

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

DƯƠNG THỊ LAN HƯƠNG

**A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
THE US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES**

Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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(A SUMMARY)**

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Supervisor: **Assoc.Prof.Dr.LUÙ QUÝ KHƯÔNG**

Examiner 1: **Assoc.Prof. Dr. Phan Văn Hòa**

Examiner 2: **Assoc.Prof. Trương Viên, Ph.D**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

In all communicative means that human beings possess, language is the only means satisfying all the needs of humans. It becomes a communicative tool because it has existed along with humans up to now. This communicative mean is gradually added and perfected basing on the evolutionary history of human beings, the trend and the tendency of the cultural contact that it has had from the old day until now. Language is a means to transform information, share emotions, thoughts - language is the bridge among humans and it is also the tool used to stream out the tone of emotions. Moreover, language has power in the fields of economic, law and especially in politics. When we mention this field, we immediately think about the negotiations, debates between the parties, presidential candidates in the presidential election. Recently, it is the debates between Obama and Romney-the two US Presidential candidates for the US Presidential election 2012. This event attracted a huge number of viewers - an event with a big influence not only in the USA but also all over the world. In the past, there were some unforgettable debates in the history of the US Presidential Debates such as the debates between Kenedy and Nixon (1960), Bush and Clinton (1992), Bush and Gore (2000) and so on. These debates were conducted by the masters in eloquence. They are famous persons who have big influence on US politics. They used suitable words, logical arguments and friendly confidently gestures to express their point of view in front of thousands of citizens who were directly watching them without any inference.

I realize that many interesting things that need to be studied in presidential debates. Therefore, I chose the US Presidential Debates as the subject area for my master thesis. The research is intended to look

over the layout, the lexical, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices used in these US Presidential Debates.

I do this research with the hope that its results will contribute to the teaching and learning of the English speaking skill and make us well-prepared for defending our ideas in a persuasive way.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

The study aims at conducting a discourse analysis of the US presidential debates in terms of the layout, lexical features, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices. It is carried out to help us know how to make a good debate and thus contributing to establishing an effective language communication.

1.2.2. Objectives

This study intended to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify and describe the layout of the US Presidential Debates
- To find out the lexical features of the US Presidential Debates.
- To find out syntactic features of the US Presidential Debates.
- To find out cohesive devices used in the US Presidential Debates.
- To find out stylistic devices used in the US Presidential Debates.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is undeniable that the US Presidential Debates are worth studying. It helps us use language in an effective way in daily conversations as well as in formal conversation. Enhancing our public speaking skill and creating a persuasive debate in order to show our important role in public, our voice becomes more powerful in life, and makes listeners feel interesting, attracting in each our saying. Therefore, our communicative ability will be improved. The awareness of linguistic features of this kind of discourse will not only help students know about the linguistic features of discourse used in the US Presidential Debates and teachers apply more effective

methods to teach speaking skills but also those who are interested in this field will also find this study beneficial for them.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the above aims and objectives, the following research questions should be put forward:

1. What is the layout of the US presidential debates?
2. What are the lexical and syntactic features of the US presidential debates?
3. What are the cohesive devices used in the US presidential debates?
4. What are the stylistic devices used in the US presidential debates?

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although paralinguistic factors such as speed, intonation, loudness, juncture, etc. and extra-linguistic such as facial expression, eye contact, postures, movement, etc. are of great importance in contributing to the success of a presidential debate, they are not the thrust of the research. Therefore, the research is just limited to the analysis of the layout, lexical features, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices of the US presidential debates from 1988 to 2012.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

A part from the abstract, the appendix, the references, the thesis is composed of:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical background

Chapter 3: Research design and procedure.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE RESEARCH

Discourse analysis is the study of the relationship between language and context in which it is used. There are many scholars who were interested in this field. Halliday and Hassan (1976) drew attention to the linguistic relations that make the text hang together. This subject is concerned with the relations between two units (sentences, paragraphs, etc.) and the particles that serve as formal markers of those relations. They identify the various cohesive devices that are used to refer anaphorically or cataphorically to entities in a text to establish logical relations in the text. They study intersentential text cohesion and identify two types of cohesion: grammatical cohesion (including reference, identification, ellipsis and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (repetition and collocation); Brown and Yule (1983) concentrated on questions relating to reference and to the general issues of coherence and relevance; Cook (1989) studied spoken and written language in its social and psychological context. Discourse analysis explains the relevant theory and applies it to classroom activities designed to improve students' discourse skills. The teacher is then shown how these activities may be further developed in specific teaching situations, etc. have devoted a lot of intellect and energy to this complex domain. However, most of their works are confined to providing a systemic theory concerning Discourse Analysis. Crombie (1985) indicates some semantic relations in discourse. According to him, we communicate to one another through language not by means of individual words, clauses or sentences, but by means of coherent stretches of interrelated clauses and sentences in relation to the linguistic and situational context. Cohesion, Coherence, Theme -

Rheme structure, information structure, frame, schemata, role of context, genre, register, etc are the main domains in their theory. Even though there hasn't been a consensus on the conceptions relating to these, to some extent, such works equips us with a quite relatively satisfactory theoretical base to investigate language in use. Yule (1996) points out that discourse analysis is the study of language use with the reference to the social and psychological factors that influence communication. He also mentions the pragmatics of discourse. Whereas, Nunan has introduced us a number of key concepts in the field of discourse and discourse analysis: text-refer to any written record of a communicative event and discourse-refer to the interpretation of the communicative event in context. He asserts that discourse analysis involves the analysis of the language in use. Halliday (1989) has mentioned to cohesion in discourse, namely the concept of cohesion and cohesive devices.

In Vietnam, there are a variety of linguists have made every effort to embark on pursuing and applying this new approach into Vietnamese. A part from the linguist Tran Ngoc Them (1999) made a detailed and systematic analysis of cohesive devices in Vietnamese texts. Diep Quang Ban (2003) gave us a more overall view of text and utterance especially above the sentence level. The fact that more master theses and doctoral dissertations relating to Discourse Analysis such as Phan Van Hoa (1998) investigates into the conjunction as means of cohesion , Bui Thi Ngoc Anh (2001) explores English linking words expressing the reason – result relation in discourse and makes a comparison with the Vietnamese equivalents with a strong focus on the syntactic, semantic, semantic features and the discourse functions that these linking words perform or Ngo Thi Thanh Mai (2007) investigates some discourse features of political speeches in English and Vietnamese in term of thematisation, cohesion and speech acts , etc. have been carried out proves that this approach draws much

attention from many researchers.

However, to the best of my knowledge, up to now there is no evidence that any research on investigating discourse features of US Presidential Debates has been done. Hence, “*A Discourse Analysis of the US Presidential Debates*” would be chosen and conducted with the aim of contributing a minor part to fulfill the overall picture of this large field.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Theory of Discourse

a. Discourse

According to Brown and Yule [21, p.iii] *Discourse is language in use*, for communication discourse is a language unit which has meaning, unity and purpose and discourse can be constituted by the combination of many sentences

b. Discourse and Text

There has been much confusion in the literature regarding the distinction between discourse analysis and text analysis which is resulted from the misunderstanding between two terms, discourse and text [Garrido & Joaquín, 10].

In summary, it can be concluded that text analysis only concentrates on studying the ways that speech are made with the use of grammars and vocabularies while discourse analysis pays attention to analyzing not only the ways that speech are formed but also the ways and situations in which they are used.

c. Spoken and Written Discourse

Spoken and written discourses are the analyses of spoken and written languages; the differences between these two language types have created the distinctions between two discourses [Michelle & Youngjoo, 21].

According to Paltridge [23], spoken and written discourses have differences in seven main aspects: grammatical intricacy, lexical

density, nominalization, explicitness, contextualization, spontaneity, and repetition, hesitations, and redundancy.

d. Formal and Informal Discourse

In order to classify discourses as formal or informal, people often base on *situations, purposes, and language use in the discourses*. In formal discourses, the author often use academic vocabulary and standard grammar while in informal discourse, daily-used languages are preferred. Because of this characteristic, formal discourse is always more difficult to understand than the informal ones. Commonly, writing is more formal than speech but in many cases, spoken discourses like election campaign and commercial or political negotiations are considered as formal while written discourses like letters between friends or family members are informal ones. When analyzing formal and informal discourses, the analysts often study about the language use, context, purpose, content, and grammar.

e. Discourse Analysis

In the view of Brown and Yule [1], they recommend that we should adopt a compromise position which suggests that discourse analysis, on the one hand, includes “*the study of linguistic forms and the regularities of their contribution*” and on the other hand, involves a consideration of the “*general principles of interpretation*” by which people normally make sense of what they hear and read.

2.2.2. Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion are two common concepts used in discourse analysis to clarify the reliability of a discourse. They are two separate notions but many people often have the misunderstanding that they are the same because of some similarities in their pronunciation and meaning. As a result, it is difficult to separate these terms. In this part, the author will provide some distinctions of coherence and cohesion as well as their roles in discourse analysis.

a. Coherence

b. Cohesion

2.2.3. Stylistics

a. Styles and Stylistics

Stylistic is a unique feature in the writing or speech of certain author, basing on the stylistic of a document, readers could easily guess its author(s). Stylistics is strongly affected by the personalities and background of the writers and each writer tends to create their unique stylistic to differentiate with the others. Style is a wider concept than stylistics; while stylistics only refers to the ways of expressing ideas or use words or evidences, style has wider application when it contains the ways of organizing the writing. Freeman [8] defines style as “the correspondence between thought and expression”; it means that style is the ways that the authors use to express their ideas and thought.

b. Classification of Stylistic Devices

2.2.4. The Notion of Debates

a. Debate

According to Hornby[36], debate is defined as “*a formal discussion of an issue at public meeting or in a parliament. In a debate two or more speakers express opposing views and then there is often a vote on the issue*”.

b. The US Presidential Debate

In each presidential election in the United State, it is traditional that the candidates for the presidential position, who are almost the members of two largest parties in the US parliamentary, Democratic Party and the Republican Party, join in a debate in order to gain the support of voters. In the debate, those candidates always discuss and make the arguments about the most controversial issues of the time and it is common that the success of candidates is decided by their performance in those debates. In the debates, the candidates try to

persuade the audience that they are the most suitable person for the presidential position and if they become president, they will solve all the controversial issues of the time. They will find out the ways to prove the voting for them is the right decision of constituencies because they will have suitable policies to promote the national economic development, improve the living standards of citizens, and solve social issues. While debates are not constitutionally mandated, it is often considered as an inevitable part in an election process; it is even considered as the most important phase in the election campaign of candidates. The main target for these debates are undecided voters; those who usually do not have any political ideology or party. With the persuasion of candidates, those neutral voters will decide their favor candidates and vote for them.

Presidential debates are held after the political parties decide their representative candidate to join in the race for the presidential position. The candidate will show off their presentation skills and eloquence ability in front of many audiences at a large hall, a university or a square. A debate does not follow any certain formats; the candidates could receive the questions from journalists, audiences, or even from their competitors. However, the most common content of a debate is the achievement of the candidates and their contribution to nation and community in the past and their commitments with the controversial issues of the time.

2.3. SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the previous studies as well as presented all the information relating to discourse, discourse analysis, coherence and cohesion, stylistics, and debate and the US presidential debates. After finishing this chapter, I have collected all necessary information to make a discourse analysis about the US presidential debates to find out the ways and vehicles that the US presidential candidates used to win in the presidential elections.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. OVERVIEW

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In brief, to conduct this study, we use the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches and a number of the above-mentioned methods. Depending on the goal of the thesis, the descriptive method is the dominant method used in the thesis.

3.3. SAMPLES

In this study, the US presidential debates selected for the analysis are both in its sound form and written form downloaded from some websites on the Internet. Ninety debates were collected for analysis. These debates are those debates between US presidential candidates in the presidential elections from 1988 to 2012. Most of the data chosen have the length of 90 minutes.

3.4. INSTRUMENTS

Mostly we use Google tool. Besides, I use some techniques of searching, copying, downloading by the computer tools for storing, printing, accessing and backing up: Microsoft Words, Microsoft Excels, Adobe Reader and so on. These instruments allow me quickly, easily gather samples and easily analyze data.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION

In my thesis, all of the data were taken from official websites; with the aim of enhancing the accuracy and reality of the source of the data.

The data used in this thesis were from the websites:

- <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/topic/PresidentialDebates>
- <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PresidentialCan>
- <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PresidentialCand>
- <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PresidentialCandi>
- <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/PresidentialCandid>

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected will be mainly analyzed on the basis of the following points:

- Layout: We divided each debate into some parts basing on their contents. After that we examine each part and describe them. It is clear that the overall layout of a debate will be of three main parts: an introduction, a body section and a conclusion section.

- Lexical features: We examined semantic features and the choice of the vocabularies which frequently used in US Presidential Debates.

- Syntactic features: We examined which sentence structures are frequently used in US Presidential Debates.

- Cohesion: We examine the frequency of the use of lexical and grammatical cohesion as cohesive devices, how many percents each group takes up.

- Stylistic devices: We examined the use of words or phrases and analyze them on the base of their frequency following with Galperin's framework.

Conclusion was drawn from the above analysis results.

3.7. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The research work is carried out with many steps as follows:

First of all, it's necessary for me to collect and analyze the data about the theoretical framework.

Secondly, I searched, downloaded, stored, and watched 19 US presidential debates.

Next, I started analyzing the data from presidential debates to investigate the layout, lexical features and syntactic structures, cohesion and stylistic devices.

After that, the result of the above analysis was discussed, and then I made some suggestions for teaching and learning English as well as for making persuasive debate.

Finally, the rest activities to complete the research such as

writing the first draft, revising, and submitting were done.

3.8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The significance of any research depends on the validity and reliability of the results coming from the research. Therefore, the valid and reliable data plays an extremely critical role. This research ensures these requirements due to the following facts:

The very first thing is carefully-prepared procedure. All of the stages in the research are well-prepared and carefully-carried out to minimize the possible mistakes.

Secondly, 19 US Presidential Debates are authentic. I also paid strong attention to watch, take note, and analyze important details. The data gathered was totally reliable and valid.

Thirdly, it was due to the fact that the data collection instrument used was observation, the influence of other factors like attitudes of other people was reduced compared other two instruments.

Thus, the validity and reliability of the obtained results are quite satisfactory.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. LAYOUT OF THE USPDs

4.1.1. Introduction

4.1.2. Main body

4.1.3. Conclusion

4.2. LEXICAL FEATURES OF THE USPDs

4.2.1. The Use of Hidden Bias Words or Phrases

It can be noted that hidden bias is considered as a subclass of doublespeak.

a. The Positive Hidden Bias

Positive hidden bias is defined as to intensify or show on own good and downplay or hide own bad.

b. Negative Hidden Bias

Negative bias is considered to intensify or emphasize other's bad and downplay or criticize other's good.

Table 4.3: Frequency of Hidden Bias

Hidden Bias	Occurrence	Percentage
Negative hidden bias	134	25.19 %
Positive hidden bias	398	74.81 %
Total	532	100

Looking at the above table, it should be highlighted that they tend to use the positive hidden bias more frequently than the negative one. The use of biased words and phrases can raise the patriotism in each listener or viewer, therefore, results in increasing the possibility of winning.

4.2.2 The Use of Word as a Propaganda Language

Propaganda is a form of communication aimed at influencing the attitude of the community toward some cause or position by presenting only one side of an argument.

Table 4.4 : Frequency of Propaganda Words

Propaganda Words	Occurrence	(%)
Justice	45	4.33
Freedom	39	3.75
Liberty	14	1.35
War	496	47.74
Terror	213	20.50
Successful	196	18.86
Free	36	3.47
Total	1039	100

Looking at the above table, the word "**War**" has been the most frequently used word as propaganda word in the US Presidential debates for the period from 1988 to 2012, followed by "**Terror**".

4.2.3 Personal Pronouns Used in the USPDs.

Table 4.5: The Use of Subjective Objective Personal Pronouns

The use of subjective personal pronouns	Occurrence	%	The use of objective personal pronouns	Occurrence	%
I	6707	28.24%	Me	684	12.91%
We	6118	25.76%	Us	551	10.40%
You	4161	17.52%	You	2012	37.98%
He	1216	5.12%	Him	76	1.43%
She	220	0.92%	Her	114	2.15%
It	3198	13.47%	It	1063	20.06%
They	2128	8.97%	Them	798	15.07%
Total	23748	100%	Total	5298	100%

4.3 SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF THE USPDS

4.3.1. Voice

In terms of voice, there are two types of voice that usually occur in English: *active voice* and *passive voice*.

In this study, there are 434 sentences in the passive voice were found from 12757 sentences in the total of the data, and thus the passive sentences only occupy nearly 3,4%. It seems that presidential candidates avoid using the passive voice in order to minimize the ambiguity and the misunderstanding.

We can see from the figure, the active sentences account 96,6 %. It outnumber the passive voice. This is likely the purpose of the presidential candidates is more simple, direct and powerful.

In conclusion, the active voice is popular used in the USPDS to show the active role in the debates.

4.3.2. Sentence Types

There are four main sentence types used in the presidential debates including simple sentence, complex sentence, compound sentence and compound-complex sentence.

a. *Simple Sentences*

b. Complex Sentences

c. Compound Sentences

Table 4.6: Frequency of Sentence Types

Sentence Types	Occurrence	Percentage
Simple sentences	3901	47.92%
Complex sentences	1577	19.37%
Compound sentences	1698	20.86%
Compound-complex sentences	965	11.85%
Total	8141	100%

4.4. COHESION AND COHESIVE DEVICES

Cohesion is one of the most distinguishing features of a text. Connected through cohesive devices, linguistic elements can be combined into an organic whole. Therefore, cohesion is generally regarded as the "visible network" of a text. Cohesion can be achieved through grammatical devices and lexical devices.

4.4.1. Repetition

The repetition of important words or structure is one important factor making texts coherence. It should be noted that the candidates in giving the political speeches usually use the "list of three" method to emphasize what they are saying.

Table 4.7: Frequency of Repetition

The use of repetition	Occurrence	Percentage
Word repetition	122	28.18%
Phrase repetition	213	49.19%
Structure repetition	98	22.63%
Total	433	100%

4.4.2. Conjunctions

Cohesive device is considered as the part of speech that can be used to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. Some of the common conjunctions found in the USPDs are "and", "but", "for", "or", "nor", "yet", and "so" which are considered as the elements of a coordinate structure.

a. Additive Conjunctions

b. Adversative Conjunctions

c. Causal Conjunctions

d. Temporal Conjunctions

4.4.3. Reference

Table 4.10: The Use of Reference

Reference	Occurrence	Percentage
Personal pronoun	29046	44.37%
Possessive pronoun	19425	29.68%
Demonstrative pronoun	16986	25.95%
Total	65457	100%

4.5. STYLISTIC DEVICES

4.5.1. Anaphora

Anaphora is defined as the rhetorical term for the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses.

4.5.2 Allusion

Allusion is a reference to an object or circumstance that has occurred or existed in an external context.

4.5.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis (so called elliptical construction) refers to the omission of a word or words. It refers to constructions in which words are left out of a sentence but the sentence can still be understood. Ellipsis helps us avoid a lot of redundancy.

4.5.4. Climax

Climax refers to a figure of speech in which words, phrases, or clauses are arranged in order of increasing importance, with the most important arguments coming last.

4.5.5. Euphemism

The term euphemism refers to polite, indirect expressions which replace words and phrases considered harsh and impolite or suggest

something unpleasant. Simply put, the Euphemism is an idiomatic expression which loses its literal meanings and refers to something else in order to hide its unpleasantness.

4.5.6. Dysphemism

Dysphemism is the use of a harsh, more offensive word instead of one considered less harsh. Dysphemism is often contrasted with euphemism. Dysphemism is generally used to shock or offend.

4.5.7. Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical question is usually defined as any question asked for a purpose other than to obtain the information the question asks.

The following table will illustrate the distribution of *Stylistic Devices* in the USPDs:

Table 4.11: Types of Stylistic Devices.

Stylistic Devices	Occurrence	Percentage
Anaphora	356	17,1
Allusion	198	9,5
Ellipsis	452	21,7
Climax	228	10,9
Euphenism	180	8,7
Dysphemism	269	13
Rhetorical question	396	19,1
Total	2079	100%

It should be noted that two groups or parties tend to use ellipsis - 21,7 % to avoid a lot of redundancy and the **rhetorical question** to make ideas more and more effective and show the attitude as well as sentiments of the speakers.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter deals with the conclusions drawn from the

findings of previous chapter. In this chapter, the author will briefly summarize these findings to draw the conclusions on the discourse analysis of USPDs for the period from 1988 to 2012. In addition, I also mention the implications, limitations of the research that I have been conducted. I also provide some suggestions for further research on this issue.

I will draw the conclusions on the main five parts of the findings chapter. The conclusions on the debate layout, the lexical features, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices will be drawn as follows:

The structure of the USPDs must be in accordance with the applicable regulations of the Commission on Presidential Debates. Therefore, the candidates from Democrats and Republicans have the same period of time to give their speeches to persuade the audiences, manipulate the listeners' thought and perceptions and make the listeners vote for them. After the introduction part, each candidate has two minutes only to present his or her ideas towards a certain subject or issue provided by the moderator. So the possibility of winning is distributed equally for each group. In this part, the choice of word is a key for the success. Because of the limited time, each candidate must choose the appropriate words, the biased words to influence people. The use of words make listeners pay their attentions to the speeches and be impressed by the speeches. The open discussion part is quite interesting. The candidates can debate each other to protect his or her ideas or to object the others' ideas. The candidates who have logical arguments with the smart choice of words will be much more highly appreciated. In this part, the candidates must be very careful about what he or she is talking about, because they may be objected by other candidates. In addition, the candidates also have to listen to their opponents when they are delivering their speeches because there may be some points that the

candidates disagree and may take advantage from opposing the opponent's ideas. In the conclusion part, the candidates can use the language in the informal way because it is time to relax and give thanks to the audience for taking time to listen to them.

The lexical features of the USPDs: It should be noted that the candidates tend to use the biased words or phrases frequently to influence people's thought. Many biased words and phrases have been found in the USPDs from 1988 to 2012. These words help the candidates to emphasize and put stress on the subjects they want to target. The use of the biased words and phrases also target to raise the patriotism in each listener or viewer, make them feel proud of being an American. In fact, many positive adjectives are used to describe the characteristics of Americans in the debates. It should be noted that through the statistics of the frequent use of biased words and phrases, the Republicans tend to use these biased words more frequently than the Democrats. These words are used frequently by McCain who always awards the Americans with the best descriptive words and phrases. George W. Bush also used these biased words frequently, much more than John Kerry from the Democrat Party. Indeed, Barack Obama used biased words and phrases very rarely. He usually focused on the questions and tried to make them clear rather than attaching much importance to the words and phrases to influence listeners. McCain used these biased words and phrases to emphasize the subjects that he wanted to target and oppose Obama, such as the troops on the line, the abortion and many other issues. The use of hidden bias approach really works out in manipulating listener's thought and changing their perceptions towards a certain topic. It is the art of using language to win in the USPDs. In addition, another outstanding issue in the use of language in US Presidential debates is the use of words as a propaganda language to achieve a certain goal of speakers. George

W. Bush is considered as the typical example for this. He insisted on using the military force to bring the “justice” and spread the “freedom” to and for the United States. However, the listeners should not be confused between the so-called “justices” with the occupation of another country, generating crime for the innocent civilians in other countries with the beautiful name of war on terrorism. Above are two main findings from the lexical features of the USPDs over years. It should be noted that each candidate has his own way of using language, has its own way of choosing words or phrases to express his ideas. However, something in common among the speeches of candidates here is the use of language to achieve a certain goal and influence people’s thought as well as make listeners vote for them. The last feature in lexical features is personal pronouns. It has two kinds of personal pronouns: The objective personal pronouns and the subjective personal pronouns. In the USPDs, “I” - 28,24% and “You” - 25,76% are used popularly to come across as good and responsible, to make the candidate prove himself in a positive way and help highlight the personal qualities and characteristics. The candidates want to become the role model and express his willingness to take action immediately.

The syntactic features of the USPDs: In terms of voice, there are two types of voice that usually occur in English: *active voice* and *passive voice*. However, in the debates, active voice occupy up to 96,6 % because the presidential candidates want to minimize the ambiguity and the misunderstanding. Besides, this is also likely the purpose of the presidential candidates is more simple, direct and powerful. The second one is about sentence types: in the debates, they usually use *formal* because the candidates must express the formality of the speeches to persuade the listeners and viewers towards a certain subject or topic. There are four main sentence types used in the

presidential debates including simple sentence, complex sentence, compound sentence and compound-complex sentence. The candidates prefer to use the simple sentence with 47, 92% to express their ideas to the complex sentence. It is easy to understand this because of the limited time for each session of the debate. And Compound-complex sentences are used the least only 11, 85%.

Cohesive devices used in the USPDs: repetition of words or phrases to emphasize on a certain subject or thing, the conjunctions to connect the sentences, to link ideas or speeches, reference to connect ideas. The repetition of important words or structure is one important factor making texts coherence. It should be noted that the candidates in giving the political speeches usually use the “*list of three*” method to emphasize what they are saying. The list of three means the repeat in three times of prepositions, words or names in a sentence. This has been considered as one of the most effective techniques in giving the political speeches when the candidates want to highlight something to manipulate the audience’s thought and perception. It should be noted that the phrase repetition tends to be used most frequently, accounting for 49.19%, followed by the word repetition. Some of the common conjunctions found in the USPDs are “*and*”, “*but*”, “*for*”, “*or*”, “*nor*”, “*yet*”, and “*so*” which are considered as the elements of a coordinate structure. In the USPDs in the period from 1988 to 2012, many conjunctions are used to connect the sentences in each debate which helps candidates to link their ideas and speeches. Especially, “Additive conjunctions” take up 53, 40%. The reference includes the three classes of personal pronouns, possessive determiners (usually called possessive adjectives) and possessive pronouns. The personal pronoun with 44,37% is the most frequently used by candidates, followed by possessive pronoun only 25,95%.

Stylistics is used in the USPDs. It should be noted that the presidential candidates tend to use the rhetorical question – 19,1% to make ideas more and more effective and show the attitude as well as sentiments of the speakers, it is considered as one of the most frequently used stylistic devices in debates. Besides, there are still some other devices used such as: anaphora, euphemism, dysphemism, rhetorical question, ellipsis, climax.

In conclusion, politics has always been one of the subjects where people use all sorts of different words and styles to convince people that their choices are the right choices. It isn't surprising that one of the easiest places to find deductive arguments and fallacies is during one of the largest broadcasted and viewed political events, the Presidential Debates. This dissertation deals with the analysis of discourse of USPDs for the period from 1988 to 2012 to highlight the importance of using language as the effective tool to win the debate. We also draw the conclusion that the political language and language devices used in the presidential debates are also different. These words make the listeners sympathize, raise the awareness of a certain subject, raise the patriotism in each listener. Simply put the use of language in political speeches in general and US Presidential debates in particular may influence the people's thoughts and change their mind. In this way "the art of rhetoric changes the way we vote" holds true.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

After the research, I hope that my thesis will bring a little bit contribution into the process of English language teaching and learning.

For people who are interested in the public speaking field: One of the permanent elements of American election campaigns have become presidential debates. It is a great tool efficiently used by both sides of the debate to present yourself in the best light, while your opponent struggles while the whole country is watching live. Debates,

since they came into American homes via television, started to raise a lot of excitement among the spectators, and sometimes they started to turn the tide in favor of one of the candidates. But what are presidential debates? It is a time when two candidates for president usually from the two largest parties, currently the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the USA engage in a debate. The topics discussed in the debate are often the most controversial issues of the time, it is said that elections have been nearly decided by these debates. The main point for doing these debates is to get all of those undecided voters to vote. Debates are a great chance to test one thing in a future president, his ability to quickly respond to questions from different subjects and see how well a candidate can handle the heat that is on him. Also, debates check how well a future president behaves under pressure and ability to articulate some thought at least vaguely connected to the question while convincing the viewers that he is both someone they can trust and serious. As we can see, the choice of words or phrase can change the way the listener vote. Therefore, the use of language is very important in the political speeches in general and in presidential debate in particular. Simply put, the use of language may have major impacts on the election results because the listeners may be persuaded and change their mind in the last minute.

For teachers: The findings provide general features of a debate and it will help them a lot in giving some tips in making a presentation persuasively and impressively as well as in writing. Especially, it has a big contribution in teaching speaking skill. Moreover, with the awareness of lexical, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices, it is a good foundation for the teachers to help students make a smooth and logical debate or speech.

For students, they can learn some basic discourse features such as layout, lexical, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices. They will get the simplest definitions of these features to apply them in public speaking skill in order to attain the master in using language correctly, suitability and quickly. Besides, it also contributes an important part in the process of writing.

In conclusion, the findings of this study have important implications for future practice and have a lot contribution to English learning and teaching in general and the development of language use in particular.

5.3. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The most outstanding limitation of this dissertation that the difference in the linguistic study in English and Vietnamese, generating the differences in the discourse analysis of the US Presidential debates. However, I make every effort to find out the common standards to make focus on to increase the validity and reliability of the dissertation. In addition, the resources for the videos of the US Presidential Debates are obtained from the website of <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/topic/PresidentialDebates> and the videos from Youtube.com. Therefore, it is unavoidable for the typing error in the transcripts so some of the words may be not exact. However, I also try to obtain the transcripts from different sources to increase the reliability of the transcripts and provide the appropriate discourse analysis of each debate basing on the transcripts and videos.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I would like to offer some suggestions for further research:

1. A study on linguistic features of the US Presidential Debates.
2. A discourse analysis of the US Vice - Presidential Debates.
3. A study on rhetoric of the US Presidential Debates.