Immigration in Barack Obama´s and Joe Biden's campaign discourses: Rhetorical analysis

Teresa Fernández Ulloa
California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), United States
orcid.org/0000-0001-5146-4516

María del Carmen López Ruiz
Universidad de Cordoba (UCO), Spain
orcid.org/0000-0002-5761-4682

Immigration and illegal immigration, in particular, is a constant problem in the USA, which is why it has become a frequent issue in political campaigns. This research shows some rhetorical resources used in the political speeches delivered by Democratic leaders Barack Obama and Joe Biden when dealing with this issue in their campaigns. Following Aristotle's scheme, traced in his *Rhetoric*, attention is paid to the different mechanisms related to *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. The different resources used are analyzed, and the similarities and differences between the two politicians are observed. The *corpus* comprises the transcripts of four political speeches given by each Democratic candidate during the electoral campaigns (Obama's 2009 election and Biden's 2021 election).

Keywords: Argumentation. *Logos*. Immigration. Political discourse.

La inmigración en los discursos de campaña de Obama y Biden: análisis retórico

La inmigración, y la ilegal en concreto, es un problema constante en los Estados Unidos, por lo que se ha convertido en un tema frecuente en las campañas políticas. En esta investigación se muestran algunos recursos retóricos utilizados en los discursos políticos pronunciados por los líderes demócratas Barack Obama y Joe Biden al tratar este tema en sus campañas. Siguiendo el esquema de Aristóteles, trazado en su *Retórica*, se presta atención a los diferentes mecanismos relacionados con el *ethos*, el *logos* y el *pathos*. Se analizan los diferentes recursos empleados y se observan las similitudes y diferencias entre los dos políticos. El *corpus* está formado por las transcripciones de cuatro discursos políticos pronunciados por cada candidato demócrata durante las campañas electorales (elección de Obama de 2009 y elección de Biden de 2021).

Palabras clave: Argumentación. *Logos*. Inmigración. Discurso político.

A imigração nos discursos da campanha de Obama e Biden: análise retórica

A imigração, e a imigração ilegal, em particular, é um problema constante nos Estados Unidos, razão pela qual se tornou um tema frequente nas campanhas políticas. Esta pesquisa mostra alguns recursos retóricos utilizados nos discursos políticos proferidos pelos líderes democratas Barack Obama e Joe Biden ao tratar dessa questão em suas campanhas e, seguindo o esquema de Aristóteles, traçado em sua *Retórica*, atenta-se para os diferentes mecanismos relacionados ao *ethos*, *logos* e *pathos*. Os diferentes recursos utilizados são analisados e as semelhanças e diferenças entre os dois políticos são observadas. O *corpus* é constituído pelas transcrições de quatro discursos políticos proferidos por cada candidato democrata durante as campanhas eleitorais (eleição de Obama em 2009 e eleição de Biden em 2021).

Palavras-chave: Argumentação. *Logos*. Imigração. Discurso político.

Introduction

This research aims to analyze rhetorical mechanisms used by Democratic leaders Barack Obama and Joe Biden to understand their attempts to convince the reader/listener regarding immigration issues. They seem to back into a specific use of terminology to address migration. They display several strategies related to credibility or *ethos*, argumentation or *logos*, and emotions or *pathos*, as explained below.

We started by selecting a more comprehensive number of discourses, but, in this specific article, we ended up using four speeches pronounced by each politician during electoral campaigns (2007, 2008 [Obama's 2009 election, his first one], 2019, 2020 [Biden's 2021 election]). In one of the sections, we also explain the situation related to immigration during these two campaigns.

1 The campaigns

1.1 Obama´s campaign

To situate Obama's first political campaign regarding immigration and point out what was happening in the country at the time, it is necessary to mention that the candidate supported the legalization of illegal immigrants in the country. He proposed several actions for such immigrants, including free access to English language lessons and workshops to help them understand the fines they had to pay as a pathway to citizenship. According to *The New York Times* (CARTER *et al.,* 2012), Obama stated that he would "toughen penalties for hiring illegal immigrants".

Obama supported comprehensive immigration reforms which considered the possibility for illegal immigrants to be granted USA citizenship (green cards), but Congress did not pass this bill. Obama defended the DREAM Act in 2010. Other attempts at immigration reforms included the 2012 DACA policy, the 2013 immigration bill, and the 2014 executive order on protecting illegal immigrants from deportation. Yet, this last measure was not approved by the Supreme Court[1].

On June 15, 2012, the Obama Administration declared that it would stop deporting young illegal immigrants who entered the United States as children if they

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[1] More informacion at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/24/us/immigration-obama-supreme-court.html and https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/20/facts-on-u-s-immigrants/

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met a specific requirement. Still, Republicans reacted with outrage, saying the move amounts to amnesty.

In 2014, President Obama proposed improving legal immigration processes, strengthening border security, deporting felons, expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allowed young people who were brought into the country as children to apply for deportation deferrals and work permits, and creating the Deferred Action for Parents of U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (APA) program. According to the data shown by Parlapiano (November 20, 2014) from the Migration Policy Institute (2012), the number of illegal immigrants was 11.4 million. At that time, 4.5 would be potentially covered by the President's plan, and 1.2 were DACA eligible. Parlapiano shows, with data from the Pew Research Center, that the unauthorized immigrant population had slowed significantly since 2007, in part by a decline in immigrants from Mexico, where more than half of those immigrants were born. The increase in deportations, according to the numbers of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the fact that there were fewer economic incentives after the recession, contributed to that decline. More Americans disapproved than approved of President Obama's decision to take executive action on the issue. Regarding the reaction of the conservatives in Congress, they accused Obama of abusing his power and expressed their desire to stop the actions, through legislative or legal measures.

DACA and DAPA were the most controversial elements of the President's plan with Republican critics. Texas and the 25 states that brought a lawsuit against the Obama Administration argued that President Obama did not have the authority to implement DAPA (Deferred Actions for Parents) because it was essentially a new law.

1.2 Biden´s campaign

President Joe Biden took the oath of office on January 20, 2021, when the United States faced a public health and economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

His ideological position towards immigration was critical during the election campaign because of the effect on foreign affairs having been carried out during the mandatory term of the government of the previous President, Donald Trump. Trump's plans for immigration included finishing the border wall between the United States and Mexico and implementing additional taxes on imported goods and restrictions on immigration (also from other countries such as Canada, China, Korea, even Europe). Given this context, the immigration plans during the campaign caused

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a lot of expectation and were a source of confrontation between both political parties (Democrats and Republicans).

Since Biden was preparing to enter the White House, the feeling that the border was opening spread across many countries, which only aggravated a significant problem in the United States. The classic border "problem" with Mexico and the massive arrival of illegal immigrants from this country, not to mention the situation of separated families, DACA children, and other long-term problems, was enlarged with the massive arrival of Haitians, Brazilians, and Venezuelans, among others, and the inability to react, or the overreaction, of the border guard.

The Biden Administration is moving to save a critical Obama-era immigration program that shields undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children from deportation by proposing a new regulation, the latest attempt to preserve it. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, created in 2012, has been the subject of ongoing litigation, despite the Administration's efforts to keep the program alive. During Trump's Administration, it was also under threat when the then-president tried to end the program.

On September 5, 2017, the acceptance of new applications for enrollment in the program was suspended; this was announced by the Department of Homeland Security attorney general, Jeff Sessions, as part of the Trump administration policy.

> On July 16, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas held that the DACA policy "is illegal." The Court granted summary judgment on plaintiffs' Administrative Procedure Act (APA) claims; vacated the June 15, 2012 DACA memorandum issued by former Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano; remanded the memorandum to DHS for further consideration; and issued a permanent injunction prohibiting the government's continued administration of DACA and the reimplementation of DACA without compliance with the APA. The Court, however, temporarily stayed its order vacating the DACA memorandum and its injunction with regard to individuals who obtained DACA on or before July 16, 2021, including those with renewal requests. (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 2021).

Many of those more than 600,000 DACA recipients were then contemplating those same "what if" scenarios as they found their lives upended by yet another court ruling. They were angered by countless promises by members of Congress from both parties that they would find a permanent legislative solution to a program that was always intended to be temporary (CBS News, 2021).

So Biden has had to face attacks from Republicans who described his policies as weak and ineffective. Many immigrant rights activists have increasingly concluded that Biden has not lived up to his campaign vows to stand up for vulnerable foreigners

who seek a better life in the United States. "What we are seeing is a crisis that has been created by Republican and Democratic administrations that have failed to provide any pathway to legalization," said Kari Hong, an attorney with the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project that works along the border in Arizona (SULLIVAN; MIROFF, 2021).

2 Methodology

Given the importance that immigration policies and reforms pose on political campaigns in the American elections and the notorious impact that words from leaders have on foreign communities, we have studied a series of speeches of both candidates during their electoral campaigns (only his first one, in Obama´s case) to detail the rhetorical phenomena employed by each orator as well as the use of the persuasive language towards immigration themes, specifically those resources linked to *ethos, logos,* and *pathos.*

These speeches were chosen following Bowker and Pearson's (2002) strategies regarding designing textual *corpora*. Thus, there was a phase of data collection and *corpus* design phase, a storage phase, and a *corpus* management phase. For the data collection phase, we collected a *corpus* of 14 speeches of both candidates searching through the browser Google with the help of specialized searching algorithms, which included the keywords "immigration," "immigrants," "democrats," "Biden," "Obama," "immigration policies," "political campaign" and "immigration reforms" (e.g. Obama+political campaign+immigration policies before:2008-11-20 site:democrats.org).

We used the democrat's campaign websites for both candidates and the transcriptions found on *Rev, Obama White House Archives, The New York Times,* and *Democracy in Action*. Once found, we downloaded the speeches and saved them in different files, divided by the candidate (Obama/Biden), political campaign (2008, 2020), and scope (immigration in general, border security, illegal immigrants, etc.). Therefore, the design of the *corpus*, according to Bowker and Pearson´s categories, can be described as monolingual (regarding the number of languages), *ad hoc* (i.e., created for this research), written (transcriptions), monitored (it admits the inclusion of new speeches if they are to be found through the internet, providing that they respect the same parameters and categories than the previous speeches), specialized (we were searching for speeches of a defined group –democrats– talking about immigration during political campaigns), and chronological (we are studying

the last two Democrats in power, so the democratic language studied is up-to-date). The transcriptions of the speeches were storaged both in a pdf file and in a txt file.

In the latter, we included the last-accessed date to the website and the URL from which we downloaded each text. To manage the *corpus*, we used the software AntConc, which is described as a monolingual, multi-purpose *corpus* analysis tool that helps analyze one or more texts to study concordances, word frequencies, keyword frequencies, clusters, lexical patterns, etc. automatically. We entered the most frequent words of the *corpus* and investigated their use in context to help us understand each orator's semantic, lexical, and syntactic choices. We could also confirm the most eligible terms for each candidate regarding immigration, which was the purpose of our research. Thanks to this *corpus* management software, we could analyze the *corpus* in a steady fashion and minimize the subjectivity variable since the data managed was made up automatically by the software. Screenshots from the program have been included below:

Image 1 – List of words without stoplist

(most repeated terms appear here, including articles, prepositions, and other empty words)

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Image 2 – Same list, with the stoplist (only "full" words)
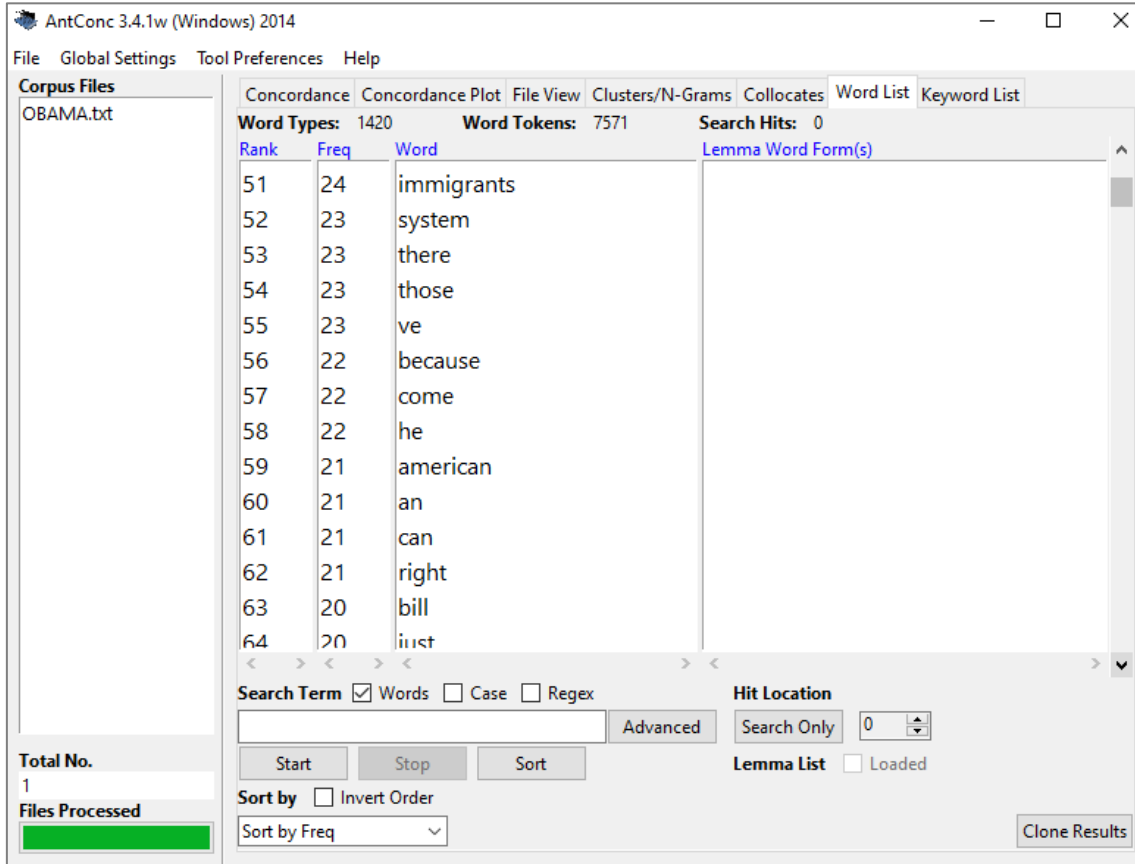
Source: Elaborated by the authors

Image 3 – Collocations

Source: Elaborated by the authors

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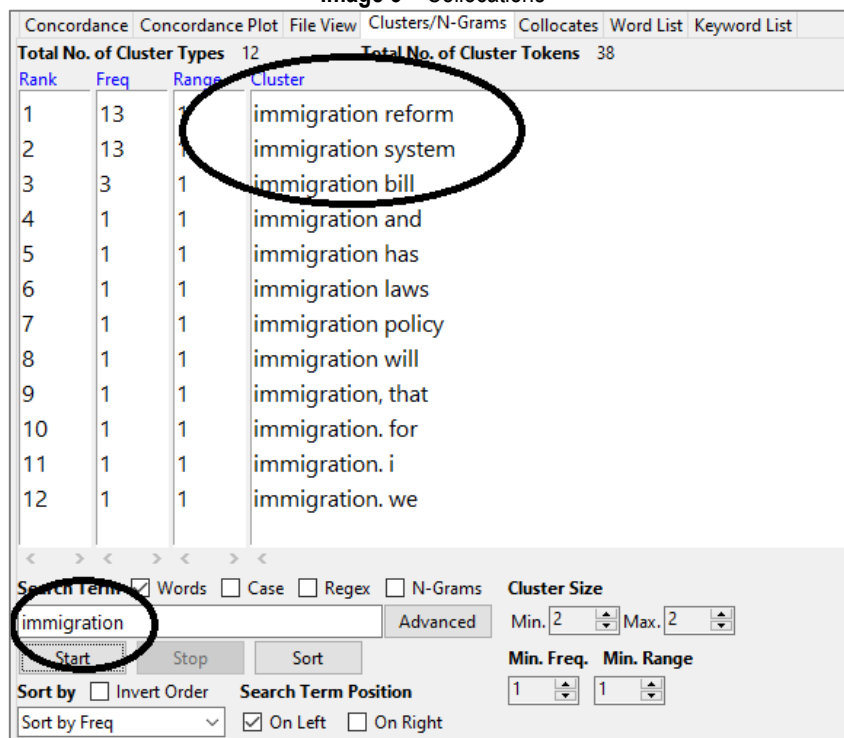Once the *corpus* was created, we analyzed the transcriptions of the speeches to classify the language used by both Democrat candidates running for the presidency into three patterns (drafted by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*): *ethos, logos,* and *pathos.*

After a decline in rhetoric, studies on argumentation have emerged strongly within a New Rhetoric, focusing on the fact that language aims to convince; it is persuasive. This New Rhetoric considers the postulates by Toulmin (2003 [1958]), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1989 [1958]), Anscombre and Ducrot (1994 [1983]), Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), Van Dijk (2005), Fuentes Rodríguez and Alcaide Lara (2007), and Charaudeau (2009), among others. Some of their contributions will be considered here.

Ethos is attributed the strategy responsible for configuring the image of credibility possessed by the speaker of a speech. *Ethos* is attributed to the action of *delectare,* which, in other words, refers to the act of "appeal" or "persuade," emphasizing fundamentally the will. The speaker intends to win the audience's trust, who does not want to stop listening to the speaker. The word *ethos,* on the one hand, comes from the Greek term ἦθος, *êthos,* that is, "custom," "character," "use." In this sense, it refers to the provision of ethics and morality of the speaker, which is why *ethos* also concerns the ethical qualities of a good speaker. To study precisely all the features that identify the *ethos* of the two speakers presented here, we will take as a reference the classification of characteristics of the *ethos* described by Charaudeau (2009).

In this way, we will start from the premise that the image of any speaker will not only be delimited by what he says but by how he says it, which will lead the audience to forge an identity of the speaker. In this sense, two types of well-differentiated identities can be distinguished: on the one hand, the *ethos* of **credibility**; on the other, the *ethos* of **identification**. The first *ethos* is the one that is related to how the speaker can legitimize his own identity, something that will be reinforced by the arguments of another strategy, the *logos.* On the other hand, the *ethos* of identification concentrates primarily on a type of identity of an affective, psychological nature, through which the speaker intends to approach a heterogeneous audience, composed of allies, opponents, or undecided voters. Each of these types of *ethos* (credibility and identification) distinguishes other subtypes that help specify more adequately in what sense rationality or affection concerns the speaker's image. Therefore, there are many *ethé* that both speakers share, confirming the political nature of the very Democrat speech, although they present

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different strategies and resources. A feature which remains prevalent is, of course, the polarization of "our" *vs.* "their". This discursive polarization is typically characterized by reinforcing the favorable properties of the ingroup (we), and the negative properties of the outgroup (they). At the same time, the negative properties of the ingroup and the positive ones of the outgroup are typically de-emphasized, attenuated, mitigated, or simply ignored or hidden. In this way, we get an "ideological framework" (VAN DIJK, 1998, p. 59), which can be applied to all levels of discourse. This will show not only in the adjectives and nouns used to describe both groups but also in complex structures that "relate these groups with specific actions, objects, places, or events."

This *ethos* is reinforced by the *ethos* of **competence** (the speaker wants to show that he is someone qualified as a political person who has acquired enough experience and training throughout his career). Now, he knows how to exercise the different functions of government. The speaker allows himself to advise the opponent to demonstrate his worth as a politician (self-praise and disqualification of the adversary might be used). Verbs in deontic modality, syntactic repetitions, and conditional statements are usually the techniques preferred by politicians.

Another example of *ethos* would be the *ethos* of **efficacy** or virtue, used whenever the speaker wants to show fidelity to his principles or appeal to the false and prejudiced principles of the Other.

The *ethos* of **performativity** helps concretize the promises related to the welfare of the society the politician addresses. The volitional modality is frequent in these cases.

The *ethos* of **commitment** alludes to the promises of the orator when focusing on the pledge of a necessary change that will only arrive upon his presidency.

Finally, the *ethos* of **sincerity** is related to the way the orator must describe himself as a person who can be trusted, whose words have a value over the receiver because he can be trusted not only as a political leader but also as a good person.

Regarding the *logos*, the argumentative scheme of Toulmin (1958) has been used as a model of analysis in this study. It comprises six elements: claim, evidence, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and qualifiers.

a) The assertion or premise, also called **claim** or proposition, is the statement that the evidence will support. There is usually a general preise to support the fundamental thesis. The central claims in Obama's and Biden's

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discourses have to do with the defense of immigrants through various policies.

b) The **evidence** supports the claim or proposition. The main points of the persuasive speech and the supporting material included serve as evidence. As far as Democrats are concerned, at least, in this study, they have concentrated on economic improvements and the welfare state.

c) The **warrant** is the underlying justification that connects the claim and the evidence. In this study, they focus on the economic results.

d) For the warrant to be solid and convincing, it requires a **backing**, which can be varied. Generally, the data or other testimonies that validate the guarantee are provided by experts, and the politician uses that material. In the *corpus*, these results are numbers and figures supporting the positive economic impact of immigrants.

e) The **rebuttal** means that the politician speaks of possible objections that can be formulated to make an anticipated defense. Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may be counterarguments. These may be disputed either through continued dialogue or by giving a rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument.

f) **Qualifiers** express the level of (un)certainty, modality, probability, or possibility of a sentence. Qualifiers can vary the level of conviction and sureness of the speaker. The meaning of the statement can be different depending on the syntactic function and position that the qualifier is given by the speaker, who may add a value of necessity by using qualifiers such as "definitely" or "necessarily," for instance; modality through words such as "clearly," "consistently" and modal verbs; and probability with adverbs such as "surely" or "maybe."

Pathos has to do with arousing emotions through the speech, which has become the primary weapon of today's politicians. It is a way to engage voters, which creates more opportunities for conviction and leads them to action; it could be considered unethical, but it is the tone of contemporary discourse. Some ways to achieve emotion are using vivid language, including personal stories of the politician or others, figurative language (metaphors, similes…), and repetition. Lexical selection is also a weapon of a persuasive communicator, along with the expressions that contrast the good actions of the indogroup and the bad actions of the Other. There will also be avoiding techniques, such as lack of precision or not talking about

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the bad things that the speaker or his political party has done. Politicians are creating an image of positive self-presentation and, at the same time, a negative presentation of the Other. This shows that *pathos*, therefore, not only helps legitimize arguments of the speaker´s *logos*, and affects, either directly or indirectly, his own *ethos* as the hero of the story, in narrative terms, but also has an impact on the adversary's *ethos*, as the antagonist. This obvious *logos/ethos/pathos* relationship demonstrates how close the three strategies are and the effect they can have on the speech.

3 Analysis

3.1 Barack Obama

Obama always points out that North America is made up of immigrants; "We are a nation of immigrants, and we must respect that shared history as this debate moves forward" (May 23, 2007), although he will always insist on the importance of them being legal, as it has been said above. He often mentions this very aspect in his discourses, pointing out how the immigration system "has been broken" for a long time. He also states that "to fix the system in a way that does not require us to revisit the same problem in twenty years, I continue to believe that we need stronger enforcement on the border and at the workplace." He insists on "secure borders," and that "means a workable mandatory system that employers must use to verify the legality of their workers." More poetically, he continues in the same discourse, "I have to say though, Mr. President, that the most disturbing aspect of this bill is the point system for future immigrants. As currently drafted, it does not reflect how much Americans value the family ties that bind people to their brothers and sisters, or to their parents."

In that discourse, he also personalizes immigration,

> With regard to the most pressing part of the immigration challenge –the 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.– we must create an earned path to citizenship. Now, no one condones unauthorized entry into the United States. And by supporting an earned path to citizenship, I am not saying that illegal entry should go unpunished. The path to permanent residence and eventual citizenship must be tough enough to make it clear that an unauthorized entry was wrong and will be punished.

Obama takes the best of his charisma and personal image together to his individual story to convince the public through personal details so that the targeted population can see themselves in a similar situation. For instance, "That promise is our greatest inheritance. It's a promise I make to my daughters when I tuck them in at night, and a promise that you make to yours –a promise that has led immigrants to

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cross oceans and pioneers to travel west; a promise that led workers to picket lines, and women to reach for the ballot" (August 28, 2008). His rhetoric develops the strategy of *pathos* in the same direction as *logos*. Both approaches are surrounded by his persona (*ethos*), which in Obama's case is more robust than in Biden's because it is composed of the political image and the personal one. The targeted receiver gets to the latter image thanks to the literary language used by the orator and the frequent use of personal linguistic devices such as personification, metonymy, analogy, conceptual metaphors, and the concept of identity and common sense.

We have mentioned the *ethos* of credibility and the *ethos* of identification and how there is a prevalence in Obama´s and Biden´s discourses of the "we" vs. "they" – "ingroup" and "outgroup," respectively (VAN DIJK, 1995, p. 150). Discursive polarization is shown through various mechanisms: disqualifications, appreciative adjectives, positive and negative politeness, etc. Among the examples, Obama says, "I will be working with others to offer an amendment to make this provision closer to what we proposed last year" (May 23, 2007).

This *ethos* is reinforced by the *ethos* of competence. The speaker allows himself to advise the opponent to demonstrate his worth as a politician (self-praise and disqualification of the adversary might be used).

> I will support amendments aimed at fixing the temporary worker program that Senator Bingaman and others have offered. And if we're going to have a new temporary worker program, those workers should have the opportunity to stay if they prove themselves capable and willing to participate in this country. (OBAMA, May 23, 2007)

Another example of *ethos* would be the *ethos* of efficacy or virtue.

> I will support amendments aimed at fixing the temporary worker program that Senator Bingaman and others have offered. And if we're going to have a new temporary worker program, those workers should have the opportunity to stay if they prove themselves capable and willing to participate in this country. (OBAMA, May 23, 2007).

The *ethos* of performativity appears in examples such as "And at the appropriate time, I will be offering another amendment with the President [Presiding Officer Senator Menendez] to sunset the points system in the bill" (OBAMA, May 23, 2007).

The *ethos* of commitment alludes to the promises of the orator when focusing on the pledge of a necessary change that will only arrive upon his presidency,

> And we must tap the vast resource of our own immigrant population to advance each part of our agenda. One of the troubling aspects of our recent politics has been the anti-immigrant sentiment that has flared up, and been exploited by politicians come election time. We need to understand that immigration –when done legally– is a source of

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strength for this country. Our diversity is a source of strength for this country. When we join together –black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and native American– there is nothing that we can't accomplish. Todos somos Americanos! (May 23, 2008).

Finally, the *ethos* of sincerity,

> That is why the United States must stand for growth in the Americas from the bottom up. That begins at home, with comprehensive immigration reform. That means securing our border and passing tough employer enforcement laws. It means bringing 12 million unauthorized immigrants out of the shadows. But it also means working with Mexico, Central America and others to support bottom up development to our south. (May 23, 2008).

For the *logos*, and following Toulmin´s model, various examples (all of them from May 23, 2007, except the ones for qualifiers) can be provided with the claim (defense of immigrants with policies in their favor), evidence (economic improvement, welfare state), warrant (economic results, numbers, figures), backing (republican vs. Democrat political leaders), rebuttal (problems not solved so far are a consequence of the mismanagement of the Other), and qualifiers:

> **Claim:** Last year I spoke at one of the marches in Chicago for comprehensive immigration reform. I looked out across the faces of the crowd. I saw mothers and fathers, citizens and noncitizens, people of Polish and Mexican descent, working Americans, and children. And what I know is that these are people we should embrace, not fear. We can and should be able to see ourselves in them.

> **Evidence:** To fix the system in a way that does not require us to revisit the same problem in twenty years, I continue to believe that we need stronger enforcement on the border and at the workplace. And that means a workable mandatory system that employers must use to verify the legality of their workers.

> **Warrant:** We can and should be able to fix our broken immigration system and do so in a way that's reflective of American values and ideals and the tradition that we have of accepting immigrants to our shores.

> **Backing:** Right now, we have 11 million undocumented immigrants in America; 11 million men and women from all over the world who live their lives in the shadows. Yes, they broke the rules. They crossed the border illegally. Maybe they overstayed their visas. Those are facts. Nobody disputes them. But these 11 million men and women are now here. Many of them have been here for years. And the overwhelming majority of these individuals aren't looking for any trouble. They're contributing members of the community. They're looking out for their families. They're looking out for their neighbors. They're woven into the fabric of our lives.

> **Rebuttal:** We're giving them all the skills they need to figure that out, but then we're going to turn around and tell them to start that business and create those jobs in China or India or Mexico or someplace else? That's not how you grow new industries in America. That's how you give new industries to our competitors. That's why we need comprehensive immigration reform. Now, during my first term, we took steps to try and

> patch up some of the worst cracks in the system. […] But because this change isn't permanent, we need Congress to act -- and not just on the DREAM Act. We need Congress to act on a comprehensive approach that finally deals with the 11 million undocumented immigrants who are in the country right now. That's what we need.

> **Qualifiers:** Passions fly on immigration, but I don't know anyone who benefits when a mother is separated from her infant child or an employer undercuts American wages by hiring illegal workers. This *too* is part of America's promise — the promise of a democracy where we can find the strength and grace to bridge divides and unite in common effort. (August 28, 2008)

> Their experience is the immigrant experience — as far as they're concerned, no one handed them anything. They built it from scratch. They've worked hard all their lives, many times only to see their jobs shipped overseas or their pensions dumped after a lifetime of labor. They are anxious about their futures, and they feel their dreams slipping away. (March 18, 2008)

> Now, I think that the bill that has come to the floor is a fine first step, but I *strongly* believe it requires some changes. (May 23, 2007)

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies get the audience to "open up." The speaker intends to change the behavior, feelings, intentions, or viewpoint of others by communicative means that are based on emotional aspects:

> But it also means binding our particular grievances –for better health care and better schools and better jobs– to the larger aspirations of all Americans: the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man who has been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family. And it means taking full responsibility for our own lives –by demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children, and reading to them, and teaching them that while they may face challenges and discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or cynicism; they must always believe that they can write their own destiny (March 18, 2008).

> In many ways, Miami stands as a symbol of hope for what's possible in the Americas. Miami's promise of liberty and opportunity has drawn generations of immigrants to these shores, sometimes with nothing more than the clothes on their back. It was a similar hope that drew my own father across an ocean, in search of the same promise that our dreams need not be deferred because of who we are, what we look like, or where we come from (May 23, 2008).

> But I also believe, Mr. President, that we have to get it right. And I think that it is critical that as we embark on this enormous venture to update our immigration system, that it is fully reflective of the powerful tradition of immigration in this country and fully reflective of our values and our ideals (May 23, 2007).

3.2 Joe Biden

Biden exemplifies contraposition because, very often, he emphasizes the differences between Democrats vs. Republicans, discussing at length the acts and

performances of his rival, Trump, whom he sees as the opposite of what the President of the Nation should be: "It was a tragedy that shot a direct line between Trump and the crusade of his policies to unleash hate and fear against the Latino community" (BIDEN, July 29, 2020). Whereas Obama (May 23, 2007) uses the personal tone so that the potential receiver gets closer to the political scenario and can see himself individually in the speech ("[...] the humanity of students like my father who came to America in search of a dream"), Biden talks more widely about the entire population and the Democratic and the Republican (Trump's) stances as two very differentiated schemes of government. He draws a line between the Republicans and Trump, who seems to be isolated as one individual separated from the group following Biden's pragmatic devices: "Then I worked with a Republican Congress to approve a $750 million aid package to help support those reforms" vs. "Trump announced an end to our aid –to Central America– via tweet, with no understanding of the consequences" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

Biden's argumentation and functional *ethos* are shown over the speech as the counterperson of Trump. His logical scheme pattern is to show "what must be done," something that the receiver infers by valuing what the Other (in his speech, Trump) is not doing or has not done so far – "I'm going to do what the Justice Department says should be done, should be done and not politicize it. It's the most dangerous thing that's happened so far is the politicization of the Department of Justice. It's become the Department of Trump and that's wrong" (BIDEN, September 23, 2020).

The discursive polarization *we/they* is observed in examples such as "And, like everything about this election, the threat Donald Trump poses to our national security, and to who we are as a country, is so extreme, we cannot afford to ignore it"; "His [Trump's] erratic policies and failures to uphold basic democratic principles have muddied our reputation, our place in the world, and our ability to lead it" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

This *ethos* of credibility and identification is reinforced by the *ethos* of competence:

> Now I believe they have a duty to make sure their algorithms and platforms are not misused to sow division at home, or to empower the surveillance state, facilitate repression and censorship in China and elsewhere, spread hate, or spur people to violence. (July 11, 2019).

Regarding the *ethos* of efficacy or virtue, he states, "As Vice President, I secured commitments from the leaders of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to take on

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the corruption, violence, and endemic poverty in their countries that are driving people to leave their homes" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

The *ethos* of performativity is used to concretize the promises related to the welfare of the society the politician addresses – "As Vice President, I secured commitments from the leaders of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to take on the corruption, violence, and endemic poverty in their countries that are driving people to leave their homes" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

The *ethos* of commitment appears in statements such as "We need to work again with Canada and Mexico as neighbors –not adversaries. And we need to focus on the root causes driving migrants to our border" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

Finally, the *ethos* of sincerity is exemplified in "We have to be honest about our friends that are falling short and forge a common agenda for action to address the greatest threats to our shared values" (BIDEN, July 11, 2019).

Logos is demonstrated using figures and numbers to show different logical evidences throughout his speech. He underlines the differences between his government project and that of the Republicans, reflecting on the *ethos* of Trump to emphasize the strength of his statements.

> **Claim:** Ladies and Gentlemen, political wisdom holds that the American public doesn't vote on foreign policy –but that's an old way of thinking. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)
>
> **Evidence:** We are a nation of immigrants. President Trump took those words out of the mission statement of our citizenship and immigration services. I will restore them. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)
>
> **Warrant:** American foreign policy must be purposeful and inspiring, based on clear goals and driven by sound strategies –not Twitter-tantrums. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)
>
> **Backing:** And the overarching purpose of our foreign policy must be to defend and advance the security, prosperity, and democratic values of the United States. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)
>
> I'm going to invest literally hundreds of billions of dollars to make housing a right, not a privilege. It's a basic right to have a roof over your head. We're going to create a hundred billion dollar affordable housing fund to build and upgrade affordable homes that exist now, build, upgrade them. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)
>
> We have to take care of everything I've talked about on the campaign trail –giving every student the skills or training they need to obtain a good 21st century job; making sure every single American has access to quality, affordable healthcare; investing in rebuilding our bridges and roads, modernizing our airports and trains; making sure Americans have access to broadband networks; reforming our taxes to reward work, not just wealth;

leading the clean-economy revolution to create 10 million new jobs right here in the United States. (BIDEN, July 29, 2020)

Rebuttal: As President, I will never hesitate to protect the American people, including when necessary, by using force. We have the strongest military in the world –and as President, I will ensure it stays that way. The Biden Administration will make the investments necessary to equip our troops for the challenges of the next century, not the last one. But the use of force should be our last resort, not our first –used only to defend our vital interests, when the objective is clear and achievable, and with the informed consent of the American people. (BIDEN, July 11, 2019)

Qualifiers: And make no mistake, the world sees Trump *clearly* for what he is – Corrupt, insecure, ill-informed, impulsive. (BIDEN, July 11, 2019)

We *only* have one opportunity to reset our democracy. After Trump, we have to be prepared to make the most of it. (BIDEN, July 11, 2019)

If we give Donald Trump four more years – we *may* never recover America's standing in the world or our capacity to bring nations together. (BIDEN, July 11, 2019)

Pathos is used through compassion, love, and emotion, and *ethos* is personified in the image of the Democratic stance, not his personal one. However, there are several examples of his identity in his speeches. Still, the primary spectrum of his words is based on affirmations uttered on behalf of the party he is representing. His language is descriptive, comparative, exemplificative, inclusive, metaphorical, plain, empathic, and sometimes repetitive when his goal is to make a statement utterly clear to the potential audience (all examples from July 11, 2019):

Prospective promises: Our Statue of Liberty invites in the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free. *I will* reverse Trump's detrimental asylum policies and raise our target for refugee admissions to a level commensurate with our responsibility and the unprecedented global need.

Literary language: We will organize and host in the United States, during the first year of my administration, a global Summit for Democracy to renew *the spirit and shared purpose* of the nations of the Free World.

Analogies: As Vice President, I worked with President Obama to craft the military and diplomatic campaign that ultimately defeated ISIS.

The American spirit, and anaphora to create emphasis: We have to champion liberty and democracy. We have to reclaim our credibility. We have to look with unrelenting optimism and determination toward the future.

Comparative language in gradation from the lesser to the most important values: The answer to this threat is more openness –not less. More friendships, more cooperation, more alliances. More democracy.

Concluding remarks

In this work, discourse analysis has shown to be a fundamental methodology to analyze and explore the words of persuasion in a critical moment during the political career of American leaders: the elections. Results shed light on the discourse strategies related to *logos* used by Democrats when talking about very controversial themes among leaders: migration and immigration policies. These two politicians are not afraid to show themselves as aware of the situation of the immigrant people and pay further attention to the motives of their migration than to the problems that may arise economically and internationally in the country.

We have revealed that Obama´s and Biden´s discourses on immigration provide notable examples of an *ethos* committed to immigrants and that emotions play a vital role in their argumentation, so they show a *pathos* aimed at persuasion through mechanisms of inclusion.

Regarding the analysis of the *logos*, and following Toulmin (2003 [1958]), the claim in Democrat's argumentation has to do with the defense of immigrants by drafting new policies in their favor. The evidence is shown through reasons connected to economic improvement and the welfare state; and the warrant is put across by explaining financial results, numbers, and figures to the audience; while the backing results from the ideas confronting Republicans vs. Democrats and the tension between the statements affirming that things could have been better should Republicans have listened to Democrats' ideas when they first were in office. The rebuttal is directed to the problems that are not yet solved and are explained as a direct consequence of the mismanagement of the Other while being in office. Finally, the qualifiers help increase the level of conviction.

In Obama's speeches, we can point out the use of metaphors, comparisons, the mention of the American dream and the individual stories and efforts, and the existence of a "broken immigration system". He describes Americans essentially as one nation that searches for integrity, inclusion, and freedom. The problem presented to the audience arises from whether the government should implicate the whole country in such matters or not. Democrat leaders, and Obama specifically, underline the importance of taking a leading role in immigration matters, taking care of immigrants, and providing the audience with information related to financial results. They also include humanitarian reasons, such as the fact that the immigrants are just like Americans in the past and must be helped. This does not mean that they are unaware of the "problems" that can be brought about by some immigrants. Still, they try to open borders to provide a significant part of them with an opportunity

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("And by supporting an earned path to citizenship, I am not saying that illegal entry should go unpunished;" "[…] In approaching immigration reform, I believe that we must enact tough, practical reforms that ensure and promote the legal and orderly entry of immigrants into our country" (OBAMA, May 23, 2007).

Whereas Obama uses the personal tone so that the potential receiver gets closer to the political scenario and can see himself individually in the speech, Biden talks more widely about the entire population and the Democratic and the Republican (Trump's) stances as two very differentiated schemes of the government. He draws a line between the Republicans and Trump, who seems isolated as one individual separated from the group following Biden's pragmatic devices. Throughout the speech, the metaphors of the evil (they) and the heroes (we) are displayed. From this cognitive context, *logos* is demonstrated using figures and numbers to reveal the logical pieces of evidence of his speech. He underlines the differences between his government project and that of the Republicans, reflecting on the *ethos* of Trump to highlight the strength of his statements. From this point of view, one could argue that Biden's argumentation and functional *ethos* are shown over the speech as the counterperson of Trump. His logical scheme pattern shows "what must be done," which the receiver infer by valuing what the Other (in Biden's speech, referring to Trump) is not doing or has not done so far. Finally, *pathos* is used through compassion, love, and emotion; and *ethos* is personified in the image of the Democratic stance, not his personal one. However, there are several examples of his identity in the speeches. Still, the primary spectrum of his words is based on affirmations uttered on behalf of the political party he is representing. His language might be descriptive, comparative, exemplificative, inclusive, and metaphorical, but also practical and plain, even repetitive when his goal is to make a statement utterly clear to the potential audience.

With regards to the vocabulary and lexical selection, the two Democrats tend to simplify the register of words so that the whole population can easily understand them –without depriving the text of the metaphoric, poetic function of language, which in the case of Obama is highly developed– and to foster the use of sentiments and feelings. For instance, Obama's most used words are those which have to do with personal pronouns ("we," "us," "they," "them," "you") and other lexical choices which depend on time ("time," "soon," "now," "today") when he wants to underline that the moment for change about the country's immigration policies has arrived, and also on words that he uses both in *logos* ("immigration," "reform," "immigrants," "country," "economy," "business") and in *pathos* ("America," "comprehension," "folks," "chance," "lives," "opportunities," "principles,"

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"women," "citizenship," "history"). Biden's lexical choices relates to the in-group and out-group line of confrontation ("they," "us," "Biden administration," "we," "Trump" – in the speech pronounced on July 11, 2019, for instance, he uses the reference to Trump up to 45 times), to words concerning the principles of the nation and the rights of citizens ("democracy," "democratic," "American," "global," "security," "human rights," "values"), and to the different issues that he criticizes about Trump's Administration before providing the alternative that he claims he would foster if he was to be elected President ("war," "leadership," "restoration of values," "future," "economy," "power," "climate change," etc.).

Obama and Biden use the metaphoric function not only to get closer to their audience and to make the information easily understood but also to implement the use of persuasion (*pathos*) through personal stories and other literary techniques (comparisons, for instance, to contrast the positive aspects of the self and the negative aspects of the Other) that are linked to the image of the orator (*ethos*) and the logical arguments that eventually convince the audience to vote in their favor. Examples of this function can be seen when they include metaphors about war, health, leadership, strength, etc. The three elements of the Aristotelian rhetoric are united through the speaker's selection of words. Mostly, these two politicians rely on the positive representation of the self against the negative picture of the other, underlining the differentiation between, in terms of Van Dijk (1995), the ingroup (we) and the outgroup (the Other, him being Trump, in the case of Biden's speeches (July 11, 2019): "[Trump is] Dangerously incompetent and incapable of leadership").

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