Proposing Versus Arguing: Probing Boosters' Functions in Presidential Debate Genre

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Abstract

Studies on presidential debates provide evidence that the use of boosters helps to convey strong emphasis on candidates' ideology. This persuasive strategy is best portrayed through the schematic structure of presidential debates. Therefore, this study aims to scrutinize the boosters' functions realized in the first American Presidential Debate 2020. This is a qualitative study with a pragmatic approach that investigates booster's functions using the domain, taxonomy, and componential analysis. The linguistic evidence in the result shows the candidates exploited several intensifiers largely, including force indication, source tagging, accentuating, and solidarity markers. These boosters emphasize the strength of past deeds, criticizing past policies to promote definite proposals, expose repetitive emotional expression, and seek solidarity in the thesis stage. Meanwhile, in the argument stage, they function as devices for articulating offensive and defensive arguments. The results imply the essential functions of boosters in the persuasive political discourse of presidential debate viewed from its communicative purpose reflected in each schematic structure.

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1. Introduction

Presidential debate (PD) is one of the political campaigns in the series of election agendas. As a political campaign discourse, PD aims to persuade individuals to people to choose the best candidate for the next national leadership. During the debates, each candidate strives to convince the audience that they are the most deserving of the presidency. In this regard, building a good rapport with their voters is presidential candidates' ultimate goal. Hence, they are expected to articulate their ideology and policy proposals to resonate with the voters and defeat their opponents' arguments (Beard, 2000; Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012).

Studies in the past two decades showed that televised PD significantly impacts voting behavior (Benoit et al., 2003; Goldberg & Ischen, 2020). The results of a meta-analysis on the effects of political debate viewing showed that these messages could reflect the candidates' character, influence voting preferences, particularly on the candidates' plans, and alter preferences for viewpoints on certain issues (Benoit et al., 2003). Therefore, it is assumed that the prominent focus of PD lies in the way the candidates introduce their proposals and argue their opponents' points of view on certain issues. Voters also strongly prefer the techniques used to deliver the proposals and arguments (Tenorio, 2002). To this end, they might get help from using meta-discourse as a device to persuade hearers.

Hyland (2005) stated that boosters convey a sense of conviction and confirmation. It indicates that they persuade hearers in a persuasive genre like PD by drawing attention to rationality, credibility, character, and emotions (Hyland, 2005; Lo et al., 2021). In the context of the PD genre, candidates can emphasize their ideological positions and policy proposals and enhance their persuasive claims through boosters among their opponents and voters. Moreover, boosters are believed to demonstrate a speaker's strong belief, confidence, and authority in the veracity of a claim and attitude toward their hearers (Donadio & Passariello, 2022). An appropriate choice of booster acts as an essential strategy for promoting proposals and defeating opponents' arguments since the main social purpose of the debate is to persuade people.

The US Presidential Debate 2020 involves Donald J. Trump as Republic presidential nominee, also known as the incumbent candidate, and Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, otherwise known as the challenger candidate. The debate format was adjusted under the safety protocol the Commission of Presidential Debates arranged since it was held amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought the US to a calamitous condition. The increasing number of deaths for COVID-19 and massive unemployment led to economic recession (Allegretto & Liedtke, 2020). Furthermore, some crucial national and international issues emerged, such as the supreme court, race discrimination, policy on climate change, and election integrity. These issues became the topics of the US presidential debate in 2020. People worldwide, including Americans, witnessed the candidates' point of view and commitment to the recent concerns. In addition, as a superpower country, USA's presidential policy relatively affects other countries. People and media continued to feature the news on its peculiar political agenda and argumentation.

Some linguists have conducted studies on boosters in the PD genre, although it was compared to the frequency of hedges (Elhambakhsh & Jalalian, 2015; Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012; Kusumawati et al., 2021). The studies by Elhambakhsh and Jalalian (2015) and Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) aim to investigate the function of hedges and boosters in Iranian televised presidential debates. Contrary Elhambakhsh and Jalalian (2015) and Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) involved a cross-linguistic study as they compared the use of hedges and boosters by Obama and Ahmadinejad, the 2008 US and 2009 Iranian presidential candidates, respectively. Meanwhile, Kusumawati et al. (2021) scrutinized the forms and functions of hedges and boosters realized in the US Presidential Debate 2016. These studies showed that the presence of boosters in PD is urgently needed for persuasiveness. It is evident in the high frequency of boosters used by the candidates. However, the studies remain unclear, particularly in presenting the holistic view of boosters' role and function in PD's moves, namely introducing the proposal and arguing the opponent's point of view. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap by scrutinizing boosters' function viewed from the

PD structure's moves. It also depicts the persuasive strategy of US presidential candidates using boosters that other politicians can practically apply. This analysis is paramount as it delves into the function of boosters contextually.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Presidential Debate Genre

The studies of the genre in political discourse are conducted under the premise that genre symbolizes a society's norms and culture (Santosa, 2003). Genre refers to the smallest cultural unit that recurs regularly, reflects a social process that leads to a social goal, and establishes how that objective is attained in society (Martin, 2014; Santosa et al., 2021). Given the nature of the genre, the social goal can be accomplished through the sequential text structure with functionally distinct stages that leads to the achievement of the communicative goal. Hence, genre analysis serves as an analytic method for the communicative functions identified in the genre as well as the linguistic realizations of these functions (Liu, 2012). Concerning PD, genre analysis as the direct representation of political activity's situation editorializes the socio-political viewpoints and cultural perspectives as well as represents linguistics characters (Golubovskaya et al., 2022).

In this study, the genre theory is considered to portray the schematic structure of PD and provide a deeper analysis of the choices of boosters realized. As a genre, presidential debate possesses a communicative goal that can be identified through its schematic structure. In the factual genre category, exposition persuades the reader or hearer (Djatmika, 2014; Kurniawati & Kurniawan, 2017). This is consistent with the social purpose of the presidential debate. The exposition genre consists of thesis, argumentation, and reiteration (Swales, 1990; Wicaksono et al., 2018). The thesis allows a speaker or writer to elaborate on their position on a particular topic. The argumentation stage enables an open discussion with a speaker or writer, from which pro and contra argumentations emerge. Meanwhile, reiteration is the closing session, where the speaker or writer conveys their final statements, persuading hearers to agree. Adopting the labeling of the exposition genre,

the first US Presidential Debate 2020 was identified into two stages, namely thesis and argument, since there was no reiteration in the data set. Table 1 shows the genre analysis of the US Presidential Debate 2020.

Table 1
The Genre Analysis of US Presidential Debate 2020

No	Structure	Move
1	Thesis	Introducing the candidate's proposal
2	Argumentation	Arguing the opponent's point of view

The commitment to solve the problems within the candidates' proposal is expected to be strongly delivered to convince and win the hearers' vote. The argument is the stage where the candidates defeat each other, showing that they are the best candidate for whom people could vote.

2.2. Boosters in Political Discourse

Despite the fact that Hyland's remark (2005) demonstrated that a booster is a linguistic tactic to persuade listeners, studies on boosters that examine their full range of functions in the nature of the political discourse genre are undersupplied. Political discourse requires the use of persuasion, which has historically been seen as verbal behavior and strategy used to influence interlocutors' attitudes, reactions, and levels of belief and agreement (Kashiha, 2022). Boosters aid politicians in persuading people, limit the negotiation space, and show that they and their voters have a common background knowledge based on shared community membership (Hyland, 2005; Hyland, 2018). Hence, boosters are viewed as instruments that denote the speaker's conviction while simultaneously projecting uncertainty and confidence to the hearers while presenting more persuasive statements to make their claims (Ho & Li, 2018; Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012; Lee & Deakin, 2016).

The proper booster's taxonomy was selected to meet the goal of the present study. Several studies in political discourse (Kusumawati et al., 2021; Parvaresh, 2018; Ponterotto, 2018) have employed this method to analyze academic discourse. Their choice of taxonomy was based on its suitability for the study purpose, which investigated the form of boosters in political discourse. However, the

same form of boosters may act in different functions in one context and another (Fetzer, 2013; Holmes, 1990). Their form and the contextual functions they present should be considered regarding the notion. Hence, the taxonomy from Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) is proper to scrutinize boosters' functions in a presidential debate. They were categorized into propositional and illocutionary. The illocutionary is divided into the speaker, content, or other, and hearer-oriented boosters. These two classes of categories and sub-categories were put together based on their functions.

Table 2

The Taxonomy of Boosters

No	Propositional Oriented Boosters (P)	Boosters (B)		
		Illocutionary Force Boosters (I)		
		Speaker Oriented Boosters (S)	Content Oriented Boosters (C)	Hearer Oriented Boosters (H)
1	Intensifying (I)	Boosting epistemic (Be)	Bounding emphatics (Bo)	Seeking solidarity (Ss)
2	Personal involvement (Pi)	Force indication (Fi)	Accentuating (Ac)	Presupposing verification (Pv)
		Source tagging (St)	Source tagging (Sg)	

Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) formulated two general functions of boosters. The first is propositional boosters, which reduce ambiguity and emphasize alternatives, and the second emphasizes the illocutionary force. There are two groups of propositional boosters. The first group intensifies a proposition's degree of truth, clearly establishing the borders between categories. The second raises the degree of personal connection. On the other hand, illocutionary force boosters reference the speaker's dependability, the proposition's veracity, and the hearer's education. Consequently, it is separated into the speaker, content, and hearer-oriented boosters. Propositional-oriented covers intensifiers, such as "very", and "superlative form", as well as personal involvement, such as possessive pronouns and adjectives. Speaker-oriented deals with boosting epistemic, including modal verbs, nouns, adjectives, and the introduction phrase "I believe". It also functions as force indication, such as in fact and negation, as well as source tagging, namely first plural pronoun and self-tagging. Content-oriented involves bounding emphatics like the conjunction, including "even", "moreover", and "furthermore", as well as accentuating and tagging trusted sources to support the claim. Hearer-oriented contains seeking solidarity, such as shared background knowledge, and Presupposing verification, namely rhetorical questions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

This descriptive qualitative study uses a pragmatic approach to portraying the booster's functions in PD's moves. The data involves candidates' utterances during the first US Presidential Debate 2020, featuring Donald Trump as a Republic Party presidential candidate and Joe Biden as a Democratic. The rationale for selecting this debate is that it was reported to be the most combative US Presidential debate (CNBC, 2020). The debate was held in Cleveland, Ohio, and Chris Wallace, a Fox News host, served as the moderator on September 29, 2020. The recorded video of the first US Presidential Debate 2020 was downloaded from the official National Broadcasting Company News YouTube Channel (NBC News, 2020). The US Presidential Debate 2020 transcript derived from the official website of CPD was used to determine the realization of boosters (CPD, 2020).

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Data Collection

The first analysis categorizes Trump and Biden's utterances into thesis and argument domains. Two minutes of uninterrupted responses to the moderator's questions characterizers candidates' utterances in the thesis stage. This segment enables the candidates to promote their

proposals. Meanwhile, the argument statements are provided in the open discussion segment. After identifying the utterances realized in the schematic structure of PD, the booster's expressions were analyzed and categorized into Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia's (2012) framework in the taxonomy analysis. The componential analysis depicts the domain and taxonomy items that relate to one another. Furthermore, the study used focus group discussions to meet the content validity of the data. The theories related to pragmatics and political discourse were applied in analyzing the phenomenon revealed in the results.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

The domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme proposed by Spradley (2006) and developed by Santosa (2021) were employed in data analysis. The model of analysis can scrutinize the realization of boosters viewed from the context where the utterances are situated. Figure 1 depicts the analytical model.
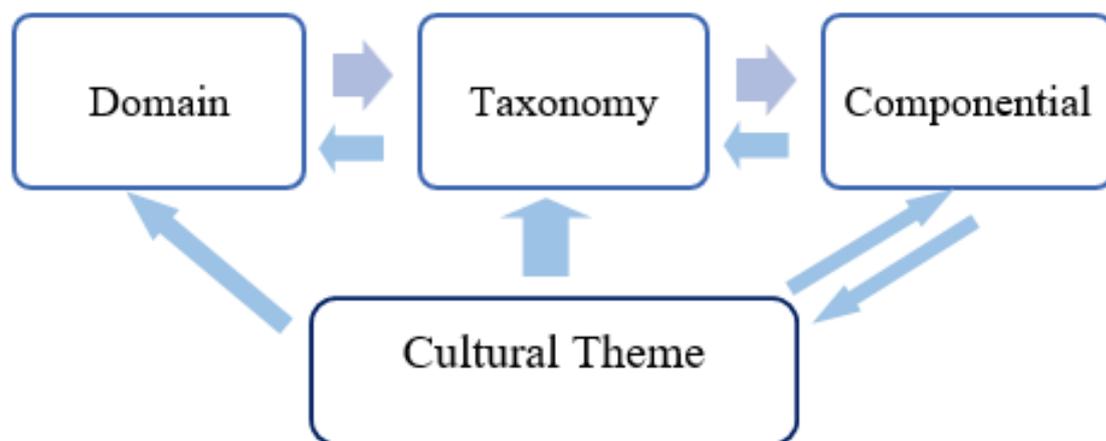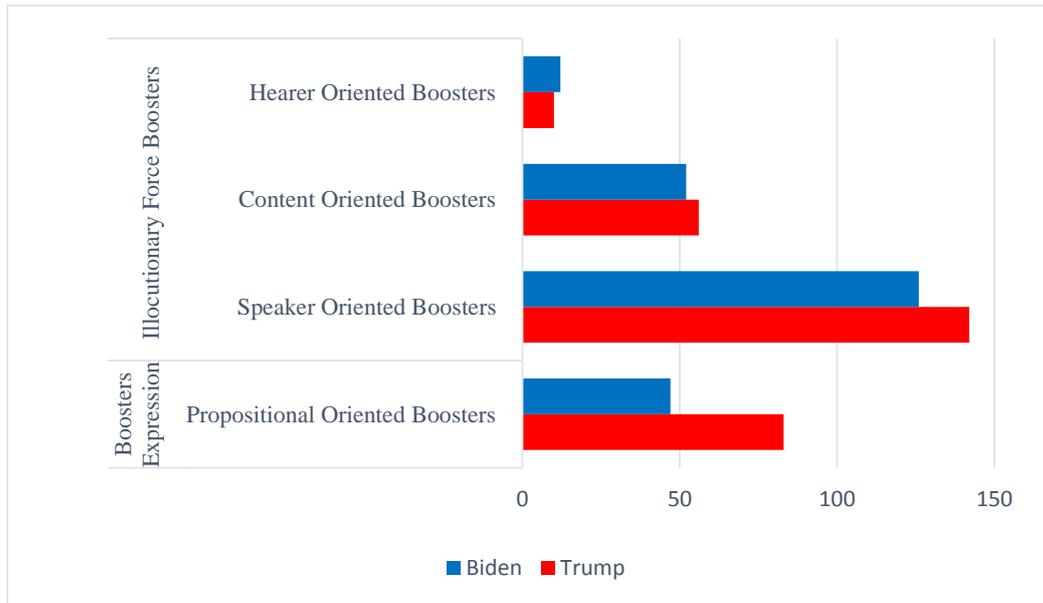

Figure 1
Model of Analysis Spradley (2006) Developed by Santosa (2021)

The context of the data contributes to encompassing the domain analysis. The taxonomy analysis displays the nature category of the data. The componential analysis explores the structure and connections between the categories of data in the taxonomy and the context of the data in the domain. Using pertinent theoretical analysis in the context of the cultural theme, we explained the relationship between the categories.

4. Results

In fighting for power, the presidential candidate seems to have a strategy but must demonstrate a strong commitment to convince the voters. The result showed that boosters became ammunition and strategies for controlling the thoughts of their opponents and voters. Both Trump and Biden had different backgrounds and contexts. In the 2020 presidential debate, Trump was the incumbent candidate. Thus, there is a need to build a strong image since the challenger would probably attack many of his policy weaknesses in the previous period. Biden, the former vice president of the United States during the Obama administration, was the challenger to Trump. As a challenger, Biden device strategies to emphasize his plans and defeat Trump's point of view.

Figure 2
Boosters Categories in the Thesis Stage

Figure 2 indicates both candidates exhibited similar behavior while investigating the speaker-oriented boosters category. It was the most often occurring category in the thesis stage. According to the data, Trump favored propositional- and content-oriented boosters while Biden took advantage of the content- and propositional-oriented boosters category. In addition, Biden investigated hearer-oriented boosters more than Trump. To depict the realization, Table 3 provides the booster's functions in the thesis stage.
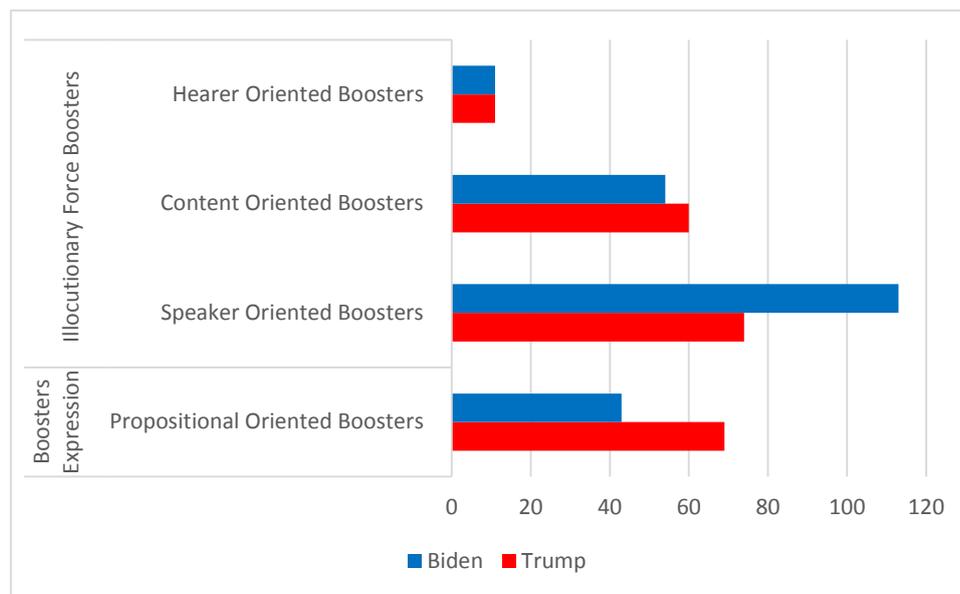
Table 3
Boosters in Thesis Stage

Candidate	Genre	Boosters Expression										Σ
		Propositional Oriented Boosters (P)		Illocutionary Force Boosters (I)								
				Speaker Oriented Boosters (S)			Content Oriented Boosters (C)			Hearer Oriented Boosters (H)		
		I	Pi	Be	Fi	St	Bo	Ac	Sg	Ss	Pv	
Trump	Thesis	82	1	31	38	73	21	29	6	7	3	291
Biden	Thesis	46	1	37	45	44	25	24	3	4	8	237

The result showed that Trump used more boosters (291) than Biden (237) in the thesis stage. The data indicate that both candidates mostly explored the same boosters' functions, namely intensifier, source tagging, force indication, boosting epistemic, bounding epistemic, and accentuating in delivering their proposals on certain issues. Trump employed meta-discourse indicating shared background knowledge to gain listeners' attention, while Biden preferred using rhetorical questions to involve hearers in the discourse.

In respect to the argument stage, the candidates engaged in a war of words by exploring different boosters categories. Figure 3 portrays boosters' categories realized during the argument stage.

Figure 3
Boosters Categories in the Argument Stage

Contrary to the thesis stage, Biden had a far greater number of speaker-oriented boosters category than Trump. However, Trump exceeded Biden in exploiting other categories, such as propositional-oriented boosters and content-oriented boosters, except for hearer-oriented boosters. The candidates behaved similarly in exploiting hearer-oriented boosters in the argument stage. The candidates' boosters choices are described in Table 4.

Table 4
Boosters in Argument Stage

Candidate	Genre	Boosters Expression									Σ
		Propositional Oriented Boosters (P)		Illocutionary Force Boosters (I)							
				Speaker Oriented Boosters (S)			Content Oriented Boosters (C)			Hearer Oriented Boosters (H)	
		I	Pi	Be	Fi	St	Bo	Ac	Sg	Ss	Pv	
Trump	Argument	66	3	16	33	25	17	43	-	5	6	214
Biden	Argument	43	5	29	47	37	19	30	5	6	5	226

The results of the data indicate that Biden (226) outperformed Trump (214). The candidates sparred by realizing various sorts of boosters. Biden primarily utilized threats of action to refute Trump's claims. In contrast, Trump frequently used intensifiers to counter and support his claims. To emphasize the substance of their assertions, both candidates also used the accentuating booster function. Trump preferred to use presupposing verification in the form of rhetorical questions concerning hearer-oriented boosters, whilst Biden used to seek solidarity boosters functions. The next part goes into more detail about how boosters work in context.

4.1. Booster' Function in Thesis Stage

What the candidates do with their agenda is influenced by the differences in ideological positions, agendas, and social, economic, and political conditions. Their speeches were strongly influenced by the ideology they brought from their respective parties and were closely related to the time's geopolitics, society, and economics. Therefore, the situation's context helps constrain the boosters' functions in each stage. Several roles of boosters in addressing the proposal were recorded, as follows.

4.1.1. Emphasizing the Predominance of Past Deeds or Policies Involving the Candidates' Role

The data indicated that both candidates used a significant number of intensifiers and source tagging boosters form in the thesis stage. Intensifiers are identified through the use of superlative, comparative, very, so, and others. Meanwhile, source tagging covers the first plural pronoun and self-tagging. The followings are examples of the data:

Context: Trump emphasized his policies with the Republican party successfully overcome the COVID-19 crisis.

(1) Trump: "*We* did(.) - *We*'ve done a great job(.)"

In this case, as the incumbent candidate, Trump built positive claims on his policies, including the Republican party, to gain the public's trust again. The incumbent party candidates are more likely than competitors to make flattering claims to win over voters.

In the same situation, Trump attempted to highlight his policies' superiority by selecting boosters to intensify information and emphasize reality.

Context: Trump emphasized his achievements in the economic field despite the pandemic crisis that hit the United States on the topic of economics.

(2) Trump: "So(,) we built *the greatest economy in history*(.)"

Trump used intensifier boosters to emphasize the idea. The candidate benefited from making his claim bold.

4.1.2. Criticizing Past Policies to Promote Plans

Several strategies, including plans preceded by past policy criticism, were applied by the candidates regarding persuasiveness. Biden mostly explored this strategy as the challenger candidate.

Context: Biden was asked to elaborate on his K-shaped recovery economic plan.

(3) Biden: "A:::nd he *has no* intention of doing anything(,) about making it better for you all at home(,) in terms of your health and your safety(.)"

(4) Biden: "*The fact* is that he has(,) *in fact*(,) worked on this in a way that he's going to be the first president of the United States to leave office(,) having fewer jobs in his administration than-when he became president (.)"

Biden's position was the challenger to the Democratic party in the 2020 presidential debate. He sought to present the unfavorable conditions of Trump's policies and propose a solution. The challenger also tried to highlight the negative action taken by the Trump administration.

4.1.3. Delivering Definite Plans

Typically, a political campaign enables candidates to deliver promises and the specific policies they aim to implement, given that they win the election. When crucial national or international issues emerge during the presidential election, potential voters will watch for attention to the candidates' commitments and plans to cope with the issues. The results show that they explored epistemic boosters in strengthening their position as presidential candidates with definite plans. In this case, they used many forms of certainty markers, such as "going to", "exactly", "absolutely", and others. They wish to demonstrate their strong belief in their proposal and would improve the United States.

Context: The moderator asked about Biden's plan for taxes.

(5) Biden: "By the way(,) I'm *going to* eliminate- a significant number of the taxes(.)"

Biden elaborated his proposal using the same form of the booster by providing an estimation condition, given that Trump was re-elected. The challenger candidate wanted to give the electorates an overview and reassure the voters. The following data is an example of the speech.

Context: The moderator asked about trusting the scientist regarding the COVID-19 issue and a statement uttered by the vice-presidential nominee.

(6) Biden: "We:::ll(,) that is what he's *going to* try to do(,) but there are thousands of scientists out there(,) like here(,) at this great hospital(,) that does not work for him(.)"

The aforementioned example highlighted the fact that something would happen even though it had not yet occurred. The data also reveal that the candidates made an effort to project a confident image when making their pledges using the certainty discourse marker.

4.1.4. Exposing Repetitive Emotional Expressions

The candidates used accentuating ideas to get into people's minds and influence their actions. Overstating ideas helps speakers slowly pierce the most argumentative minds. The below excerpts portray the persuasive strategy using accentuating boosters.

Context: Trump explained the rationale behind the nomination of Justice Barret.

(7) Trump: "…*Good in every way*(.) *Good in every way*(.)"

Context: Biden explained about trusting the scientist regarding the COVID-19 issue.

(8) Biden: "Well(,) no(,) no(.) *You can trust the scientist*(.) … *You can trust the scientist*(.)"

The excerpts show that the candidates persuade hearers by repeating emotional expressions. They pervaded hearers of their idea, dealing with their prominent policy, ideology, and even opponent's misdeeds. By repeating a word, phrase, or clause, the idea will easily get into and change the voters' minds.

4.1.5. Seeking Solidarity with Hearers

Promoting persuasiveness, the candidates attempt to force their ideology on the hearers by conveying common ideology and avoiding contrary ideas. Furthermore, it helps the candidate to get into the hearers' minds easily and change their behavior. This persuasive effort can be realized through solidarity markers, which help build engagement with the hearers. The following excerpts show the role of solidarity markers uttered by the candidates.

Context: The moderator asked about Biden's stance regarding the COVID-19 issue.

(9) Biden: "… You pointed out(,) he puts pressure and disagrees with his scientists(.) *Everybody knows.*"

Context: The moderator asked about Biden's agenda in economics named K-shaped recovery.

(10) Biden: "The difference is millionaires and billionaires like him(,) in the middle of the COVID crisis(,) have done very well(.) But *you folks at home*(,) *you folks* living in Scranton and Claymont and(,) all the small towns(,) and working-class towns in America(,) *how well are you doing?*"

Excerpt 9 demonstrates that the candidates conveyed common knowledge known to everyone to the hearers. They assess the current proposition using solidarity markers as "so generally recognized or widely agreed upon as to be self-evident". Furthermore, they used these markers to obtain solidarity from their listeners and tended to position the ideology as one known to the public. In this case, Biden used impersonality by calling the listeners "you, folks at home" while directing his eyes and hands towards the camera. The challenging candidate wanted to engage listeners in his ideology against Trump. In addition, the form of boosters that characterize politicians' language style is rhetorical questions. The data showed that rhetorical questions in the category of presupposing verification represent a self-evident proposition, which is generally accepted. Subsequently, the speaker engages the listener to provide the necessary meaning.

4.2. Boosters' Function in Argument Stage

The data showed that the two candidates explored boosters' function more on intensifier, force indication, accentuating, and source tagging, such as first plural pronouns and self-tagging, to deliver offensive and defensive arguments. This follows Benoit's (2003) statement that presidential debate involves offensive and defensive arguments. Therefore, the function of boosters is viewed from these two kinds of arguments.

4.2.1. Offensive Argument

The candidates attempt to damage their opponents' image by uttering offensive arguments to defeat their opponents. The findings reveal that the first US PD 2020 was filled with abundant offensive arguments. This conforms to the American and world's popular media reviews that the first presidential debate was full of attacks in the form of interruptions,

ridicule, bullying, and cross-talk (Chiwaya, 2020). This study depicts boosters' functions in offensive arguments as follows.

4.2.1.1. Attacking the Opponent's Point of View

This action is frequently realized through boosters functioning as force indications. The below excerpt illustrates how Biden argued toward Trump's statement.

Context: Trump mentioned that Biden agreed with Berni Sanders' plan to socialize medicine.

(11) Biden: "Because he(,) *in fact*(,) already has cost 10 million people(.) the healthcare they had from their employers because of his recession."

Biden emphasized his statement by utilizing the phrase "in fact" to relate to the truth. Politicians need to use facts and evidence to build criticism and ensure that their arguments cannot be disproved. Therefore, the candidate can use boosters indicating force to emphasize the speech delivered.

4.2.1.2. Attacking Opponents' Misdeeds

The data show that the candidates mostly exploited record issues to damage the opponents' image. This action is realized through intensifiers in bolding the flaws, as depicted in excerpt 12.

Context: Trump argued about Biden's record in solving global disease, Swine flu.

(12) Trump: "We:::ll(,) you <u>didn't do</u> *very* well in Swine Flu(.) H1-N1(,) you were a disaster(.)"

Intensifier boosters assist the candidate in exposing the utterance's propositions. Trump attempts to attack Biden since he criticized his policy coping with COVID-19. The goal is to build public opinion using the opponent's record.

4.2.1.3. Mocking

The candidates naturally deliver rude words to their opponents when the debate tension goes high. The data shows a significant number of mocking from both candidates, as indicated by excerpt 13.

Context: They argued about taxes policy.

(13) Biden: "…You're *the worst president* America has ever had(.)"

The economics topic becomes the combative segment when it falls into taxes issue. Both candidates were engaged in counter-arguments regarding their plans for tax policy. In this case, Biden attempts to build a narrative that Trump has no contribution toward tax policy for the US economy by using intensifiers in the form of superlatives to mock the incumbent candidate.

4.2.2. Defensive Arguments

Aside from attacking arguments, the stage was also colored with defensive arguments. According to Benoit (2007: p.321), attacks can damage candidates' reputations and images, while the defense can redress the damage. Therefore, the candidate naturally responds to attacks by delivering a persuasive defense. The boosters present two functions in defensive arguments as follows:

4.2.2.1. Rejecting Arguments

To counter the offensive arguments, the candidate directly conveyed rejection by uttering boosters force indication in the form of negation.

Context: Biden rejected the issue uttered by Trump that he was going to omit healthcare.

(14) Biden:" That is simply *not* true(.)"

Amidst attack arguments threatening the candidates, they may find it difficult to maintain their impulses. Therefore, the reactive response that appeared is rejected by using booster force indication in the form of negation.

4.2.2.2. Clarifying the Accusation

Two strategies were construed for clarifying the accusation. The first is exposing personal involvement in dealing with the prominence of past policy. The results showed that the candidates built on their defensive arguments by relying significantly on the second person pronoun "we", which functions as source tagging and the subject of their propositions. They wanted to involve the role of their representatives and parties in promoting their strengths.

Context: Trump's response to Biden's attack regarding his policy in the economic sector.

(15) Trump: "*We*'ve done things-that you *never even* thought of doing(.)"

In this case, Trump exposed himself and his party for an action he claimed Biden never did. Moreover, the incumbent candidate emphasized his utterances using boosters force indication in the form of negation "never" and bounding emphatic in the form of conjunction "even" to create a bolder ambiance.

The second strategy is conveying the plan, followed by a comprehensive explanation. This strategy is realized with the epistemic booster in the form of modal verbs, such as "going to", "have to", and others, to strengthen the speech commitment. It is aimed at conveying his confidence in improving policies' quality.

(16) Biden: "…The fact is(,) it's *going to* create millions of good-paying jobs(.)"

As previously stated, the defense can mitigate the damage caused by attack arguments. The detailed, convincing speeches they delivered confirmed the candidates' agendas.

5. Discussion

Due to the fact that each schematic structure of PD realizes a certain communicative purpose, it is reasonable to conclude, following a close examination, that the functions of boosters vary according to the structure. This study results show that the persuasive genre of the 2020 United States presidential candidate debate consisted of thesis and argument stages. The thesis stage lets the candidates explore their proposal and agenda, given that they are elected. Meanwhile, the argument stage provides an opportunity for the candidates to appear aggressive in breaking the opponent's arguments and defending theirs to save their image.

Furthermore, the data show that the candidates mostly use propositional and speaker-oriented boosters, such as intensifiers, source tagging, force indication, and boosting epistemic. They also use content-oriented boosters, such as accentuating, bounding emphatic, and source tagging, as well as hearer-oriented boosters, namely shared background and presuppose rhetorical. Booster is a meta-discourse device that aids candidates in bolstering their persuasive messages. The finding is in contrast with the previous studies from Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) and Elhambakhsh and Jalalian (2015) revealing that the presidential candidates Barrack Obama, Ahmadinejad,

Ruhani, and Ghalibaf, mostly exploited propositional-oriented boosters during the debate. Regarding the result of the study, both Trump and Biden like to come out as likable individuals.

With respect to the findings of boosters in the thesis stage, the candidates more largely exploited intensifier boosters to emphasize the predominance of past deeds. The candidates attempted to intensify the evaluation of a proposition (Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012). The finding also aligns with Vassileva (2001) that boosters make speech more powerful and may provoke the hearers. Furthermore, the source tagging boosters were frequently used to convey the candidate's existence in the policy. According to Beard (2000), politicians use the first-person plural in every speech to mark themselves, their government, and their political parties to show the group's credibility. This is consistent with Dogan-Ucar and Akbas (2022) and Allami and Barzegar (2020), stating the self-mentioned phrase "we" refers to the speakers as the agents.

Additionally, the research findings demonstrate that candidates critique competing policies by examining the facts and employing boosters force indication. The data shows that Biden attempted to appear convincing by criticizing his opponent's policies. According to Hyanes and Rhine (1998), the incumbent challenger tries to appear convincing by criticizing his opponent's policies. This action is also included in the persuasive strategy in the PD. Moreover, the challenger preferred to use force indication boosters' function for information intensification, position exaggeration, and negation (Triyoko, 2021). In addition, the candidates conveyed their promises using certainty markers in the form of boosting epistemic. Candidates build their reputations and characters during the campaign by making credible political promises to convince voters Aragonès et al. (2007) and Wijayanti et al. (2022). Accordingly, politicians use certainty markers to be seen as trustworthy by the electorates in conveying their commitment.

The candidates utilize emphasizing boosters by reiterating the proposal's contents to remain in the consciousness of the voters. These results are consistent with Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) that attenuating boosters function as propaganda tools. The candidates also appeared

to involve the voters in their interactions. According to the data, both candidates employ symbols of solidarity to communicate their objectives throughout the thesis stage. Solidarity markers convey "a widely-common knowledge" as self-evident and dominate public opinion (Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012; Simon-Vandenbergen et al., 2007). These results are consistent with Kristina et al. (2021) that politicians tend to build solidarity with their hearers.

The same booster function plays several roles at various phases of an argument. The evidence suggests that at the argumentation stage, boosters are used to attack the opponent's viewpoint, mistakes, and mockery. Additionally, supporters aid candidates in communicating their defenses. Candidates use booster features like force indication and bounding emphatic about refuting claims and explaining allegations. The findings are consistent with Anh's (2018) finding that US Presidential candidates utilized strategies such as extra-vocalization and verbal description of opposing candidates, as well as image enhancement through defense against opposing candidates' blaming arguments. These results also corroborate Benoit (2007) and Dalimunte and Wen (2022) that political debate is a political medium that provides message form most likely to feature defense and attack to show their strong commitment and face-threatening acts. Hence, they need linguistic devices to gain support from voters.

The present study implies the persuasive strategy involving boosters as a meta-discourse based on the communicative purpose of PD, reflecting on its schematic structures. Moreover, the result contributes to a new perspective of boosters' study viewed from the genre. This study is limited to the number of sources of the data being analyzed and the diversity of the speakers since they are from the United States of America. Therefore, future studies are recommended to include a more in-depth analysis using the lens of American Study or political science. The political discourse genre is also recommended to enrich boosters' study.

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Appendix

Table 1

Notation Indication

Symbol	Name	Use
(.)	Long pause	Ends the conversation
(,)	Micro pause	A brief pause in the conversation
-	Interruption sign	Illustrates there is an interruption in the middle of the speech
:::	Colons	Illustrates prolongation of sounds
…	Omitted text	Illustrates there is another speech beforehand
Italic	Italicized text	Illustrates the booster data/stressing the speech
Text	Underlined text	Illustrates another booster in the speech