengthens his mission's credibility and moral correctness while indirectly undermining competing ideas or ideologies. Biden skillfully used polarization to establish a narrative where his government is seen positively, while the components he intends to challenge and surpass are depicted negatively.

4.1.4 Illustration/Example

Example/illustration offers the listener concrete instances, whether real or imaginary, that assist discourse producers in supporting their viewpoints or making their views more plausible. Illustrations or instances are often

offered as a vignette or short tale, illustrating or enhancing the credibility of a broader idea advocated by the speaker (Van Dijk, 2005). Joe Biden's speech is structured to make his points of view more acceptable and real. Using illustrations/examples provides credence to the speaker's perspective.

The following passages demonstrate the use of this strategy:

Table 3: Use of Illustration/Example by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract 1 "In another January on New Year's Day in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. When he put pen to paper, the President said, and I quote, 'If my name ever goes down into history it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it.' My whole soul is in it."

Extract 2 "Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our 'better angels' have always prevailed. In each of these moments, enough of us—enough of us—have come together to carry all of us forward."

Extract 3 "Just look around. Here we stand, in the shadow of the Capitol dome, as was mentioned earlier, completed amid the Civil War, when the Union itself was literally hanging in the balance. Yet we endured, we prevailed."

Extract 4 "Here we stand looking out on the great Mall where Dr. King spoke of his dream."

Extract 5 "Here we stand, where 108 years ago, at another Inaugural, thousands of protesters tried to block brave women marching for the right to vote. And today we mark the swearing in of the first woman in American history elected to national office: Vice President Kamala Harris. Don't tell me things can't change."

Extract 6 "Here we stand across the Potomac from Arlington Cemetery, where heroes who gave the last full measure of devotion rest in eternal peace"

Extract 7 "And I know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength, the strength of our Nation, as does President Carter, who I spoke with last night, who cannot be with us today, but whom we salute for his lifetime of service."

Joe Biden utilizes the Illustration/Example rhetorical technique in his speech to create a story that improves his image while portraying others in a poor light. Biden associates himself with historical personalities and significant events, such as Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation. By highlighting the nation's ability to overcome obstacles like the Civil War and the Great Depression, he situates himself within a lineage of achievement and advancement. This alignment presents his presidency in an optimistic and forward-thinking manner, establishing a connection between his leadership and a prestigious American legacy. In addition, Biden emphasizes accomplishments and landmarks, such as the completion of the Capitol dome amidst the Civil War and the advancement of women's suffrage. He draws connections between these events and his inauguration and the momentous swearing-in of Vice President Kamala Harris, demonstrating his dedication to upholding a tradition of equal rights and progress. Notably, Biden avoids attacking certain persons or organizations, but he conveys portrayal of others through contrast. By addressing social problems such as extremism, lawlessness, and intolerance, he indirectly portrays his agenda as against these negative qualities. This method portrays those who reject or fight his ideals in an unfavorable light without condemning them. Moreover, via the utilization of symbols associated with American history and solidarity, such as Arlington Cemetery and the enduring influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Biden constructs a storyline centered around collective principles and mutual objectives. This solidifies his stance as a unifying force and portrays to these ideas as contradictory to the sought-after national cohesion. Biden constructs a storyline that presents himself and his government in a favorable historical and ethical context while contrasting criticism as incompatible with these commonly held national principles and narratives. Biden's speech employs discursive techniques to promote self-presentation and politely articulate his perspective on perceived opposition.

4.1.5 Victimization

Victimization is when people use the "binary us–them pair of ingroups and outgroups" (Van Dijk, 2005) to make outgroup members look wrong, and ingroup members look like they are being mistreated. The following excerpts demonstrate the use of victimization as a strategy in Joe Biden's inaugural speech:

Table 4: Use of Victimization by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract 1 "Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew, and America has risen to the challenge."

Extract 2 "We've learned again that democracy is precious, democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed."

Extract 3 "So now, on this hallowed ground where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation..."

Extract 4 "Few people in our Nation's history have been more challenged or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we're in now."

Extract 5 "A once in a century virus that silently stalks the country has taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II."

Extract 6 "Millions of jobs have been lost; hundreds of thousands of businesses closed."

Extract 7 "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us."

Extract 8 "A cry for survival comes from the planet itself, a cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear."

Extract 9 "And now, a rise of political extremism, White supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat."

Extract 10 "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart."

Extract 11 "Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks..."

Joe Biden uses victimization as a rhetorical tactic in his speech to establish a distinction between portraying himself positively and portraying others negatively. In this strategy, he highlights the durability, cohesion, and ethical fortitude of his government and the American populace while accentuating external obstacles, dangers, and past failures. When he discusses America being challenged once again and successfully meeting the challenge, he emphasizes the nation's ability to endure and conquer hardships. This is a favorable self-portrayal, discreetly insinuating the competence and power of the current government. Simultaneously, the mention of undefined external or historical forces that have challenged America serves as a negative portrayal of an alternative entity, indicating a history marked by difficulties and hardships. Likewise, Biden's focus on the worth and vulnerability of democracy and its success indicates the current administration's dedication to these principles and presents a favorable portrayal of a government that supports democratic ideals. This is juxtaposed with an implied allusion to potential dangers to democracy, whether from prior governance or foreign forces while emphasizing their inability to subvert democratic principles. The reference to recent violence at the Capitol is employed to portray the present government as a stabilizing influence among disorder, characterizing the culprits as an adverse foreign menace. Biden also recognizes the gravity of situations such as the epidemic, indicating a sincere and compassionate approach to his leadership. This recognition contradicts the picture of the epidemic as an uncontrollable force inflicting widespread misery, hinting at an ineffective reaction from prior leadership. Moreover, his allusion to the persistent conflict between the American principle of egalitarianism and the actualities of racial discrimination and societal inequity demonstrates a commitment to tackling these matters. It indirectly censures previous leaders for their inability to do the same. Biden's utilization of victimization in his speech enhances the perception of his administration, presenting it as ethically honest, robust, and competent in overcoming obstacles. At the same time, it criticizes previous misdeeds and external threats, making a clear delineation between his leadership and the issues faced by the nation. The deliberate use of communication plays a vital function in influencing public opinion and strengthening his administration's legitimacy and ethical power.

4.1.6 Lexicalization

Lexicalization in discourse refers to how specific words or phrases convey particular meanings or values, often shaping perceptions and attitudes. In political speeches, it is common for speakers to use lexicalization to emphasize specific ideas, concepts, or values.

In his inaugural speech, Joe Biden utilized lexicalization in the following way:

Table 5: Use of Lexicalization by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract 1 "This is democracy's day, a day of history and hope, of renewal and resolve."

Extract 2 "The people—the will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded."

Extract 3 "I know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength, the strength of our Nation."

Extract 4 "A once in a century virus that silently stalks the country."

Extract 5 "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us."

Extract 6 "Unity. Unity."

Extract 7 "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart."

Joe Biden utilizes the discursive technique of lexicalization in his speech to portray himself in a favorable light and others negatively. He used expressions such as "history and hope," "renewal and resolve," and "the will of the people has been heard" to present the occasion as a time of democratic victory and optimism, therefore favorably portraying his government. This approach not only emphasizes the democratic principles that he upholds but also presents his presidency as a manifestation of the people's desires, depicting a selfless and honorable intention. Biden aligns his leadership with the nation's resilience and strength, indicating his dedication to maintaining and strengthening these qualities. In contrast, Biden utilizes a strategy of portraying others in an unfavorable light to establish a clear distinction between his leadership and the difficulties he has encountered. The individual portrays the COVID-19 virus as a malevolent and imperceptible adversary, highlighting the conflicting notions of negativity associated with the "other" and the positivity associated with his administration's efforts to resist it. In addition, he designates aspects such as "political extremism," "White supremacy," and "domestic terrorism" with specific labels, portraying these beliefs as opponents and establishing his administration as the constructive force that opposes them. Furthermore, Biden's allusion to the manipulation and fabrication of facts portrays former administrations or political opponents unfavorably, bolstering his reputation as a supporter of truth and openness. The deliberate choice of particular words not only strengthens the perception of his leadership but also undermines the credibility of opposing aspects or acts from the previous administration, clearly establishing a narrative of good self against bad others in his presidency.

4.1.7 Populism

Populism is a set of political ideas and actions that try to meet the needs and wants of regular people. Joe Biden uses populism in his inaugural address. Some examples of this strategy are provided below:

Table 6: Use of Populism by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract-1 "Today we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy. The people the will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded."

Extract-2 "This is a great Nation; we are good people. Over the centuries, through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we've come so far. But we still have far to go."

Extract-3 "We've learned again that democracy is precious, democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed."

Extract-4 "But the American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us, on 'We the People,' who seek a more perfect Union."

Extract-5 "And I ask every American to join me in this cause: uniting to fight the foes we face: anger, resentment, and hatred; extremism, lawlessness, violence; disease, joblessness, and hopelessness."

Extract-6 "We can see each other not as adversaries, but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect."

Extract-7 "And so today, at this time, in this place, let's start afresh, all of us. Let's begin to listen to one another, hear one another, see one another, show respect to one another."

Joe Biden utilizes populism as a rhetorical tactic in his speech to construct a favorable image of himself while portraying others in a negative light. This is apparent when he underscores the victory of a democratic objective over individual candidature, depicting his government as in harmony with the collective determination of the people. By adopting this approach, Biden presents himself and his leadership as advocates for democracy, appealing to the broader public rather than specific or privileged groups. In addition, his use of inclusive language, precisely the expression "We the People," aligns with the fundamental principles of the U.S. Constitution, presenting a perception of a president that is inclusive and fosters unity. This inclusive approach indirectly contrasts with prior administrations or organizations viewed as divisive or exclusive, so discreetly portraying them incorrectly without explicitly mentioning them. Biden's prioritization of unity and collaboration in addressing

shared concerns such as extremism, violence, sickness, and economic distress solidifies his image as a uniting figure. By presenting his leadership as a collaborative endeavor to address common national concerns, he positions himself as a leader who prioritizes the welfare of the entire society, distinguishing himself from any perceived sources of division or disorder in previous times. Furthermore, his optimistic language, recognizing previous challenges while highlighting advancements and possibilities, frames his leadership as positive and forward-thinking. This strategy not only associates Biden with the public's concerns but also separates him from influential or polarizing groups, successfully employing populism to contrast his favorable self-presentation and the unfavorable depiction of others.

4.1.8 Metaphor

A metaphor is comparing two dissimilar items or events to attribute the characteristics of one to the other (Shakoury, 2018). Joe Biden also makes use of metaphoric language in his discourse, as shown in the following excerpts:

Table 7: Use of Metaphor by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract-1	"Through a crucible for the ages, America has been tested anew, and America has risen to the challenge
Extract-2	"So now, on this hallowed ground where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation..."
Extract-3	"This is a great Nation; we are good people. Over the centuries, through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we've come so far."
Extract-4	"We'll press forward with speed and urgency, for we have much to do in this winter of peril and significant possibilities..."
Extract-5	"A cry for survival comes from the planet itself, a cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear."
Extract 6	"In each of these moments, enough of us—enough of us—have come together to carry all of us forward."
Extract-7	"For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage."
Extract-8	"Politics doesn't have to be a raging fire destroying everything in its path."
Extract-9	"Here we stand, in the shadow of the Capitol dome..."

Joe Biden uses metaphors in his speech as a discursive strategy to establish a clear distinction between presenting himself positively and others negatively. Using the phrase "through a crucible for the ages," Biden establishes a connection between himself, his administration, and the concepts of resilience and victory. This portrayal depicts America as a nation that has been cleansed and strengthened by its challenges. The metaphor, along with allusions to weathering "storm and strife," emphasizes the story of a resilient and forward-thinking country, which reflects favorably on Biden's leadership and the nation's spirit. The phrase "advancing swiftly and urgently in this season of danger and significant potential" amplifies this favorable self-perception, converting obstacles into chances for proactive measures and hopefulness. In contrast, Biden utilizes metaphors to portray the acts of others, namely those who provoke violence or neglect crucial matters, such as environmental preservation, in a wrong manner. The speaker's portrayal of the Capitol violence, in which he describes the offenders' attempt to destabilize the foundation of the Capitol as an act of sacrilege on sacred ground, condemns their acts and emphasizes the seriousness of their offence. By employing personification to depict the planet's desperate plea for existence, he condemns those who disregard environmental concerns, portraying them as neglectful or detrimental. The metaphor depicting politics as a "raging fire obliterating everything in its trajectory" creates more separation between his administration and the political approaches of previous leaders or adversaries. By employing these metaphors, Biden constructs a storyline of optimism and perseverance for his government and the nation. He establishes a clear division that unfavorably portrays his adversaries, highlighting the harmful outcomes of their behaviors and beliefs. Biden uses analogies to strengthen his principles and plans for the country while delineating his opposition to those he perceives as threatening the nation's democratic norms and institutions.

4.1.9 Modality

One of the common persuasive strategies used by politicians is modality that is the speaker's (or writer's) attitude towards the proposition being presented. "It allows them to formulate different kinds of claims (e.g., assertions,

opinions, hypotheses, speculations) and indicate how committed they are to those claims” (Cameron, 2007). The following instances from Joe Biden's inaugural addresses showcase Modality.

Table 8: Use of Modality by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract-1: "Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew, and America has risen to the challenge."

Extract 2: "The people—the will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded."

Extract 3: "So now, on this hallowed ground where just a few days ago violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one Nation under God, indivisible, to carry out the peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries."

Extract-4: "I have just taken the sacred oath each of these patriots have taken, the oath first sworn by George Washington."

Extract 5: "This is a great Nation; we are good people. Over the centuries, through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we've come so far. But we still have far to go."

Extract-6: "We'll press forward with speed and urgency, for we have much to do in this winter of peril and significant possibilities: much to repair, much to restore, much to heal, much to build, and much to gain."

Extract-7: "A once-in-a-century virus that silently stalks the country has taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II."

Extract-8: "To overcome these challenges—to restore the soul and secure the future of America—requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy: unity."

Extract-9: "And we must meet this moment as the United States of America. If we do that, I guarantee you, we will not fail."

Extract-10: "But the answer is not to turn inward, to retreat into competing factions, distrusting those who don't look like you or worship the way you do or don't get their news from the same sources you do."

Extract-11: "We have never, ever, ever, ever failed in America when we have acted together."

Extract-12: "And I promise you, I will fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did."

Extract-13: "And each of us has a duty and a responsibility, as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders—leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our Nation—to defend the truth and defeat the lies."

Extract-14: "We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal."

Extract-15: "With unity we can do great things, important things"

Joe Biden utilizes modality in his speech as a rhetorical technique to establish a contrast between presenting himself positively and portraying others negatively. Biden exudes an aura of assurance and resolves through modal verbs and sentences that communicate conviction and imperative. His affirmations, such as "we will not fail" and "I will fight as hard," underscore his determination and aptitude for leadership. Furthermore, his utilization of modality to emphasize potential and opportunity, shown by expressions such as "we can accomplish remarkable feats" or "there is a significant amount to be gained," establishes him and his administration as heralds of constructive transformation. This prospective outlook is also reinforced by his prioritization of duty and accountability, as seen by remarks such as "we have a considerable amount of work to accomplish" and "each bears an obligation and responsibility." These declarations portray him as a dedicated and accountable leader. On the other hand, when Biden discusses difficulties, opponents, or previous shortcomings, he uses modality in a pessimistic manner to criticize others. For instance, mentioning "a rare virus that spreads throughout the country without detection" emphasizes an inevitable difficulty and suggests mismanagement by past governments or organizations. This is emphasized by drawing attention to the tasks that have not been accomplished or the shortcomings of others, whether stated directly or indirectly, indicating unfulfilled difficulties or insufficiently resolved problems. In addition, Biden criticizes others by comparing his commitments to their perceived shortcomings or lack of action, therefore unfavorably portraying them. Using this method, he creates a story in

which he and his team are portrayed as competent and accountable, highlighting the deficiencies or obstacles caused by others, such as past governments, specific factions, or worldwide conditions. Biden uses modality in a speech to effectively strengthen his favorable image while gently casting others in a negative light. This strategy is crucial in shaping the narrative structure of his discourse.

4.1.10 Evidentiality and Authority

The perspectives or claims in an argument are more moving if the speaker supports his opinion with evidence or proof. In line with this, a speaker may give reference to an authority (usually persons or institutions who are above the fray of politics) to achieve objectivity, credibility and reliability. The following excerpts exemplify the use of this strategy in Joe Biden's discourse:

Table 9: Use of Evidentiality and Authority by Joe Biden; Inaugural Speech

Extract-1: "Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew, and America has risen to the challenge." - This statement implies a historical test and challenge, indicating that America's response is based on past experiences and successes.

Extract 2: "A once-in-a-century virus that silently stalks the country has taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II." - This comparison provides a factual basis to underscore the severity of the situation.

Extract-3: "In another January on New Year's Day in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation." - Referencing a historical event and authority figure (Abraham Lincoln) to draw parallels and legitimacy.

Extract-4: "I have just taken the sacred oath each of these patriots have taken, the oath first sworn by George Washington." - This statement connects the speaker's actions to those of a foundational figure in American history, George Washington, to add gravitas and continuity.

Extract-5: "Few people in our Nation's history have been more challenged or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we're in now." - This extract asserts the historical significance of current challenges by comparing them to past events.

Extract-6: "We can see each other not as adversaries, but as neighbors." - While not citing a specific authority, this statement uses the principle of community and social evidence to promote unity.

Extract-7: "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we all are created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart." - This uses the historical narrative and the foundational American ideal as evidential support.

Extract-8: "Many centuries ago, Saint Augustine, a saint of my church, wrote that a people was a multitude defined by the common objects of their love." - This references a religious and historical figure, Saint Augustine, to provide philosophical backing to the speaker's point.

Extract-9: "Recent weeks and months have taught us a painful lesson. There is truth, and there are lies: lies told for power and for profit." - Here, recent events are used as evidence to illustrate a point about truth and deception.

Extract-10: "As the Bible says, 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'" - Citing a religious text adds moral and spiritual authority to the message of hope and perseverance.

President Joe Biden utilizes the discursive technique of Evidentiality and Authority in his address, presenting himself in a good light and portraying others incorrectly. Biden associates himself with esteemed American historical figures and principles, such as referencing Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation or evoking the legacy of George Washington. This positioning establishes Biden and his administration as successors and guardians of these honourable traditions. This historical affiliation supports his reputation and juxtaposes his leadership with prior administrations that may not have kept these principles. Moreover, Biden's utilization of verifiable data, especially when addressing the epidemic and its consequences, positions him as a leader firmly rooted in reality and honesty. This attitude contrasts with any past leadership that may have minimized or disregarded such facts, supporting his legitimacy. In addition, Biden's incorporation of moral and religious allusions, such as referencing Saint Augustine or biblical passages, imbues his leadership with a moral aspect, depicting him as governed by timeless principles. Not only does this enhance his favorable self-image, but it also indirectly critiques others. When addressing the significance of truth and the risks associated with using lies to gain

power and financial gain, Biden portrays 'the other' negatively. In this context, 'the other' might refer to past administrations or political adversaries, depicting them as dishonest or driven by a thirst for power. The speaker strengthens this indirect approach of portraying others negatively by highlighting obstacles such as systematic racism and political extremism. Through this approach, he criticizes the shortcomings or insufficiencies of previous administrations in addressing these matters, thus portraying 'the other' in a bad light as either negligent or inept. Biden employs evidentiality and Authority to strengthen his position by strengthening his credibility and moral standing while weakening his detractors or predecessors. This dual technique is a refined method of influencing public opinion, enhancing his leadership reputation while questioning that of his opponents or predecessors.

5. Conclusion

Joe Biden's inaugural address demonstrates the use of various discursive strategies to both fortify his self-presentation and critique opposing perspectives. Through topicalization, Biden effectively underscores critical themes of democracy and unity, positioning himself as a unifying force while indirectly criticizing previous administrations and their shortcomings. His emphasis on historical parallels and contemporary challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice, serves to enhance his image as a resilient and forward-thinking leader, while implicitly casting his predecessors and detractors in a less favorable light. The "Number Game" strategy further solidifies Biden's rhetoric by utilizing quantitative comparisons to highlight the gravity of current issues and the perceived inadequacies of past leadership. By framing historical and present challenges through numerical analogies and significant milestones, Biden reinforces his narrative of competence and contrasts it with previous failings, subtly criticizing former governance without direct confrontation. Polarization emerges as a central technique in Biden's speech, distinguishing his administration's values from those he deems detrimental to national progress. His discourse underscores a clear division between his vision for America and the negative forces of extremism and division, framing his leadership as the necessary corrective to historical and contemporary issues. Biden's use of illustration and example lends credibility to his narrative, linking his presidency to esteemed historical figures and pivotal events. This alignment with America's legacy of progress and resilience enhances his positive self-presentation while indirectly criticizing those who oppose or undermine these values. The strategy of victimization allows Biden to emphasize his administration's strength and ethical commitment by highlighting external and historical challenges. This approach not only bolsters his image as a competent and empathetic leader but also subtly critiques past failures and external threats that his administration aims to address. Lexicalization in Biden's speech serves to reinforce his favorable self-image and negatively portray opposition by carefully selecting terms that emphasize democratic ideals and present challenges as adversarial forces. This rhetorical choice shapes public perception by aligning his presidency with positive values while contrasting it with perceived negative elements. Populism is evident in Biden's appeal to collective democratic values and inclusivity, positioning himself as a representative of the people's will and contrasting his administration with previous leaders or groups perceived as divisive or exclusive. This approach underscores his commitment to unity and the common good, reinforcing his favorable self-presentation. Metaphors in Biden's address create vivid imagery that highlights the resilience and potential of the nation under his leadership. By contrasting these positive metaphors with negative portrayals of opposition, Biden effectively delineates his administration's goals from those he views as undermining them. Modality in Biden's speech reinforces his authoritative and optimistic stance, contrasting his resolute leadership with past deficiencies or obstacles. This technique enhances his image as a capable and committed leader while subtly critiquing previous failures or mismanagement. Finally, the use of evidentiality and authority in Biden's discourse, through historical references and factual assertions, strengthens his credibility and moral standing. By aligning himself with revered figures and principles, and addressing past and present issues with verifiable data, Biden reinforces his positive image while implicitly questioning the legitimacy and effectiveness of past leadership. Joe Biden's inaugural address demonstrates use of discursive strategies to project a favorable self-image, address contemporary challenges, and subtly critique opposing views. His rhetorical choices underscore his leadership qualities while navigating the complexities of political discourse, shaping public perception in alignment with his vision for the nation.

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