

## Analyzing Rhetorical Patterns in Donald Trump's Speech: A Sociolinguistic Approach

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**Abstract.** Language plays a crucial role in shaping political perception, especially when used strategically through rhetorical devices. Previous studies have often focused on the structural aspects of political language, but many tend to overlook how rhetoric is emotionally received and interpreted by audiences with different ideological backgrounds. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how Donald Trump's speeches apply rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos, and how these appeals generate different public reactions. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that focuses on interpreting meaning and persuasive strategies rather than measuring them numerically. Five major campaign and presidential speeches delivered between 2015 and 2021 were purposively chosen based on their rhetorical importance and audience impact. The data were collected from speech transcripts, audience reactions, and online comments, then analyzed using Herrick's (2015) rhetorical theory and Garrett's (2010) language attitude theory. The analysis went through three stages: data reduction, classification of rhetorical appeals, and interpretation of audience responses. The data were examined manually through careful reading and interpretation to maintain consistency and ensure the credibility and replicability of the research. The findings show that emotionally charged expressions trigger strong emotional and behavioral responses from Trump's supporters, while also provoking skepticism and opposition from his critics. Ethos-based statements strengthen perceived credibility and loyalty even without factual evidence, and logos-based arguments simplify complex political issues into clear and relatable messages that shape public perception. In conclusion, Trump's rhetorical strategies work not only as persuasive tools but also as means of identity building and ideological polarization. By combining theoretical perspectives and real audience responses, this study highlights political rhetoric as both a linguistic force and a sociocultural influence.

**Keywords:** Donald Trump; ethos pathos logos; language attitude; political rhetoric; sociolinguistics

### Introduction

In this era, language is moving massively. If we still consider it only as a communication tool, that is no longer relevant. Regarding today's sensation, popular figures gain public engagement by using their language ability. According to According to (Dilfuza, 2025), language functions not merely as a means of communication but as a sociolinguistic system shaped by social context and ideological influence. She explains that discursive markers in speech reflect the speaker's social identity and the dynamics of interaction within society. This perspective shows that language evolves through social interaction and cultural influence rather than individual rational thought. Education, environment, and media exposure directly determine how language develops and how meaning is constructed in public discourse. Similarly, (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025) emphasize that sociolinguistics examines the inseparable relationship between language and society, noting that linguistic behavior reflects power relations, cultural norms, and identity. This connection highlights why language analysis in politics must consider not just what is said, but also how and why it is said in a particular social context.

In the political world, persuasive strategies play a crucial role in creating a good impression in society.

Politicians often use emotional and hopeful speech to win the support of the association. In general, the more trained a political figure is in rhetoric and dialectics, the more easily they can win the hearts of voters. As (Hatirn et al., 1989) explain, language is not a neutral medium; it is a tool for challenging power. A politician who is an expert at dialectics understands how to use it strategically to hide domination and influence public opinion. In this era, language has become a strong tool of control capable of influencing the public both emotionally and psychologically. Supporting this view Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012), argue that discourse is inherently rhetorical because it combines language, ideology, and power in constructing public meaning. Their perspective bridges critical discourse analysis and rhetoric, showing that political speech acts as a persuasive form of ideological negotiation rather than mere communication. Furthermore, (Schedler, 2023) highlights that political polarization today is no longer only ideological but also linguistic where rhetorical strategies themselves intensify group identity and emotional division within the public sphere.

Donald Trump is among the most well-known political figures, recognized for his special rhetorical technique. He is known as an uncommon speaker because he conveyed his message in ways that challenged conventional norms that many politicians tend to avoid. Nevertheless, he successfully used this style to catch the attention of the American public. Through this rhetorical technique, he built an international reputation despite the controversy surrounding it, which eventually contributed to his popularity and served as a challenge to his political opponents. It reveals that when he had an assassination accident during his campaign, it also increased the sentiments of the United States civilians toward him. Widespread public attention followed the incident, helping him craft a positive image as an American hero who survived an assassination attempt by the enemy. Although not all Americans supported him, he secured a second term in office due to his capacity to communicate persuasively.

This investigation examines the selected speech using two primary theories: Rhetorical Theory from (Herrick, 2015) and language attitude theory (Garrett, 2010). According to Herrick (2015), rhetorical theory is the study of how language is purposefully structured to persuade, focusing on how speakers use strategic discourse to shape public thought and action. It emphasizes three core appeals: ethos, which relates to the credibility and moral character of the speaker; pathos, which engages the audience's emotions to build solidarity or stimulate specific feelings; and logos, which uses logical arguments, cause-effect reasoning, or factual claims to convince the audience. Herrick also highlights rhetoric's function in constructing social identity and maintaining ideological power structures through language. Meanwhile, Garrett's (2010) Language Attitude Theory focuses on how language is evaluated and responded to by audiences across three key dimensions: affective (emotional responses such as pride, anger, or fear), behavioral (observable actions such as applause, protests, or demonstrations), and cognitive (beliefs or judgments formed about the speaker's message or credibility). Garrett's framework is beneficial in political speech contexts where language not only conveys information but also activates social positioning and ideological alignment.

This study selects several relevant works to support the analysis. For example (Hariati & Purwarno, 2025) examines how lexical choices shape the construction of a public image. Meanwhile, (Nur & Panji, n.d. 2025) analyzes how figurative language works not just as decoration, but as a powerful persuasive instrument. The third article is by (ULUGOV, 2025) investigate how to create the speech text not only concentrate on the textual context but is must focused on how manage the audience perception, the fourth article is from (Teneva, 2025) Analyzing the Rhetorical Appeals as Manipulation Means in the Mainstream Media, this study analyse how mass media use a emotional language to emphasize the crisis energy condition in 2021-2022 to affected public opinion. Drawing on Aristotle's rhetorical theory, Teneva examines the persuasive techniques used to influence public perception. Based on the study, the author believed that The Guardian utilized linguistic strategies, including framing, syntactic structures, and lexical choices, to criticize Trump. This method represents a CDA-based media strategy designed to influence public perception and promote specific ideologies, particularly about national crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The last article was by (Wijaya & Tanto, 2023). Their study revealed that the media used linguistic strategies such as negative framing, actor

suppression, and ideological polarization to construct an image of Trump as incompetent and disconnected from the public. While their analysis provides insight into media representation, it focuses mainly on structural features and journalistic discourse. This present study seeks to extend that perspective by exploring how rhetorical appeals particularly emotional and ideological ones are received and interpreted by audiences across different sociolinguistic backgrounds.

Although those studies deliver valuable understandings into language and representation, they primarily focus on structural elements or media content and often overlook how rhetoric is received and processed emotionally by the audience. Among those studies, the approach developed by Teneva (2025) is the closest to this analysis; however, she does not connect her study with sociolinguistic theory to explain how the audience responds or aligns itself ideologically. To serve this gap, the author used (Garrett, 2010) language attitude theory to examine public responses to Donald Trump's rhetorical style. In addition, the study analyzed observed factual data of public reaction to provide a more in-depth and trustworthy understanding. This research presents a new analytical approach that utilizes two rarely used theories and offers a brief explanation of public response. A combination of these can help the author make a comprehensive analysis of how he used rhetorical strategies and how people may respond to them. The latest analyses focus just on textual parts without examining how society may react to them. The writer hopes this study will assist readers, particularly those in the fields of education, language, and politics, in gaining a better understanding of how language functions in political speech and how audiences respond to it.

## Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach within a sociolinguistic framework to explore how Donald Trump's speeches employ rhetorical strategies to influence public perception. The qualitative method is considered appropriate because this research focuses on meaning, emotion, and social interpretation rather than statistical measurement. The data of this research consist of one of Donald Trump's public speeches and audience reactions associated with it, selected purposively based on its emotional intensity and the strong public attention it received. The video was retrieved from YouTube (Fox4news, 2025) and transcribed manually to maintain contextual accuracy, including notes on vocal emphasis, repetition, and audience response. Additional data were collected from the YouTube comment section under the same video to capture public reactions in digital space and to understand how rhetorical expressions were interpreted differently by online audiences. The analysis applied Herrick's (2015) rhetorical theory particularly the appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos to identify the persuasive techniques used in the speech, while Garrett's (2010) language attitude theory was applied to interpret how audiences emotionally and cognitively responded to those rhetorical strategies. The analytical process consisted of three main stages: data reduction, where utterances containing rhetorical elements were identified; data display, where the data were categorized according to rhetorical type and audience reaction; and conclusion drawing, where the findings were interpreted to reveal how rhetorical strategies shape perception and ideological stance. To ensure validity, the researcher used data triangulation by cross-checking transcripts, comparing interpretations with related studies, and reviewing multiple recordings of the speech. All analyses were carried out manually through close reading and categorization to preserve contextual depth and interpretive accuracy, ensuring that the overall procedure remained systematic and transparent.

## Result and Discussion

Rhetorical theory, as explained by Herrick (2015), identifies three fundamental types of rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos refers to the strategy where speakers show their credibility, authority, and trustworthiness to strengthen the persuasiveness of their message. It involves launching moral character and aligning oneself with shared values. Pathos focuses on appealing to the audience's emotions. Through emotional engagement, speakers aim to create solidarity, generate specific feelings, or reinforce group identity.

This type is especially relevant in political speech, where encouraging emotional connections with the audience can influence public behavior and loyalty. As (Burke, 2013) notes in his study, rhetorical style particularly emotional and tonal elements plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive and affective engagement, as stylistic nuances can heighten persuasion and emotional alignment between speaker and audience. Logos, meanwhile, depends on logical reasoning, data, cause-and-effect arguments, and factual claims. It aims to persuade by presenting structured arguments that appear rational and evidence-based. Herrick highlights that these three appeals do not function separately but often interact within a single discourse, collectively shaping how language influences public perception, social identity, and ideological power.

Building on this theoretical framework, the findings of this study demonstrate how Donald Trump's use of rhetorical strategies aligns with these core appeals and directly affects public reaction. The result confirms that rhetorical strategies can evoke strong public responses, divided along ideological lines. The phrases "We love you, Michigan" and "These people are just looking to destroy our country." These phrases generate feelings of pride and unity among supporters, while provoking anger and doubt among opponents. The contrasting public responses to these phrases highlight the effectiveness of Trump's pathos strategy in fostering group identity and emotional loyalty. Through ethos, he increased his credibility by using repetition and hyperbolic claims. The utterance "*We're going to be doing numbers that nobody's ever believed*", *We actually won it three times*," and "*We're going to be doing numbers that nobody's ever believed*" make the image of a successful and visionary leader. Those phrases triggered strong emotional support and reinforced the cognitive alignment of supporters, while being perceived as manipulative and misleading by the opposition, ultimately leading to protests and demonstrations. This similar with (Khan et al., 2021), who found that Trump's rhetorical patterns particularly in his Islamophobic tweets often relied on repetition, emotional exaggeration, and identity-based framing to consolidate in-group solidarity while discrediting opponents, showing how rhetoric becomes a mechanism for ideological influence and social polarization.

In logos, he tries to simplify complex political issues into terms that are easy to understand for everyone. for example the utterance like "Since I took office, the cost of eggs is down 87%" and "Our military suddenly has the best recruiting numbers in 30 years" utilised the numerical to strengthen his claim of their successfull. Even though weak in factual terms, those utterances create a sense of pride and validation among his supporters. Conversely, the opposition responds to it as a distraction issue that aims to hide the failed regulation. "Overall, the data reveal that Trump's rhetorical strategy succeeded in building support among his followers by shaping both emotional and cognitive responses positively for supporters and negatively for opponents. But this strategy also reinforces ideological polarization, as reflected in the real-time reaction. Researchers analyze that response through three dimensions of language attitude: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. The emphasis is that political rhetoric is not only a persuasive tool but also a social instrument for shaping identity and polarization.

**Table 1.** Classification of Rhetorical Strategies and Public Responses in Donald Trump's Speech

N	U	R	Public Response
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1	<i>We love you, Mic higa n</i>	Pat hos	A: Pride B: Applause C: Trump seen as relatable
2	<i>thes e peo ple are just loo kin g to dest roy our cou ntry</i>	Pat hos	A: Confident B: loyalty C: Trump perceived as legitimate leader
3	<i>We won it twic e. We actu ally won it thre e tim es</i>	Eth os	A: Hope B: Cheers C: Trump trusted to bring change
4	<i>we'r e goin g to be doi ng nu mbe rs that nob ody' s ever beli evered</i>	Eth os	A: admiration B: applause C: Trust in Trump's real impact
5	<i>Sin ce I too k offic e, the cost of eggs is dow n 87 %. I was</i>	Lo gos	A: Security & nationalism B: Cheers C: Trump seen as strengthening the military

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6 Aft	Lo	A: Anger & fear
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This data table shows that rhetorical utterances in Donald Trump's speeches demonstrate a persuasive pattern, which can be grouped into three major categories: Pathos, Ethos, and Logos. Each type reflects not only different rhetorical strategies but also produces specific patterns of public response calculated through affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. The classification was conducted based on type-based rhetorical analysis, focusing on how each utterance functions socially and emotionally.

The utterances are grouped as follows:

**Pathos:** Phrases such as "We love you, Michigan" and "These people are just looking to destroy our country" represent emotional appeal. These expressions primarily evoke strong affective reactions like pride or fear, followed by observable behaviors such as applause or protest, and cognitive alignment framing Trump either as a unifying figure or a polarizing threat.

**Ethos:** Utterances like "We won it twice. We actually won it three times" and "We're going to be doing numbers that nobody's ever believed" emphasize Trump's credibility and leadership. These statements generate loyalty and trust among supporters while triggering skepticism and behavioral rejection from opponents, including protests.

**Logos:** Sentences such as "Since I took office, the cost of eggs is down 87%" and "Our military suddenly has the best recruiting numbers in 30 years" show simplified logical structures using cause-effect reasoning and numerical references. These utterances stimulate positive cognitive validation among supporters, while critics interpret them as manipulation.

The following discussion elaborates on each category through detailed analysis of six selected utterances, each chosen for its representative rhetorical impact and public response pattern.

### **Pathos: Emotional Bonding**

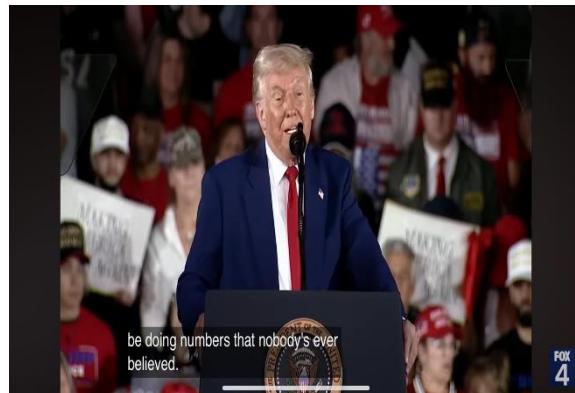


Figure 1. We love you, Michigan

The Utterance "We Love You, Michigan" Is One Of The Excerpts That Effectively Engages The Audience. Although Simple, This Phrase Has A Significant Impact On The Audience By Bridging The Gap Between The Leader And Supporters Through The Use Of "We" Rather Than "I." These Rhetorical Choices Helped Build A Close Relationship With His Supporters. The Word Love Itself Adds A Positive And Joyful Tone, Improving His Image And Captivating The Audience. This Strategy Symbolizes A Form Of Pathos, As It Appeals To The Audience's Emotions And Strengthens Trump's Identity As A Powerful Leader. Nonverbal Factors Such As Gestures, Vocal Intonation, And Facial Expressions Amplify The Emotional Resonance Of The Speech. This Aligns With (Dilfuza, 2025) View That Discursive Elements In Speech Function Not Only As Linguistic Tools But Also As Sociolinguistic Markers That Reflect Speaker Identity And Shape Interpersonal Relations Within A Community.

According To Garrett's Language Attitude Theory, Responses Fall Into Three Dimensions: Affective, Behavioral, And Cognitive. From An Affective Perspective, The Supporters Express Their Happiness Through Loud Applause, Indicating That They Feel Respected And Appreciated. The Behavioral Aspect Of Language Attitude Is Evident In Audience Actions, Including Flag-Raising And Slogan-Chanting. While In The Cognitive Dimension Most Of The Audience Asses Donald Trump As A Nationalism That Closed With A Civilian But On Opposition Side That Phrase Accept It As A Manipulative Things, They Think That Kind Rhetorical Technique Only As A Useless Strategy To Hiding The Controversial Strategies. The Protest Featuring A Sign That Read "Trump Is A Liar" Took Place Outside The Protest During Trump's Speech, Indicating Strong Opposition. This Observation Resonates With The Findings Of (Darmawan Et Al., 2025), Who Revealed That Expressive Speech Acts In Online Political Discussions Frequently Generate Polarized Emotional Reactions Such As Sarcasm And Anger, Highlighting The Affective And Behavioral Impact Of Rhetorical Language In Shaping Public Sentiment. Likewise, (Jeffries Et Al., 2025) Found That Even Subtle Linguistic Variations Influence Listener Attitudes, Reinforcing Implicit Emotional And Cognitive Biases That Shape Social Alignment.

This Phrase Uses Pathos By Establishing An Emotional Relationship With The Audience. From The View Of Language Attitude Theory, The Supporters Reacted With An Affective Response, Shown Through Applause, And Cognitively Considered Trump As A Unifying Figure. On The Other Hand, The Opposition Sees That As A Manipulative Rhetorical Move And Reacts With Anger. This Response Pattern Indicates That A Single Phrase Can Not Only Enhance Identity But Also Boost Polarization On The Opposing Side.



**Figure 2.** These people are just looking to destroy our country

The phrase "these people are just looking to destroy our country" is a pathos strategy in political rhetoric that Trump uses. The utterance deliberately crafts a sense of fear, anger, and anxiety among his supporters to stimulate negative emotions, including anger, anxiety, and fear, among his supporters by framing political opponents as a threat to America. He makes the narrative of "we versus them" that places himself as a central figure against the destructive power from outside his group.

This strategy not only brings solidarity and protection to his supporters but also strengthens his image as a heroic figure who fights against the threat to save the United States. This finding also related with (Shah, 2025) observation that political discourse often manipulates public perception by employing emotionally charged language to construct narratives of threat and heroism, thereby influencing how audiences interpret political reality on social media platforms.

According to language attitude theory, Researchers can analyze public reaction to the statement through three key dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. From an affective perspective, this utterance produces strong emotions in his supporters, especially anxiety over the perceived danger to their country. On the other hand, it triggers anger in the opposing side, who is Trump portrays as a threat to American values.

This utterance reflects behavioral dimensions, such as loud cheering and a spontaneous boost in collective spirit among the supporters. Cognitively, the supporters considered Trump's rhetoric as honest and brave in handling their political opponent, which makes them believe Trump is an assertive leader and worthy of support. In contrast to the opposition sides, that statement accepts it as a dangerous provocation that potentially polarises society. It is considered a groundless accusation to frame the opposite side who don't support Trump. The evidence takes the form of a protest poster reading "Hate won't make America great," which suggests that the opposing side perceives Trump as a hate figure due to his emotionally charged rhetoric. In this case, each group's ideological background shapes their public response: one side views it as an act of bravery, whereas the other sees it as a hateful statement that may lead to socio-political polarization.

To develop a deeper understanding, these statements exemplify pathos through the use of negative diction and significantly influence public perception. Trump demonstrates strong rhetorical skills through his ability to evoke emotional responses from audiences with contrasting ideologies; some may remain loyal, while others may strongly oppose him. As a result, the utterance functions not only as a persuasive tool but also as a dynamic reflection of the social and ideological forces shaping contemporary American society.

#### **Ethos: Credibility, Repetition, and Group Validation**



Figure 3. We won it twice. We actually won it three times

Trump repeatedly declares, "We won it twice. We actually won it three times," to construct a winning narrative and boost his image as a successful leader. He doesn't rely on factual evidence, but instead builds a perception of success through confident delivery. He uses the pronoun "we" rather than "I" to reinforce group identity and create a strong emotional bond with his audience. His repetition of "three times" adds dramatic intensity and triggers emotional responses, provoking supporters to feel proud and confident that they made the right political decision. Through this language, Trump doesn't just inform, he shapes belief and builds a collective sense of truth among his followers.

This analysis applies language attitude theory, particularly the three response dimensions identified by Garrett: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. On the affective level, Trump's statement sparks emotions such as pride, happiness, and a sense of superiority. Supporters express these emotions through real-time reactions such as cheering, applause, and visible enthusiasm during his rallies. Cognitively, they treat the utterance as evidence of Trump's legitimacy and leadership ability. They accept the message as confirmation of their ideological alignment with him and grow more confident in his authority, regardless of factual verification. This interpretation aligns with (Sain & Hermansyah, 2025) findings that language attitudes are deeply connected to group identity and emotional affiliation, where linguistic expression reinforces collective belonging and strengthens social solidarity.

Meanwhile, the opposing side rejects the claim and responds with pessimism and harsh criticism. Critics view the repetition as manipulative and misleading, especially when they compare it to Trump's real performance. Their frustration leads them to organize public demonstrations. One report from the (Archive, 2025) YouTube channel, titled "*Over 1,000 Protesters Gather Outside Trump Rally in Michigan*," shows people expressing disappointment with Trump's leadership. Many of them believe his presidency brings harm rather than progress and consider his victory a political disaster that deepens polarization.

Trump doesn't rely on facts to build ethos. Instead, he uses confidence, emotional repetition, and shared identity to increase his credibility. He prefers persuasive storytelling over logical reasoning, using political speech as a tool for collective loyalty. Trump's rhetorical approach highlights how language operates as a tool for unifying supporters and silencing opposition, relying on ideology rather than evidence to shape public perception. He turns language into a powerful force for manufacturing belief, emotional connection, and social identity. As (Nawaz et al., 2016) note, interpretation and response are highly influenced by timing and contextual factors, suggesting that audience reactions to political discourse like Trump's repetition of victory claims are not static but evolve alongside the socio-political climate in which they are produced.



**Figure 4.** we're going to be doing numbers that nobody's ever believed

The utterance "we're going to be doing numbers that nobody's ever believed" is an example of an ethos rhetorical strategy that aims to create an image of Trump as a revolutionary and confident leader. This phrase positions Trump as someone who promises to achieve what no one has achieved before, something beyond what people could previously imagine. Through this statement, he reinforces his identity as the only figure capable of delivering significant change. This rhetorical style not only boosts public belief but also projects an image of ideal leadership. As (Dzulfian Syafrian, 2025) explain, language serves not only as a communicative medium but also as a social force that constructs and reflects power relations, identity, and collective belief within society. Trump's use of ethos exemplifies how linguistic expression can shape public perception and reinforce social hierarchies through persuasive communication.

From the affective dimension, supporters responded enthusiastically, as the utterance ignited feelings of optimism, pride, and collective trust, making them feel as though they were on the right side, destined for victory. From a behavioral perspective, the audience's loud applause reflects Trump's success in emotionally engaging his supporters. From the cognitive dimension, supporters perceive Trump as a visionary leader who can complete his promises due to his optimistic and honest rhetorical style.

In opposition, this view is considered a hyperbole and as empty rhetoric, planned only to provoke emotional support without offering concrete plans. They feel inconvenienced, annoyed, and angry about how Trump built an unrealistic narrative. As a result, the opposing side's disappointment becomes evident through public demonstrations against Trump's policies. Cognitively, Trump is an unworthy leader from the opposite point of view and potentially destroys the United States. To gain deeper insight, the statement shows how the speaker employs ethos to reinforce public credibility. This statement reveals the dual impact of ethos: supporters view it as hopeful and inspiring, while critics dismiss it as empty rhetoric meant to attract attention.

### Logos: Simplified Logic and Familiar Reasoning



**Figure 5.** Since I took office, the cost of eggs is down 87%. I was only here for six days

Another outstanding statement appears when Trump says, "Since I took office, the cost of eggs is down 87%. I was only here for six days." This exaggerated claim highlights his use of humor and hyperbole to convey a quick impact and credit for economic improvement, even when the timeframe makes the claim unrealistic. Although the claim is unverified, it is rhetorically effective in constructing a successful narrative of his leadership within a short period. The phrase "87%" presents a factual element, while "I was only here for six days" strengthens the dramatic effect, making the statement resonate strongly with a broad audience. He

consciously uses basic logic and concrete examples to convey the significant changes his presence introduces, emphasizing his real impact.

According to language attitude theory, supporters respond with admiration, recognizing the effectiveness of Trump's leadership in achieving rapid change within a short period. Behaviorally, the crowd expresses growing enthusiasm, often responding with celebratory chants and success claims. Affectively, this moment generates pride, excitement, and a sense of shared victory. Behaviorally, the crowd gets stronger and responds with success claims. Cognitively, supporters assess him as a competent and decisive leader who is capable of delivering tangible outcomes for society. As (Jenke, 2025) explain, audience interpretation of political information is often influenced by pre-existing ideological biases, where individuals selectively focus on cues that confirm their expectations about a candidate's competence and leadership qualities.

For the opposition, accepting the statement is seen as an attempt to distract attention from more substantial issues. They feel the success is not comparable to the unfavorable regulations that negatively impact society. Public protests reflect the dissatisfaction caused by Trump's policy decisions. This statement employs logos, combining popular narratives with data-driven reasoning to make complex issues more digestible. Although it is weak in terms of factual accuracy, the statement effectively builds a persuasive narrative, reinforces supporters' loyalty, and simultaneously provokes skepticism and resistance from the opposing side.



**Figure 6.** After years of missed targets, our military suddenly has the best recruiting numbers in 30 years"

"After years of missed targets, our military suddenly has the best recruiting numbers in 30 years." This phrase represents a logos-based rhetorical strategy that Trump employs to highlight his achievements in the military sector. The declaration that the American military has reached its highest recruitment levels in the past 30 years simplifies a complex issue into a clear narrative that resonates strongly with the public. This utterance explicitly presents a cause-and-effect structure by contrasting the failures of previous governments with his claimed success during his presidency. The phrase "after years of missing the target" creates a contrast that enhances his claim. Not supported with data, the words "30 years" bring the authority condition and strengthen the perception that it has truly happened. Rhetorically, this utterance represents a populist use of logos, in which Trump employs numerical references to construct public trust without verified data. As a result, by claiming military success, he aims to enhance his credibility as a leader who safeguards national strength and security.

Language attitude theory classifies public response into three dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. From the affective dimension, Trump's supporters express pride and a sense of security, as they believe the US military has significantly strengthened over the past 30 years. From a behavioral perspective, the loud cheers following the utterance indicate that the crowd felt satisfied and enthusiastic. Cognitively, supporters interpret this moment as concrete evidence of Trump's success in delivering positive results. These findings match with (Reddy Naini et al., 2025), who emphasize that emotional tone and prosodic delivery in speech play a crucial role in shaping audience affective responses, as listeners instinctively associate vocal energy and confidence with credibility and strength.

The opposing side responds with skepticism, viewing Trump's claims as attempts to conceal failure. Many of them identify as anti-Trump and believe such statements serve only as distractions. Behaviorally, they

express their disapproval through protests held directly outside the venue. Cognitively, they interpret his rhetoric as a manipulative strategy that constructs an illusion of success. Deeply, this utterance shows how the logos rhetorical strategy is applied to strengthen their leader image and shape public perception. This dynamic reflects what (Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2025) describe as affective polarization, where individuals' emotional attachment to political identity leads them to evaluate information through ideological filters rather than objective reasoning, thereby intensifying division in political discourse.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Donald Trump's rhetorical strategies through pathos, ethos, and logos effectively influence public perception while also contributing to ideological polarization. Emotional appeals (pathos) strengthen group identity and generate loyalty among supporters, while ethical and logical appeals (ethos and logos) create perceived credibility and simplify complex political issues into persuasive narratives. However, these strategies also trigger strong emotional opposition from audiences with different ideological orientations, reinforcing polarization in public discourse. This illustrates how language operates not only as a communicative tool but as a symbolic system that constructs meaning and power relations in society (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025). From the perspective of language attitude, Trump's speeches reveal how linguistic style and word choices shape public evaluation and emotional responses toward the speaker. Supporters perceive his language as authentic, powerful, and representative of their values, while opponents interpret it as manipulative or divisive. This finding fit with (Ding et al., 2023), who explain that discourse and language practices actively participate in "world-making," shaping collective perception, identity, and social reality. These findings demonstrate that political rhetoric functions not only as a persuasive tool but also as a sociolinguistic instrument that constructs identity, influences public attitudes, and defines ideological boundaries in modern political communication. Moreover, the strategic use of linguistic cues and framing echoes the principle of multimodal meaning construction discussed (Khan et al., 2021), where the interaction between verbal and contextual signals amplifies interpretive depth and audience engagement. This study contributes to the field of sociolinguistics and political linguistics by integrating rhetorical theory with language attitude theory to explain how rhetoric functions as a tool of persuasion and social alignment. Future research may explore how similar rhetorical strategies operate across different cultural and linguistic contexts to further understand how political discourse shapes public perception globally.

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