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## **Times of Crisis: A Comparative Discourse Analysis of U.S. and Mexican Presidential Rhetoric**

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# **TIMES OF CRISIS: A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF U.S. AND MEXICAN PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC**

A Thesis  
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Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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in

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by  
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## **Abstract**

Language is a communicative tool that in the possession of politicians holds the power to be persuasive and aggressive, empowering and uniting, or disruptive and dividing. Previous research has relied on numerous methodological approaches to analyze political discourse from different viewpoints to reveal the manner in which politicians as part of political institutions transform and manipulate language. The current investigation performs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) based on the framework developed by Van Dijk (1993,1997) in order to demonstrate the speech act realization in a total of 14 political speeches delivered by American presidents Biden, Trump, and Obama and Mexican presidents López Obrador, Peña Nieto, and Calderón made from 2010-2022 at the onset of three crises: Russia-Ukraine, the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the U.S.-Mexico Border Crisis. The method of CDA incorporates the Speech Act theory of J.L Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975), and the Politeness theory of Brown & Levinson (1978) through a mixed-methods approach for obtaining quantitative and qualitative data. The pragmatic dimension of the investigation aims to address the following research questions: (1) What type of speech act realization occurs in the presidential discourse of Mexican and American presidents during times of crisis? Does these presidents' discourse reveal any significant similarities or differences between the types of speech acts employed in their discourse?; (2) What does the implementation of specific speech acts in the political discourse reveal about the cultural and political differences between the United States and Mexico?; (3) What do the speech acts in the corpus reveal about the ways in which different political elites conceptualize their power and exhibit an image as a leader to their respective audiences? The results of the investigation revealed captivating similarities and

differences in speech act frequencies, discursive strategies, ideologies, and political identity in the political discourse of Mexican and American presidents.

Key words: Political discourse, speech acts, times of crisis, ideology, politeness, presidents, United States, Mexico, culture

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The field of pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the process of language use in social interactions by emphasizing the role of the language user's production of meaning in a specific context (Mey, 2001). The study of discourse within pragmatics seeks to investigate and explain the linguistic and communicative means of discourse in the sphere of contextual boundaries whether educational, societal, cultural, political, religious, or professional. Discourse through a pragmatic lens transcends the complexities of language production as it provides insight into discourse as a form of daily communication to convey thoughts, opinions, feelings, and ideas alongside the importance of context.

Language is a powerful tool that in a political context, presented through a political leader, evokes a dogma representative of social, cultural, and political models. Political discourse, related to elite groups and institutions, as stated by Van Dijk (2003), is the discourse of politicians within the boundaries of the domain of politics that determine the incorporation of discursive tools and strategies to reveal attitudes, intentions, and ideology. Within his theory of ideology, Van Dijk (2006) states that ideologies are “socially shared representations of groups, ideologies are the foundation of group attitudes and other beliefs, and thus also control the ‘biased’ personal mental models that underlie the production of ideological discourse” (2006:138). The concept of ideology in relation to politics emphasizes the relationship between specific actors and events. The use of discourse by politicians to represent collective beliefs and ideologies may reveal particular rhetorical strategies and give rise to information about communicative events and their audience. Ideologies are formulated through rhetorical strategies and structures within a context model constraint; therefore, there is an underlying assumption

that political discourse functions through social representations and models through which they function. The socio-political context of major crisis events such as war, economic recessions, natural disasters, or pandemics redefine a president's image from political leader to crisis leader. Crisis management, from a political standpoint, obligates presidents to engage in techniques to handle unforeseen circumstances (risk assessment), present a plan of action (resolution), and convey essential information to a public (response). Text and talk in this context take on a crucial role in the effects institutional discourse imposes in stating sociopolitical goals, characterizing social relationships, and exhibiting the power relations between an individual and a collective.

The investigation concentrates on the speech act employment and politeness strategies in the text and talk of American and Mexican presidents in times of crisis between 2010-2022. The Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975), and Politeness theory of Brown & Levinson (1978) deal with the usage of discourse as a social and cultural tool that a speaker manipulates in communicative situations to influence the relationship between a speaker and hearer and in accordance to the functions being performed by verbal behavior to transmit power, solidarity, action, and politeness to a hearer. The circumstances of politicians in times of crisis associated with the realization of speech acts in their discourse offer insight beyond discourse itself due to the notion that "their control of discourse operates at all levels: they tell the language users which relevant propositions to select in event models, what speech act to realize and what the conditions of the speech act are, what politeness forms to choose, what style characteristics to select, and so on..." (Van Dijk, 2003:213). A time of crisis presents a challenging situation with varying divergences and convergences between the political positions and rhetoric of presidents demonstrating that while different words, terms, and concepts can be linked to responsibilities shared by the government

and the public, power remains attached to an individual in a moment of crisis while the collective society implodes (Carrillo-Blouin, 2003).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides important insight into the discourse of political elites within the same or different political parties in a political communicative event. Developed by Van Dijk (1993), a Critical Discourse Analysis framework, defined as “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Hamilton, 2001:466) is utilized in the investigation to determine similarities and differences between American and Mexican presidents’ use of speech acts, if the speech act strategies reveal any cultural or political differences between the two countries and/or the ideologies of their respective presidents, and the manner in which the conceptualization of power, authority, values, morals, and political image is presented to their respective audiences. The theoretical and methodological approach of CDA emerged in the field of linguistics as a way to describe, analyze, and explain the role of discourse as a social practice tool. Critical discourse analysis enables the interdisciplinary study of discourse as a social practice in which sociopolitical elements are an inherent part of language as they reveal ideologies and power relations at the macro and micro-levels. Van Dijk’s theoretical model for CDA, as presented in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Hamilton, 2001), consists of analyzing and bridging the gap between the following macro- and micro- levels: member-groups, actions-process, context-social structure, personal and social cognition. The discourse structures of member-groups and actions-process involve language users engaging in discourse as part of social groups or organizations and the social acts of those individual actors as part of a group process or action. Context-social structure and personal and social cognition encompass discursive interactions of language users confined



to a social structure or context and the individual or collective cognitions which portray opinions, memories, or knowledge. Discourse structures of such macro- and micro- levels of discourse have the potential to exhibit notions of power, control, and bias. In cases such as press conferences, parliamentary debates, presidential statements, policy announcements, or primary election campaigns the dominant group (politicians) exercises strategic manipulation of power and position of leadership to appeal to particular social attitudes. Van Dijk (1977, 1997) presents the notion of discursive power and control based on knowledge, information, and authority with regard to the level of influence and control the speaker possesses in acting as part of an organization or institution. The CDA of such discourse permits a deeper glance into the discursive methods an influential authority employs upon an audience in a political and societal context to achieve an end goal. Discussing social cognition and power relations within a society or group, Van Dijk maintains that “power relations and inequality are not merely locally enacted, managed or negotiated, but also (known, presupposed to be) structurally embedded in society” (1977:383). This assertion suggests the manner in which the branch of pragmatics takes into consideration belief systems, social constraints, and contextual conditions for the sake of performing an effective approach to CDA analysis within the relationship of talk and text in the context of politics.

The objective of the current study is to demonstrate the speech act articulation in the political discourse of U.S. and Mexican presidents at the onset of three major crises in order to provide an in-depth pragmatic analysis and understanding of the manner in which language as a political tool can be molded and manipulated to achieve specific intentions or actions while conveying ideological convictions representative of the political administration or the country. The scope of the thesis contributes to the field of linguistics, specifically the branch of

pragmatics, and cultural studies to highlight that the usage of rhetorical strategies in political discourse has the ability to emphasize political, cultural, and social similarities and differences of two separate countries in accordance with the manner in which a respective politician manipulates and constructs language. The value of this study is undeniable, given the importance of political discourse and the uptake of the public in times of crisis.

As a Mexican American who grew up on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border towns of McAllen, Texas and Reynosa, Tamaulipas I possess the desire to personally achieve a unique and important contribution to the fields of Linguistics and Hispanic studies for the purpose of building a connection between discourse and social, cultural, political, and economic factors. The dual identity of growing up with two languages and two cultures intertwines with experiencing the continuous transformation of the U.S.-Mexico relations and double-sided usage of political discourse by national leaders. The personal purpose for conducting an investigation with regard to both the political discourse of presidents as crisis leaders and two countries that have shared several years of diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations is to introduce how each speaker's utilization of language in a position of authority, the language use in a specific context, and how the discourse strategies serve to characterize the cultural relationships between beliefs, values, attitudes, prejudices, and ideas.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

The chapter presents information of discourse analytical frameworks and linguistic theory that enable the understanding of language use and the combination of significant rhetorical tools and features. This section further presents existing research that has been conducted relevant to the investigation topic in focus of U.S. and Mexican political discourse.

### 2.1. Discourse and Pragmatics

The work of Teun A. Van Dijk, one of the founders of critical discourse studies and analysis, significantly contributes to the areas of discursive ideology, knowledge, racism, context, and power. Specifically pertaining to discourse studies and pragmatics, Van Dijk's (1977) *Text and Context. Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* defines the role of discourse as the text and talk of communicative events-- that is, the verbal or written communication involves interplay between speaker and hearer in terms of underlying pragmatic structures. When we refer to pragmatic structures for social discursive interactions, it is important to consider the socially shared representations alongside discourse that characterize the attitudes and ideologies of institutions or organizations and their members. When participating in communicative events, "people not only build and use models of events in order to represent their knowledge about such events, but also in order to represent their opinions about them" (Van Dijk, 1997:192). This social cognition forms part of context models in which language users formulate and manage speech acts while implementing their knowledge of pragmatic rules and social norms and constraints.

In *Cognitive Context Models and Discourse*, Van Dijk further states "language users not only form or update models of events or situations they communicate *about*, but also of the

*communicative event* in which they participate” (192). A context model functions on a pragmatic dimension of discourse in which actors not only self-represent as speech participants, but also continuously construct, negotiate, and manage discourse in specific communicative events or situations. Context as part of the complex properties of discourse is a communicative situation serving a pragmatic role related to the structures and functions of context models comprised of a setting, social circumstance, goals of (inter)action, the situational relation between participants, institutional environment, group membership, and categories of participants (Van Dijk, 1997). This theoretical framework of context models derived by Van Dijk permits the pragmatic study of distinguishable features in the discourse of language users such as intentions, ideologies, perspectives, purposes, and goals.

## **2.2. Political Discourse**

The field of linguistics views general discourse as a form of written and spoken communication involving speakers that belong to a variety of social domains. Discourse encompasses various types of communication, whether written or oral. Speakers often employ a specific type of discourse best suited for a particular context (for instance, politics). One cannot claim that all of politics can be considered political discourse, however. Van Dijk (1997) defines political discourse as the text and talk of political elites and professionals that participate in communicative events involving the public, the citizens, the voters, and the masses. In the domain of politics, the text and talk of political actors during political communicative events serve a purpose in the political process, ideologies, systems, and relations. Political actors in this context are the group of politicians who have been elected and are being paid for political functions and preside over a country or region. Thus, political discourse in the domain of politics

encompasses events such as press conferences, presidential statements, parliamentary debates, media interviews, propaganda, and government announcements serving a specific political purpose. Van Dijk (1997) further states that discourse must be performed by a speaker who participates in the professional role of a politician at an institutional setting such as a government or parliament in order to be considered political discourse. Describing and defining political discourse as a genre entails the level of context, contextual characteristics and the structure of rhetoric while taking into consideration the national and international circumstances at the occurrence of the discourse as it influences a politician's choice of rhetoric presented to the society (Jameel & Sameer, 2021). In simpler terms, the meaning of a discourse is guided by a speaker's context or mental models that influence rhetoric based on ideologies or attitudes and what is deemed socially acceptable in a given time period. Political discourse as a class of genres defined by a social domain may be utilized to influence public opinions, sentiments, and decision making during major crisis events.

Times of crisis can impact a country economically, politically, socially, and fiscally while forcing the leader of a country to mitigate these imminent threats to the public. Discourse as a tool in the leadership and political process plays an important role at the onset of a crisis. Even though few citizens have the opportunity to meet or speak with the political figures of their country, many citizens exhibit a personal attachment and intense loyalty to these figures. As distant as they are in reality, U.S. and Mexican presidents often make appearances on media and social networks "trying to market a president as an ordinary American" (Farnsworth, 2015). In the case of presidential image and character, political discourse plays a central role in candidates' avoiding presenting an image of being disconnected with the common public without seeming forced. These efforts often involve speeches to convey personal views and leadership goals while

shaping public opinion. Given the nature of political discourse, when disaster strikes, citizens look to the head of the government to respond to these threats and present information as part of the presidential process while presenting future approaches to the issue at hand.

### **2.3. Political Discourse Analysis**

As discussed in previous sections, political discourse implies that an individual who speaks as a member of a government and as a member of a political party does so for the purpose of carrying out a political action and aiding in the political process. Given the role of politicians, political events present ideologies, promises of future action, current intentions, and opinions. In terms of discourse analysis, Van Dijk states that “the categorization and analysis of such talk as political discourse will be based on a number of structural criteria for such texts and contexts: Roles and goals of speakers, inane topics, special conditions and circumstances and especially the functionality of such discourse...” (1997:22). In order to understand the information derived from the political discourse analysis of text and talk produced by a politician, the political context must be examined to reveal political ideologies, norms, and agendas. Within the political context, it is important to consider the ways in which political speeches distinguish themselves from one another and the political nature of the discourse. Van Dijk (1997) establishes that a political discourse analysis may be carried out following the original parameters of the structural levels of discourse analysis: rhetoric, semantics, syntax, lexicon, and pragmatics. Pragmatics goes beyond the general meaning of linguistic expressions as it aims to also incorporate nonverbal behaviors, specific meanings, inferences, and indirect communication while linking communicative behavior and the understanding of communicative acts within the scientific study of language (Clark, 2021).

Presidential speeches may serve to present a government's ideology of a given administration in power, as seen in the previous studies of this section. Politics involve various political parties that often reveal different sides of political language in the progressive process of transforming and adapting a country in a political, social, and economic manner in which power is ascribed to individuals and part of a collective. In other words, political language targets the presentation of a political outlook focused upon the effective improvement of a specific region through the collaboration of a powerful and balanced central and local government.

#### **2.4. Political Discourse: Mexican Presidents**

The collective and individual identity of the Mexican community is derived from a complex history comprised of abundant revolutions, civil wars, protests, and governmental turbulence. Political discourse analysis allows for a deeper view into the manner in which a political elite working within the Mexican government exhibits an image as a leader of a country that continues to fight internal struggles against corruption, drug wars, militarization, organized crime, and immigration while maintaining public support and appealing to the public sentiment. Over the span of two centuries (1870s – 2000s), Mexican presidents like Porfirio Díaz, Francisco I. Madero, Plutarco Elías Calles, Lázaro Cárdenas, and Vicente Fox have had to manage critical events such as the Mexican revolution, social revolts, military coups, the assassination of acting presidents, World War II, and government corruption. Political discourse displays the capacity words possess as presidents attempt to manage discourse to give emphasis to political movements, administrative changes, and social shifts that define a president during their administration (Carrillo-Blouin, 2003).

The use of political discourse during a time of crisis or a political turning point can be deemed by a politician as a political act on behalf of the country. Fondevila & Quintana (2015) performed a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine public speeches given by President Zedillo (1994-2000), President Fox (2000-2006), and President Calderón (2006-2012) in order to determine how Mexican presidents frame and redefine categories during their administrations in terms of agency and context. The article presented the varying definitions of national sovereignty and national security in the conceptions of militarization and drug trafficking to portray a government ideology and public agenda in combatting the illegal drug trade. Their findings demonstrated that although presidents identified drug trafficking as a national threat, their treatment and definitions of national sovereignty and international co-operation were quite different. The researchers aimed to contribute to the study of political discourse based on war hypotheses to observe the construed definitions of certain political terms in the justifications of the involvement of armed forces in drug-trafficking control. Discourse during a time of turmoil has the ability to emphasize the intention of, or the justification for, political action. These manifestations of meanings, ideas, and concepts that constitute each presidency are reflected through an administration's way of defining and framing various concepts.

Recent studies have emerged examining the discourse of the current Mexican president, Andrés López Obrador. Chihu Amparán (2021) implemented the Frame Analysis model, developed from his previous studies, to perform a discourse analysis of López Obrador's 2018 presidential campaign. The study applied the concept of *frame*, developed by Gregory Bateson (1955), to explain this phenomenon as part of discourse. Results revealed six frames (presentation, problem, problem solving, attack, defense, and campaign closure) employed within the presidential campaign of López Obrador that served different functions in terms of



positive and negative ‘spots’ based on visuals, words, and music. The utilization of framing by López Obrador served in molding the political conscience of the public by communicating a vision of future social and political change. The investigation contributed to the field of linguistics in demonstrating the political and social influences that political elites have in defining and constructing political controversies, issues, and actions. In general terms, the influential and powerful role a president possesses as the leader of a country endows them with the ability to manipulate political discourse to establish governmental objectives, even though the promised future actions that are explicitly expressed during political discourse do not inherently indicate the political intention to deliver the proposed initiatives of the political agenda (Velázquez Flores, 2010).

Not only does political discourse analysis function to identify patterns in rhetoric, but it also reveals gaps between what is said and administrative action. Velázquez Flores’ (2010) study on Felipe Calderón’s political agenda during the first months as the acting president of Mexico highlighted a gap between the intended plans of action initially proposed and their actual realizations during his presidential campaign. The domestic and foreign policy projects or actions of an acting president are important in maintaining continuity from one administration to the next while giving prestige to the country and its leader. Another recent study, Muñiz (2021), presented a different approach via a discourse analysis on the use of cues and framing in the political discourse of Mexican President Andrés López Obrador over the course of one year. The article sought to identify discursive strategies employed by the president while proposing a political agenda and an ideology. The corpus of the study was developed through the analysis of 60 press conferences given from 2019 to 2020. Results exposed the employment of an ‘us versus them’ scheme that aimed to create a contrast between the positive and negative aspects of the

new Mexican government (López Obrador's administration) and the old Mexican government (the prior administration under President Peña Nieto from 2012-2018) and related them to the fight against corruption. The speech notes that the categories of 'us' versus 'them' involve the notion of in-group and out-group social groups. The in-group is that in which the speaker identifies with being a part of while the category of out-group is the group that the speaker does not identify in belonging to. The language used to differentiate oneself between these groups reveals an intergroup bias and social stereotypes that have the ability to evoke positive or negative connotations about preexisting beliefs of in-group and out-group members (Mass et al., 1989). Therefore, the distinctive language of 'us' and 'them' by President López Obrador to differentiate himself between in-group and out-group language demonstrates the manner in which he identifies as part of a specific group, in this case his new political administration. President López Obrador tended to exercise polarization to portray an ideology to the public opinion towards the political and social realities of Mexico. Words and expressions such as '*desafío*', '*esfuerzo*', '*reto*', and '*nueva realidad*' were common in expressing government interventions. Words and expressions such as '*abuso*', '*influyentismo*', '*antiguo régimen*', and '*buenos para nada*' were typically related to corruption and the old government. López Obrador's usage of discursive labels and framing reflected the augmented use of polarization in order to influence public opinion. The precise and organized function of labels to frame attitudes and beliefs towards social and political realities reflect upon the manner in which President López Obrador characterized social groups, informed the audience about a political issue, and defined political figures.

## **2.5. Political Discourse: American Presidents**

The American political system, including the various institutions within the federal and state governments, along with its leaders, has influenced how American culture and identity present a strong sense of nationalism, patriotism, and freedom. The United States is one of many countries that has faced pivotal moments forcing its political leaders at the time to take communicative action. Presidential rhetorical choices are powerful elements in gaining public approval, presenting a successful or auspicious presidential image, and impacting future actions (Winkler, 1989). Today, the White House has become a dominant force in American politics as the chief executive of the country draws public attention to current events through mass media. Particularly in times of crisis, the selective release of information and the presidential “spin” of discourse in a media or political environment appeal to the public interests with the intention of introducing a political agenda, framing a situation for an intended purpose, or acquiring public support (Farnsworth, 2015).

Presidential political communication is a vital part of presidential operations, predominantly in times of crisis that present a situation of presidential governance as the President of the United States implements communicative strategies in discourse to disperse information or set a leadership tone while developing a connection with the American public. As an example of a well-studied time of crisis, on September 11, 2001, the United States faced the deadliest foreign terrorist attack the American community had ever experienced. At the time, American President George W. Bush was confronted with the task of providing an immediate response to the national and geopolitical crisis during a time of great loss. President Bush’s response to the 9/11 crisis revealed discrepancies in the linguistic strategies and themes embedded in the rhetoric (Bligh, Kohles & Meindl, 2004; Wlodarek, 2010; Kús, 2020).

Discourse analysis of President George W. Bush's speeches demonstrated the utilization of themes such as faith, God, and virtue to paint a picture of collective unity and strength in the face of adversity while employing hostility, shame, aggression, and blame towards the 'other' group. At the onset of the crisis, President Bush predominantly referenced the American public as a collective group and incorporated themes of patriotism, faith, and unity. This reflected an attempt to minimize fear and anxiety in the wake of crisis in order to maintain a relationship between the leader and followers through a hardship. Aside from aiming to build rapport with the audience, Bush often referred to the nation's tragedy as an 'us versus the enemy' concept through an extensive application of persuasive speech to gain political support for military actions and appeal to the emotions of the public at a sensitive time. Bush's initial responses to the 9/11 terrorist attack employed the conviction of 'good versus evil' in addressing the tragic event while denouncing the actions of the terrorists and providing sympathy for the victims and their families. His discourse reflected the president's rhetorical goals to express sympathy, restore faith in leadership, ensure the trust of American citizens, and introduce a plan of action (Kús, 2020). Similarly, Włodarek (2010) revealed the numerous ways in which President Bush implemented arguments and American values to gain political support, develop an image as a strong leader against world terror, influence the audience, and present policies to justify the actions for the war against terror. The political discourse highlighted that 'future orientation', 'sense of control', and 'sense of belonging' were the most common values employed by President Bush to unite the nation in a time of tragedy while focusing on the war on terrorism to revive domestic economy and restore national security and solidarity in working towards the common goal against global terror. Flores-Ferrán (2017) maintains that persuading an audience to support an opinion or attitude through the depiction of an 'us versus them' rhetoric often

involves a shift in discourse to not only create a sense of unity or promote solidarity, but to also denounce an opponent that stands against the country.

Studies have discovered that during a time of crisis, presidents employ distinct styles of rhetoric such as embellishment, religious appeals, or persuasive language to appeal to the public's attention while gathering support and establishing political goals. The rhetoric of President George W. Bush highlights how a leader implements constructs of inspiration, hardship, aggression, religion, embellishment, and freedom to an audience in order to evoke sentiments for the purpose of gaining support or achieving a political intention. During his presidency, President Bush's discourse at the onset of the Afghanistan war in 2001 and the Iraq war in 2003 showed a shift in rhetorical style from one time of crisis to another. President Bush frequently employed sentiments of inspiration, hardship, and aggression in addressing the Afghanistan war. Meanwhile, at the onset of the Iraq war, President Bush heavily employed aggression and hardship rhetoric to accomplish future military goals (Kraybill & Madrid, 2019). Foreign crisis rhetoric entails framing the situation while conveying facts of the situation, conflict resolution, and intended future actions. A spillover of ongoing political turmoil from one administration to the next causes presidents to assess their own approach to be taken with regard to formulating discourse. Discourse analysis of an overlapping or similar crisis that extends from one administration into the next is important in uncovering differences in discursive strategies, ideologies, and conflict resolution between presidents.

The presidential rhetoric and rhetorical choices of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan during the hostage crises of 1979 and 1985 emphasized the opposing strategies employed by each president to effectively handle hostage situations during their administrations. With regard to the 1985 TWA hijacking under Reagan's administration, Reagan took the stance of his

predecessors such as Richard Nixon. Reagan employed labels such as ‘kidnappers’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘assassins’ to reinforce the negative actions of the hostage situation. He immediately presented his rhetorical stance which in turn helped preserve his public image and the public image of his administration. The label of ‘terrorists versus the innocent victims’ enabled Reagan to reinforce the image of his administration through actions of justice. On the contrary, Carter displayed the situation of the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis as unique. The moral stance taken by Carter invited public attention and disapproval as he presented the event as unlikely to occur again and did not take into consideration the handling of previous hostage crises or the traditional manner for responding to the public. Carter did not implement his rhetoric for pragmatic benefits and instead exhausted all alternatives after numerous failed attempts of hostage releases which in turn deteriorated his public image and approval. Winkler (1989) concluded that during initial public responses of hostage situations, presidential rhetoric becomes the focus for public information and the public’s expectations of the outcome. During a moment of crisis, a president’s rhetoric molds the framework of the future words and actions during the crisis.

A recent time of crisis is associated with a history of tensions and conflicts between Russia and other countries over the years. This continuous crisis has presented presidents with the task of addressing the conflict within their respective administrations and public. Rzepecka (2021) offered an investigation on foreign crisis rhetoric through a comparative analysis of President George W. Bush’s remarks on Russia’s war with Georgia (2008) and President Barack Obama’s remarks on the Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014). By focusing on the relationship between crisis and political rhetoric, this investigation has contributed to our understanding of how a president’s language and actions during a time of crisis influence future crisis responses

and management for future presidents to follow. According to the results, both presidents initially responded by presenting the facts of the conflict. Bush presented Russian actions as an escalation of conflict and a contradiction of actions while Obama discussed an understanding of the affair while explaining the dangers, repercussions, or consequences that could arise from Russia's actions. Results highlighted a shift in President Obama's rhetoric in terms of tone, focus, and purpose as his rhetoric moved from presenting the conflict and political ideals to focusing on the reality of the situation and its complexities. Furthermore, Bush's remarks present the conflict as a struggle of ideals in a political context employing words like 'democracy', 'freedom', 'sovereignty' and 'integrity' to counter other interpretations of the conflict. Obama's remarks present the conflict in the context of morality on the principles of ethics, integrity, and independence. Overall, the study revealed that presidential responses in a time of conflict adhere to foreign crisis rhetoric in presenting the initial facts of the situation, conflict resolution, and future actions while manipulating their tone, focus, and purpose of rhetoric.

## **2.6. Speech Act Theory**

The field of pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies the use of language in context, the conditions of language use, and the relationship between a speaker and a hearer. Speech acts and their accompanying features serve a special function in linguistic communication as they allude to actions within a context that participants may exploit. John L. Austin and John R. Searle, important American and British language philosophers and linguists, played a crucial role in introducing a new conception of language that emphasizes the investigation and philosophy of language use and interactions in everyday functions (Clark, 2021; Márquez-Reiter and Placencia, 2005).

J. L. Austin's (1962) *How To Do Things with Words* conveys the notion that when we use language, we simultaneously perform acts in certain communicative situations and conditions associated with successfully uttering a speech act. His work proposes the initial composition of speech acts as the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act in order to differentiate between the types of function of language and to establish that intention and action can be performed through the use of words under certain contexts and conditions. The seminal work demonstrates how we are using language and what we are doing in saying something through three kinds of actions that are defined as follows (Austin, 2018):

**Locutionary Act:** the act of 'saying something' that has meaning

**Illocutionary Act:** seek to accomplish a function that displays the speaker's intention corresponding to an attitude or desire. These acts consist of an action that is accomplished by a speaker and the force of an act in saying something (giving advice, making an accusation, a promise, stating an opinion, ordering, warning)

**Perlocutionary Act:** what is achieved by a speaker in saying something and the effect of an act on the hearer results in an achieved response (scaring, inspiring, convincing, persuading, deterring)

Considering that Speech Act Theory focuses on language and action and the fact that there are numerous potential functions in the manner that we use speech, Austin's *How To Do Things with Words* puts in place a definition for speech acts that determines when we speak we do things with the words that are uttered; thus, "the truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words but on what act you were performing in what circumstances" (1962:144). This original theory of speech acts initiated the establishment of five general classes for speech acts according to illocutionary force: verdictives, exercitives, commissives,



behabitives, and expositives. The categories established enabled Austin to expand his speech act theory and introduce that the notion of “the illocutionary force of an utterance, or what illocutionary act it is that we are performing in issuing that utterance” (1962:149) has the capacity to determine the type of speech act in an utterance. Illocutionary acts possess a dynamic between an utterance and the force emitted through the production of the utterance. This force, known as the illocutionary force, varies in its degree of strength with regard to the speaker’s intention in performing an illocutionary speech act. The illocutionary force of an utterance determines the specific interpretation of an utterance in a set context such as suggesting, asking, advising, or demanding (Mirela, 2015). Moreover, Searle’s *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language* issues a statement asserting “the speech act or acts performed in the utterance of a sentence are in general a function of the meaning of the sentence...therefore, it is in principle possible for every speech act one performs or could perform to be uniquely determined by a given sentence” (1969:18). This idea guided Searle’s (1969) Speech Act Theory Taxonomy that further developed and reclassified Austin’s speech act categories into five types:

**Commissives:** The illocutionary act that commits the speaker to future action and presents intention. Some verbs which commonly introduce commissives include: commit, promise, vow, guarantee, swear, pledge.

**Declarations:** The act that immediately causes an alteration or effect in the status or condition of the current world. This illocutionary force includes verbs such as: declare, nominate, terminate, resign, proclaim, authorize, revoke, veto.

**Representatives (Assertives):** The speaker commits to presenting information, truth, and something being the case. Verbs in this class include: state, claim, assert, suggest, report, conclude, deduce, inform.

**Directives:** These consist of the speaker attempting to get the hearer to perform an action. Verbs of this class consist of: command, request, warn, plead, order, advise, ask, question, call on, prohibit, urge.

**Expressives:** The psychological state or attitudes that reveal the sincere sentiments of a speaker. This illocutionary act utilizes expressive verbs such as: thank, congratulate, apologize, welcome, blame, believe, desire, appreciate.

## **2.7. Speech Act Theory and Political Discourse**

“Evidently, the word of a politician has a strong pragmatic effect and can change not only current political situations, which will definitely affect all the people, but also the ideas and the ideals of the masses, thus causing some social transformation since the values of social life are created, transferred, and imposed on us by language” (Gabets & Gené, 2016 as cited in Dijk, 2008:23). Political discourse as a separate genre encompasses social and cultural factors that impact the speaker and the audience. It is a manner of presenting an image, acting upon the world or proposing ideologies, values, and facts. Speech acts form part of the rhetorical structure of political discourse, thus speech acts that are politically contextualized in text and talk must be incorporated into a political discourse analysis from a pragmatic viewpoint. Speech acts play a role as part of the political context of discourse to convey information expressed by a politician to an audience. In other words, the characteristics of speech acts in political discourse demonstrate an aim to achieve specific means in which the illocutionary force is formulated by a

politician to serve as a promise (commissive), a statement of information (representative), an immediate order (directive), or to express attitudes and sentiments (expressive) (Mirela, 2015).

As seen in earlier sections, the role of language in political discourse reflects the representation of a new political figure aiming to establish actions, ideologies, and goals for the well-being of a nation through the implicit or explicit manipulation of language. Jameel & Sameer (2021), for example, carried out an investigation examining the use of speech acts while aiming to demonstrate the applicability of Searle's Speech Act Theory (1969) and Leech's Politeness Maxims (1983) through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of Richard Nixon and George W. Bush's presidential victory speeches. The results revealed the frequent use of illocutionary acts such as expressives, commissives, and assertives in both presidential victory speeches, whereas directives and declarations were hardly used or not used at all. President Nixon and President Bush employed a high frequency of assertive speech acts in order to state future goals, claims, or justifications. The second most frequent speech acts were expressives. Although they were more commonly employed by President Bush than President Nixon, both presidents utilized these speech acts to express gratitude and thanks toward American citizens. A compelling finding was the dissimilar use of commissive speech acts in both victory speeches. President Nixon used fewer commissives in his speech, which emphasizes a lack of promises or pledges to the audience that may have been caused by apprehension during a difficult political time, American military forces in Vietnam. On the contrary, commissives were the third most common speech act in President Bush's speech. As President Bush aimed to gain legitimacy for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars through expressives and assertives, commissives were used for the purpose of making promises regarding American social and economic affairs. Presidential

victory speeches are often used as a platform to gain public support, establish presidential goals, political agendas, and a leadership image.

A well-documented and investigated discourse type in the field of linguistics along with victory speeches have been inaugural speeches. The discourse within inaugural addresses contributes to the formation and influence of attitudes, perceptions, and ideologies of the public towards their elected official. Gabets & Gené (2016) addressed how the discourse of a president reflects transformations of economic, social, and political structures through a detailed investigation of 26 American presidential inaugural addresses from 1913 to 2013. The researchers performed a discourse analysis on the several functions of deixis, the background information that establishes a relationship between speech and its context, that produce a strong pragmalinguistic effect. The results concluded that personal deixis, temporal deixis, spatial deixis, and commissive speech acts were apparent in inaugural speech for the purpose of providing information, additional meaning, and positive self-presentation. Commissive speech acts were often utilized to declare promises related to the future prosperity of the nation. The pragmatic effects of personal, temporal, and spatial deixis fostered a sense of unity, solidarity, and hope within the idea of a great American society. The article emphasized the construction of political discourse through a pragmatic lens to demonstrate linguistic influence and manipulation for the means of presenting the dynamics of language use in inaugural address, a speech formally given after a candidate victory.

The choice of speech act types communicates beyond the words being uttered by instilling feelings to each member in an audience and appealing to a society a national image. The discourse of war time presidents and presidents caught between conflicts serves to depict the use of language and the linguistic influence of a politician upon the society by means of language

manipulation in the domain of pragmatics. Alemi, Latifi & Nematzadeh (2018) explored the use of persuasive strategies in two presidential speeches delivered by Barack Obama in August and September 2014 regarding US foreign policy and air-attacks on ISIS. The political rhetoric was analyzed in terms of Searle's (1978) classification of speech acts, exclusive versus inclusive pronouns, and linguistic agency. The findings of the study revealed that assertive speech acts were the most common in both of Obama's speeches. The frequent use of assertives highlights President Obama's intentions to assert the truth and justify the launch of airstrikes on ISIS by the U.S. army through the persuasive rhetoric of presenting ISIS, a terrorist group, as a direct threat to the country, the world, and its citizens. The second most frequently used speech acts were commissives. President Obama employed commissives to reassure the American people that actions would be taken toward the threat and to assume responsibility as the leader of the country in properly executing these promises. The use of specific discursive strategies indicates the inclination of manipulating language in political discourse to achieve certain goals or political ends. In the case of Barack Obama and the Middle East, linguistic structure and rhetorical patterns revealed the intentions to transfer specific messages to American civilians regarding U.S. foreign policy, American ideals and values, military action, and economic strength.

On the other hand, in the case of Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, a discourse analysis of a speech delivered on July 18, 2016 presenting a National Anti-Corruption System (NAS) revealed attempts to manipulate and control the perception of corruption and his role in corruption by neutralizing the opposition, presenting political truth as the president of Mexico, and confronting widespread scandal about his and his regime's involvement in deep corruption (Hodge, Salgado Andrade & Villavicencio Zarza, 2019). The speech act portion of the analysis presented direct requests, expressives, pronouns such as 'we' and 'I', and key terms such as

‘civil society’, ‘anti-corruption’, and ‘issue’ revealed contradictions in terms of identity splits and duck-rabbit contradictions (framing the same situation in two different manners). These findings demonstrated Peña’s intentions to alter the political perception of the public by displaying corruption as two contradictory images. In sum, by establishing an anti-corruption system during his presidency, Peña makes an attempt to withdraw himself from the accusations of any involvement in the corruption scheme of his administration while also attempting to separate his leadership image from the image of corruption.

Given the great deal of previous research in the field of linguistics concerning political discourse, the present study aims to contribute to an expanded vision of language that focuses on the aspects of communication that reveal a deeper meaning beyond the literal meaning of sentences and words. Linguistic studies often focus on the political discourse of one country or perform comparative analyses on the discourse of politicians within the same country, therefore the current investigation seeks to display a pragmatic perspective in the analysis of political discourse in times of crisis enables a broader connection and understanding of a type of language that individuals encounter in their everyday lives as part of a societal collective through national leaders that seek to establish themselves as inclusive, accessible, reliable individuals. These political voices continuously maintain a dialogue between their administration and their diverse communities as sources of information, thus the present investigation seeks to contribute new and relevant linguistic and cultural research by simultaneously analyzing the discourse of U.S. and Mexican presidents at the onset of recent overlapping crisis events. The results obtained from the investigation will demonstrate multiple sides of political discourse by contributing to the notions of discursive strategies, ideology, policy, leadership, power, and crisis management.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

The chapter lays out a detailed methodology that implements a structured, analytical approach to address the research questions and hypotheses set forth in the study. A political speech corpus and important information associated with the investigative process of the study are displayed in this section to ensure a complete understanding of the system of methods and investigative perspective.

### **3.1. Speech Act Corpus**

The data for the current project was collected through transcripts and live video recordings of 14 speeches delivered by American presidents Joe Robinette Biden, Donald Trump, and Barack Obama, and Mexican presidents Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Enrique Peña Nieto, and Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa at the onset of three crisis events: the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022 – Present), the COVID-19 Pandemic (2019 – 2022), the U.S.-Mexico border crisis (1970 – Present). These crises were selected for their effects in the present sociopolitical environment of the U.S. and Mexico and their relevance in the interest of the general public. In the field of pragmatics, other crisis events such as the 9/11 terrorist attack, the Afghanistan and Iranian War, the Kennedy assassination, and the War on Drugs, have been studied ad nauseam due to their worldwide popularity, thus the importance of selecting recent emergency events that merit further study dictated the selection of the political speeches within these crises.

The presidential speeches of President Biden, Trump, and Obama were acquired through the University of Virginia Miller Center which offers a meticulously organized archive consisting of audio and video recordings of presidential speeches made by current and former

U.S. presidents. Speech transcripts of President Obama and President Peña Nieto's remarks on immigration reform were provided by the White House online archives website and the United States Government Publishing Office website. A briefing room section on the government website contains newsroom and press office information on statements, releases, speeches, and remarks that enabled the gathering of data for this investigation. Additionally, the official website of the Mexican government provides an additional affiliated government website focusing on providing citizens information on the current president, the public servants, and the news. The newsroom section of the website offers unique audio and video of the presidential speeches of President Manuel López Obrador along with their respective text transcripts. President López Obrador also utilized the social media platform Twitter to broadcast a short speech remarking on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since the speech was in video format, a text transcription was obtained through the process of manually transcribing the audio using the word processing software Microsoft Word. Concerning President Calderón's speech at the Joint session of the U.S. Congress, the translated speeches transcripts were acquired through the Law and Business Review of the Americas journal in the SMU Scholar system and C-SPAN, an American cable satellite public affairs network. Politicians in confronting a crisis, with a spotlight on their leadership abilities, must publicly address an audience and in turn the audience presumes that the discourse reflects their leader's discourse styles and personality. Thus, it is important to note that these finely crafted political speeches are most likely scripted or pre-prepared by a ghost writer in the administration that elevates speeches through the implementation of discourse strategies for the intention of appealing to public sentiment, informing the audience, and managing crisis perspectives representative of the country and its citizens.



The selected speeches, statements, and remarks serve as the basis for an in-depth analysis of a variety of speech acts within the political speeches of each president. Specific sentences were extracted for further analysis to elaborate upon notions of ideology, power, and leadership within presidential rhetoric as part of the discourse analysis process. The sentence examples are coded based on their speech act category, but were specifically selected due to the notion that speech acts may be expressed through the use of explicit performative verbs or through indirect means therefore presenting varied ways of articulating speech acts in utterances. The speech acts within each speech were coded for illocutionary type in order to establish the frequency of speech act occurrences within each presidential speech and to determine the types of speech acts and rhetorical strategies employed by each president and patterns of change that emerge. The speech act coding took into consideration performative verbs such as *advise*, *declare*, *promise*, *thank*, *believe*, and *inform* alongside modal verbs such as *will*, *must*, *shall*, and *need* associated with each speech act type for the purpose of determining the illocutionary force of the speech acts. The data was inserted into a spreadsheet program, Microsoft Excel, to provide a general overview of the data and in order to effectively present trends in the quantitative and qualitative research findings of the investigation. An inductive analytical approach was implemented to derive underlying meaning, concepts and strategies taking into consideration the incorporation of performative and modal verbs, sentence structures, pronoun usage, and context.

Since the political system within a country varies, the investigation considers the differences in the length of presidential terms between the U.S. and Mexico. In the United States a president holds office as the head of state and government for the length of a 4-year term, whereas in Mexico a president serves a 6-year term. Due to these discrepancies between the lengths of presidential terms, the analysis encompasses a span of 12 years of political discourse

for the purpose of implementing a diachronic analysis to determine any similarities or differences within two cultures and two languages in the context of politics over a period of time. Therefore, the investigation constitutes a corpus collected from transcripts of data from various speech types in political discourse including presidential statements and press conferences from 2010 to 2022. Table 1 displays a total of 14 political speeches accounting for 2 speeches per president under analysis with the exception of López Obrador who had 4 speeches under analysis due to the difference in length of presidential terms. It is important to note that the word count column, as seen in Table 1, considers only the discourse dedicated to each crisis and does not consider other rhetoric beyond the scope of the discourse such as question and answer sessions with journalists.

Furthermore, the data collection process proved difficult with the lack of available archival resources for Mexican presidents, therefore particular transcripts were obtained through an American source rather than a Mexican source. Translations that occur from an original language to another call into question the reliability of translated resources since Spanish grammatical structures and vocabulary may be altered in the process of translation if they do not exist in the English language structure. Additional public sources are highly needed in the Spanish language with regard to speech transcripts in order to accurately analyze political discourse samples in their original state. Although beyond the scope of the study, the data derived from the critical discourse analysis reflects the difference in the length of each presidential speech that proves significant in the quantity of speech acts produced by American versus Mexican presidents. Lastly, time constraints limit the discourse data in the presidential discourse of press conferences and statements which alter the structure of a regular presidential

speech. Press conferences are often limited to an initial presidential discourse and directed toward a Question and Answer structure with an interlocutor and the press.

*Table 1. Presidential Speeches of Mexican and American Presidents*

President	Date	Topic	Type of Discourse	Word Count
Obama	1-Jul-10	Remarks by the President on Comprehensive Immigration Reform	Presidential speech	4,127
Obama	20-Nov-14	Address to the Nation on Immigration	Presidential Address	2,222
Trump	11-Mar-20	Statement on the Coronavirus	Presidential Statement	1,277
Trump	13-Mar-20	Press Conference about the Coronavirus	Press Conference	2,275
Biden	24-Feb-22	Remarks on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine	Presidential Statement	1,996
Biden	26-Mar-22	Remarks in Support of the People in Ukraine	Presidential Statement	3,417
Calderón	20-May-10	Mexican President Addresses Joint Session of U.S. Congress	Presidential speech	642
Calderón	19-May-10	President Calderón U.S. Arrival Ceremony	Presidential speech	587
Peña Nieto	19-Feb-14	President Obama's News Conference with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper of Canada	Press Conference	1,292
Peña Nieto	6-Jan-15	Remarks by President Obama and President Pena Nieto after Bilateral Meeting	Joint Presidential Statements	948
López Obrador	12-Mar-20	Presidential Remarks on COVID-19	Press Conference	1,315
López Obrador	13-Mar-20	Presidential Remarks on COVID-19	Press Conference	348
López Obrador	24-Feb-22	Remarks on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine	Press Conference	534
López Obrador	9-Apr-22	Remarks on Mexico's position in face of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine	Public Social Media Statement	217

### **3.2. Discourse Analysis Framework**

The objective of the study consists of a comparative, diachronic investigation on speech act realization in the political discourse of American and Mexican presidents during times of crisis. Aside from presenting the political and cultural contexts that embody each presidential speech, the overall basis of this investigation is to explicitly implement a discourse analysis on specific speech acts from the total of 1,129 speech act samples collected for the investigation. The research investigates the rhetorical strategies employed in the political discourse of Mexican and American presidents in order to demonstrate how presidents react to crisis events, how they handle crises, and how they exhibit their ideologies and attitudes to the public through rhetoric and action. The linguistic analysis of political speech act utterances is based on the critical discourse analysis (CDA) theoretical framework of Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory, specifically encompassing illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in five speech act types: expressives, declarations, directives, representatives/assertives, and commissives. As part of the analytical portion of the study, the theoretical framework of context models and ideology designed by Van Dijk (1997, 2003, 2006) is incorporated to constructively interpret and explain beyond the denotation of words. These models will guide the research analysis to carry out an evaluation of the speech acts embedded in political context that portray the specific functions or intentions of an individual in a position of authority, legitimate power, and trust.

### **3.3. Research Questions**

The shared border, economic ties, and diplomatic relationships between the United States and Mexico have remained strong and vital for many decades. Research questions were specifically chosen for the purpose of investigating the role of language and discursive strategies

in the political discourse of U.S. and Mexican presidents. Previous studies (Alemi, Latifi & Nematzadeh; 2018, Hodge, Salgado Andrade & Villavicencio Zarza; 2019, Gabets & Gené; 2016, Jameel & Sameer; 2021) have revealed the manner in which speech act realization in political discourse exhibit individual ways that presidents and their administrations handle crisis situations or utilize their position of authority to establish their leadership identities. Given that rhetorical strategies in political discourse have the capability of presenting intention, power, ideology, and a leadership image, the present investigation seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. What type of speech act realization occurs in the presidential discourse of Mexican and American presidents during times of crisis? Does these presidents' discourse reveal any significant similarities or differences between the types of speech acts employed in their discourse?
2. What does the implementation of specific speech acts in the political discourse reveal about the cultural and political differences between the United States and Mexico?
3. What do the speech acts in the corpus reveal about the ways in which different political elites conceptualize their power and exhibit an image as a leader to their respective audiences?

Since a national or international crisis is an unexpected event with unique conditions, it is expected to find both similarities pertaining to discursive tools and type of language utilized by U.S. and Mexican presidents. The results will highlight differences related to the distinct

leadership styles and ideologies that pertain to the social and cultural identity of each country and will reflect the priorities representative of the political system in each country.

## **Chapter 4. Data Analysis**

This chapter presents the research findings and discusses the comparative and contrastive discourse analysis of the obtained data to provide a descriptive and in-depth view into selected speech act examples. The chapter then elaborates upon the meaning of specific speech act realization and their reflection of ideology, power, morals, values, and leadership qualities of the political leaders under investigation.

Due to the fact that speech acts can be evaluated according to the values of truth and politeness as the speaker presents the current state of affairs, it is imperative to bring forth the notions of conversational cooperation, face, and pronominal choice before delving into the discussion. On a pragmatic level, discourse requires individuals in a specific context to adhere to certain communicative rules encompassed by The Cooperative Principle developed by British philosopher Paul Grice in 1975. The Cooperative Principle consists of the following four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims govern the rational means of communicative exchanges to allow effective and cooperative communication between individuals (Mey, 2001). The Cooperative Principle states “you should say what you have to say, when you have to say it, and the way you have to say it” (Fraser 1990:222) in accordance with the conversational maxims that serve as guidelines or constraints for rational communication. In order for a speaker, in this case a politician, to enhance the goals central to their communication, such as to influence or give information, making the discourse profitable and conducive is essential.

Politeness strategies are implemented by a speaker to mitigate face-threatening acts in order to allow a speaker to succeed in communicating their intentions to a hearer. There are social intricacies associated with how a speaker respects his or her social relationship with the

hearer through discursive strategies of speech acts that perform to carry out an illocutionary force in a communicative environment (Clark, 2021). Therefore, in order to maintain social harmony, a speaker needs to follow the social and communicative norms of conversation to avoid potential impoliteness that may cause a social disruption. Brown & Levinson related the notion of ‘face’ to a speaker’s way of managing (im)politeness to manage social relationships in interaction while being aware of the risks implied in saying something a certain way. To determine the level of politeness to be integrated in an interaction, a speaker must consider positive face concerns (a person’s want to be perceived as desirable by others) and negative face concerns (a person’s desire to maintain their freedom and autonomy from imposition and distraction). Brown & Levinson established that some speech acts have the capacity of being more ‘face-threatening’ than others, thus a speaker is required to mitigate certain speech acts in accordance with politeness strategies (Mey, 2001; Clark, 2021).

Importantly, Brown & Gilman (1960), Knappert (1968), and Pennycook (1994) contributed to the understanding of the pragmatic implications of pronominal choice in discourse. Aside from their grammatical definitions, personal pronouns implemented in political discourse reveal whom the speaker identifies with in accordance with power and solidarity relations (Pennycook, 1994). Through pronouns a speaker can present themselves in accordance with an individual or collective group, distinguish inclusivity and exclusivity, frame a separation between an ‘us’ versus the ‘other’, display dimensions of power and solidarity, and reflect social and cultural ideologies.



#### **4.1. Russian Invasion of Ukraine**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), currently constituting 30 member countries from Europe and North America, serves as a political and military alliance to provide security, collective defense, and crisis-management operations at a multinational level. On February 21, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the recognition of the Ukraine regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent Russian republics. As a form of retribution against Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, the UN Charter attempted to prohibit their use of force and unlawful action. In retaliation, Russia vetoed this action causing the UN General Assembly to intervene in condemning Russia's aggression toward Ukraine (Eichensehr, 2022). On February 23, 2022, Russia officially declared war on Ukraine and commenced to deploy military troops to invade the country. Their aggressive action prompted worldwide responses from the political leaders of various countries including the United States and Mexico.

##### ***4.1.1. Speech Act Frequency***

Remarks delivered by Presidents Biden and López Obrador on the Russian invasion of Ukraine portray the presidential leadership and responsibility they hold to act in releasing information to their citizens, revealing the country's role in the complexity of a crisis event, and managing how their respective publics perceive the event as it presents various social and economic challenges. Table 3 conveys the speech act frequency in the presidential statements made by President Biden and President López Obrador at the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

*Table 2. Crisis 1*

Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Biden	Key Words/Phrases	López Obrador	Key Words/Phrases
Declarations	0	N/A	0	N/A
Representatives	269	This is a premeditated attack/Today, Russia has strangled democracy/These principles are essential in a free society	28	Acerca de los efectos económicos/No queremos la guerra en ningún lado/Se pudo haber evitado esta guerra/ Eso informarle a la gente, que ya tenemos ese plan para actuar
Commissives	14	The people of Ukraine can count on the United States to meet its responsibility/ We'll work together to help/And we, the United States, will help/We will limit	1	Y repito hacer todo lo posible por detenerla de inmediato
Directives	19	Let me also repeat the warning I made last week/We cannot go back to that/We need to steel ourselves for the long fight ahead/We have to fight the corruption/Please, if you have a seat, be seated.	0	N/A
Expressives	17	Thank you/God bless you all/It's a great honor to be here/Sorry to keep you waiting/May God protect our troops	2	Buenos días/Un abrazo fraterno

#### ***4.1.2. President J. Biden***

The ongoing events of the Russia-Ukraine conflict prompted President Biden to deliver two sets of presidential statements remarking on the invasion. His first presidential speech given on February 24, 2022, one day after the invasion, intertwines the manner in which information is given to the American public concerning the crisis event while making strong assertions

condemning the actions of President Vladimir Putin against Ukraine. Biden continuously presents an extensive plan of action involving retaliatory measures such as imposing international and economic sanctions and restrictions on Russia for the purpose of executing a consequence toward the acts of violence and oppression that threaten global peace and security. He simultaneously provides an additional plan of action with the intention of easing the minds of American citizens with regard to oil and gas price inflation while employing commissives that hold him accountable to the public to fulfill said promises. Biden presents a non-intervention stance directed toward the crisis, but stresses the unity, solidarity, and dependability of the United States, Europe, and its NATO allies in an agenda loaded with future courses of action to combat a conflict that interferes with the international order, national sovereignty, basic freedoms, and national security.

Two months after the crisis, President Biden gave his second presidential statement at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland. In this speech, Biden incorporates messages directly to Ukrainian and Russian citizens, on one hand, to assure the Russian people they are not the enemy in this conflict, and on the other to demonstrate powerful unity in supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia. The messages evoked by Biden assert a step toward the future by framing the fight against the conflict as a long-term battle for democracy. Historical background information and direct quotes from individuals such as Abraham Lincoln, Pope John Paul, and Madeline Korbet Albright embedded in the speech bring attention to the perpetual struggle for democracy and freedom and the violation this conflict imposes on international order. Biden brings attention to the leadership image of President Vladimir Putin by evoking words like ‘aggressor’, ‘pariah’, ‘sinister’, and ‘tyrant’ as a manner of formulating a negative image of Putin and conveying that the consequential actions of this Russian leader have resulted in punishment, isolation, and a

costly path for the country. Throughout the speech Biden appeals to the emotions of the audience as he shares anecdotes of his interactions with Ukrainian refugees as a manner of gathering support and understanding for the current efforts of humanitarian relief and the strong NATO presence in surrounding NATO territories.

#### ***4.1.3. Speech Act Examples***

1. *“America stands up to bullies. We stand up for freedom. This is who we are.”*

Speech Act Type: Representative

Biden states that in the face of cruelty, injustice, and violence the United States and ally countries stand united during the battle for democracy and freedom. President Biden speaks of the American image as an entity that holds longstanding values and morals and appeals to public sentiment in emphasizing the importance of the United States taking action against the violation of international law and security. The statement indicates to American citizens to take pride in the measures their country is taking in combatting violence, aggression and corruption when being confronted with conflict. Moreover, within the grammar of the sentences, the term *bullies* indirectly refers to Vladimir Putin and politicians form a part of this entity. Biden frames the term bully as an individual who must be fought and defeated due to their existence as a threat to human rights and liberty. The control Biden has over this representation allows for him to generate a worldview aligned with his intentional goals and promote standing up for freedom as a patriotic act (Wilson, 2015). The assertion emphasizes that the U.S. is morally good, thus initiative must be taken when its values are under threat. The inclusive usage of the subject pronoun *we* demonstrates Biden as a member of the audience, American citizens and “freedom-loving nations”. In including himself as part of the American population, Biden not only asserts himself as a president that fights for human liberty, democracy, and dignity, but also asserts his

personal stance on the considerable power the United States and NATO allies possess over the future of the world.

2. *“And the people of Ukraine can count on the United States to meet its responsibility.”*

Speech Act Type: Commissive

Directly addressing Ukrainian citizens, President Biden wholeheartedly commits himself, the country, and the American government to aiding Ukraine during the crisis event. The sentence fragment reveals a promise where Biden obliges himself to perform an action. By making a promise, Biden commits himself, the speaker, to the sincerity condition of intention to execute future courses of action. The hearer, Ukraine, and its political leaders, possess the ability to hold the speaker accountable to bringing about future states of affairs, whether these involve humanitarian relief, monetary or technical assistance (Searle, 1975). The phrase *count on* assumes full responsibility in confronting the challenges Ukraine faces and making use of the political power that the United States and NATO member countries hold in fighting the assault and securing the principles of global peace. The commissive speech act demonstrates an assurance to Ukraine that its citizens can rely on the United States during a crisis event.

3. *“But we’ll not cease our efforts to get humanitarian relief wherever it is needed in Ukraine and for the people who’ve made it out of Ukraine.”*

Speech Act Type: Commissive

The commissive speech act reveals that a promise has been issued from the speaker, the President, to the hearer, Ukrainian citizens. In this case, Biden strongly commits the country and himself to fulfill the promise of aiding Ukraine during its battle against Russia. The phrase ‘we

*will not cease our efforts*’ increases the illocutionary force of promise as *will not* fortifies the expectation of delivering humanitarian relief and general aid at any time during the conflict to ease their suffering. This involves providing American resources to Ukraine in order to confront the challenges being placed upon the country while assuring people that as the chief executive of the United States, Biden brings forth the control and power he possesses to fulfill his long-term promise on behalf of the country.

4. *“We must commit now to be in this fight for the long haul. We must remain unified today and tomorrow and the day after and for the years and decades to come.”*

Speech Act Type: Directive

President Biden calls to the American citizens as a way to promote unity and solidarity. The usage of the word *we* in the directive speech act shortens the distance between the president and his target audience. In this case, Biden incorporates himself as part of the general public while implementing the use of *must* to increase the illocutionary force of obligation and necessity from the American people as a means of gathering understanding and support for his administration to carry out future courses of action. From an authoritative and powerful stance, Biden’s suggestion determines what he expects of American citizens during unprecedented times while claiming that his administration will undergo whatever means necessary for an undetermined period of time to fight against anything that threatens the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of numerous individuals.

5. *“Russia’s Central Bank is now blocked from the global financial systems...”*

#### Speech Act Type: Representative

Representatives fit the existing state of affairs in that they serve the purpose of asserting information that commits the speaker to the truth of the expressed propositional content of the utterance (Searle, 1975). The statement signifies a fulfilled promise that was previously made in a different presidential statement. This accomplishment strengthens Biden's status as a reliable commander-in-chief by proving he is a man of his word. The assertion that an earlier proposed action was successfully carried out by his administration aids in the truth behind Biden's statement that countries must not underestimate the lengths to which the United States will go to ensure these nonviolent means are executed to avert a long-term war or induce Russia's retreat out of Ukrainian territory.

#### ***4.1.4. President López Obrador***

President López Obrador delivered a set of two brief speeches over the course of two months through a press conference and a social media platform, Twitter. In these speeches, López Obrador asserts that the Russian invasion of Ukraine presents a violation of international law while sustaining his administration's stance of non-intervention. In simple terms, the principle of non-intervention in international law forms part of international order and security that enables a country to possess independence or self-rule in pursuing a course of action politically, socially, or economically. As president, López Obrador focuses on informing and promising Mexican citizens that there is a plan of action set in place to prevent any form of negative consequence that might arise due to the conflict. Meanwhile, he assures the general public that the government will remain vigilant during this time of unease. The presidential discourse highlights López Obrador's attempt to reassure and comfort Mexican citizens while framing Mexico as a supporter of peaceful conflict resolution. Although López Obrador clearly

establishes the foreign policy stance of non-intervention, he demonstrates his point of view and stance on violence, suffering, and war by condemning the use of force on any country.

His brief social media statement on Twitter reinforces the statements made in his previous speech and further provides comments on the continuing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Although he explains that Mexico will abstain from actively taking part in the economic sanctions proposed by the United States and NATO as a form of peaceful conflict retaliation, President López Obrador makes reference to Latin America's history to fortify the reasoning behind Mexico's stance against invasion and war. The historical background information serves as a form of expressing his disapproval and hopes of a peaceful solution to the conflict and continuing humanitarian aid. President López Obrador assertively maintains a neutral stance in the global crisis while stating that Mexico offers its peaceful and meaningful support for the Ukrainian victims suffering due to the crisis event.

#### ***4.1.5. Speech Act Examples***

6. *“Sí, bueno en términos de política exterior nos vamos a seguir conduciendo, promoviendo que haya diálogo, que no se utilice la fuerza, que no haya invasión, no estamos a favor de ninguna guerra.”*

Speech Act Type: Representative

As part of his core duties, in terms of foreign policy as a political leader during a time of conflict, President López Obrador holds the role of crisis manager and articulates the need to strengthen national dialogue against foreign invasion and war. His implementation of the word *diálogo* captures the use of communication as an instrument to manage a political crisis and discuss key issues while serving as a pathway to assess and maintain Mexico's foundational principles.



According to López Obrador, dialogue not as a form of conflict resolution, but as a tool to disperse information about divisive issues presents the country's beliefs and peaceful stance directed towards the crisis event to ensure an ideological uniformity in condemning all acts of aggression and the rejection of the use of force.

7. *“Eso informarle a la gente, que ya tenemos ese plan para actuar, por ejemplo, en producir más energía eléctrica con agua, vamos a echar a andar a toda su capacidad las hidroeléctricas y otras medidas que estamos ya tomando, estamos preparados para eso con el propósito que no haya apagones, que no falte la luz y que no aumente el precio.”*

Speech Act Type: Representative

The statement was issued directly to a member of the press as a response to a question concerning the government's plan of action to prevent rising gas prices. President López Obrador asserts that a precautionary plan is in place to ensure that Mexican citizens do not suffer potential side effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. He maintains that the Mexican government is prepared to face any economic or commercial consequences that may arise with regard to gas, electricity, oil, and water prices. The representative speech act emits a strong illocutionary force of informing as it orders the press to spread information delivered by the president as form of controlling the narrative during the crisis event. The spreading of information presents López Obrador as a confident leader that assists and protects his citizens.

8. *“Desde luego, no aceptamos la invasión de Rusia a Ucrania porque nosotros hemos padecido de invasiones.”*

Speech Act Type: Representative

Once again, President López Obrador's statement emphasizes a foreign policy stance and moral claim. López Obrador resorts to language for the purpose of maintaining the position of neutrality, communicating the identity of Mexico as a country that shares a common history of invasions, and supporting his decision of Mexico's inaction. From a political standpoint, López Obrador implements language to identify the nation and himself in a conceptual reality, notwithstanding the affairs of other countries (Knappert, 1968). The word *no* in the representative speech act does not function as a response to a question or request. In this case, *no* asserts a denial and refusal against a belief and practice. The usage of *nosotros* illustrates a sense of collectivity that remarks on Mexico's repeated history of invasion and war that has led to the country to prioritize a passive foreign policy.

9. *"...incluso está en nuestra Constitución en el artículo 89, es un principio de política exterior la solución pacífica de las controversias y esa es la postura internacional de México...y va a seguir siendo esa la postura, la no intervención..."*

Speech Act Type: Representative

President López Obrador does not intend to commit himself, the country, or his administration to providing support, relief, or imposing economic sanctions. The explanation of the Mexican constitution, specifically Article 89, exemplifies his reasoning behind a hands-off approach in the conflict and invokes truth to his claim due to the fact that the country's constitution in itself states a clear foreign policy approach toward the peaceful settlement of disputes. President López Obrador asserts facts while driving the perspectives and attitudes of individuals in their understanding of Mexico's decision of non-intervention. The phrase '*va a seguir siendo esa la*

*postura*’ serves to reinforce the unchangeable stance of neutrality in order to avoid a deeper involvement in a situation that could potentially cause further conflict.

10. “*Un abrazo fraterno desde México*”

Speech Act Type: Expressive

Although non-intervention remains a key priority for President López Obrador, the closing statement expresses sentimentality toward the country of Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens. The illocutionary force of behind the utterance reveals the function of the sentiments love, kindness, compassion, and friendship that are revealed by the propositional content of the expressive ‘*un abrazo fraterno*’ as it binds the speaker to a presupposed emotional truth (Searle, 1975). The closing group of words imply that despite choosing not to actively participate in the conflict, the speaker (López Obrador) intends for the hearer (Ukraine) to know that on behalf of his country, the President extends a mutual respect, understanding, and affection to the affected nation during an extreme hardship.

#### **4.2. COVID-19 Pandemic**

As public health officials, politicians, and the general public became alarmed by the high levels of the global spread of a foreign virus, a life-threatening disease, and a rapidly rising death toll, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. The global health emergency caused the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to put forth health and safety measures such as global air travel restrictions, stay-at-home orders, mask mandates, and state and local government shut-down orders in order to minimize the spread of disease, prevent the rise of

contamination, and reduce the death toll. Politicians in joint efforts with public health officials, mitigated the release of information and current events to their respective citizens throughout the time of crisis not only to disseminate medical information or statistics, but also to introduce a plan of action in hopes of maintaining a unified and strong front while preserving positive and supportive public sentiments.

#### ***4.2.1. Speech Act Frequency***

In the era of the COVID-19 Pandemic, political public figures throughout the world were presented with the challenge of becoming crisis leaders. As the head of the country during a time of crisis, a president possesses a responsibility and obligation to rise to the occasion as an effective and trustworthy communicator and leader. In crafting their messages to assert information to the public, presidents must utilize their rhetoric to confront other responsibilities such as ensuring the safety, health, and overall well-being of citizens, managing the potential consequences that arise due to the effects of the crisis, and maintaining unity, solidarity, and hope throughout the country. Table 4 presents the speech act frequency in the political discourse of President Donald Trump and President López Obrador during the onset of the coronavirus outbreak.

*Table 3. Crisis 2*

Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Trump	Key Words/Phrases	López Obrador	Key Words/Phrases
Declarations	1	I am officially declaring a national emergency	0	N/A

(table cont'd.)

Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Trump	Key Words/Phrases	López Obrador	Key Words/Phrases
Representatives	186	Smart action today will prevent the spread of the virus tomorrow/Our team is the best in the world/Today, the WHO officially announced/Google is helping to develop a website/The FDA's goal is to/The CDC has published guidelines	49	Vamos a continuar informando/Una cosa es la política y otra cosa es la salud pública/En lo económico lo mismo, tenemos presupuesto/La política es un noble oficio, pero no se sabe de epidemias de virus
Commissives	7	I will soon be taking emergency action/I will always put the wellbeing of America first/We will remove or eliminate every obstacle necessary to deliver	3	Vamos a mantener/Vamos a tener garantizado/Se va a apretar más el cinturón del gobierno
Directives	21	We are strongly advising/it is critical for you to follow the guidelines/Wash your hands/I am instructing/I am asking Congress to/We must take all precautions/I'm urging every state to/	8	Tengamos calma/no hagan lo mismo que sus colegas diputados/todos tenemos que ajustarnos a la opinión de los médicos/que se tenga confianza en los especialistas
Expressives	15	My fellow Americans/Thank you/I appreciate/God bless you and God bless America	3	Buenos días/Espero que

#### ***4.2.2. President Trump***

At the onset of the coronavirus outbreak, as the chief executive of the United States, President Donald Trump delivered a presidential statement and held a press conference as a formal response to the coronavirus outbreak after it was announced as a global pandemic by the

CDC. Trump confronts the challenges that America might and will face during the pandemic while he establishes the political, economic, and social steps put in place to handle the situation. As Trump addresses the nation, he shows appreciation to medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies and administrations, and technological companies in their efforts to provide aid and support through the pandemic. Since the health crisis presents a new and alarming situation worldwide, Trump frequently stresses the importance of taking health and safety measures as the country adapts to the new crisis.

As the coronavirus continued to spread throughout the United States, in a press conference held in the White House Rose Garden, President Trump declared a national emergency, reiterated information included in his previous presidential statement, and provided emphasis on slowing down the spread of the virus, continuously taking precautions, and following the CDC information and guidelines. During the press conference, he allowed for a brief gap in his discourse to provide healthcare professionals and business leaders the opportunity to deliver any additional information concerning the pandemic to the American public.

#### ***4.2.3. Speech Act Examples***

11. *“To unleash the full power of the federal government in this effort, today I am officially declaring a national emergency.”*

Speech Act: Declarative

Presidential power involves a government administration possessing the ability to declare a national emergency in order to put policies in place that are guided toward the safety and protection of all citizens. The time of crisis empowers President Trump, in his position of authority, to *“unleash the full power of the federal government”* with the intention of performing

actions outside of the norm to actively mobilize efforts to manage the pandemic. The illocutionary force is made explicit in the performative sentence through the present continuous sentence “*I am officially declaring*”. Trump brings into existence the severity of the crisis event and carries out the action of declaring by simply uttering the performative verb *declare* in the first person singular, *I am* (Underwood, 2008). This emphasizes the president’s capacity to personally make a difference through policy making, executive orders, signing legislation, and vetoing bills as the head of the state and the head of the government. As Trump invokes his authority, the responsibilities of crisis leadership begin to characterize his presidential image as a leader that reacts, prepares, and executes all means necessary for the country’s best interest.

12. “*And to those families and citizens who are worried and concerned for themselves and their loved ones, I want you to know that your federal government will unleash every authority, resource, and tool at its disposal to safeguard the lives and health of our people.*”

Speech Act: Commissive

Trump’s rhetoric takes on a sense of achievement, initiative, and solidarity while committing the speaker (himself) to a truth about facts or opinions. The illocutionary force of promise is increased as President Trump aims to express empathy toward American citizens by committing the nation’s resources and providing reassurance that his administration possesses the capabilities to undertake the crisis. The statement reflects that the country is in good standing to confront the virus and allows for Trump to maintain the support and influence needed to carry out future obligations and to prevent public disruption. The usage of *I* and *will* in this case conveys a guarantee made personally by the president to Americans and commits him to carrying

out the actions described when the time presents itself. The commissive commits the speaker to a course of action, but the implementation of the first-person pronoun *I* binds the speaker to truly carry out the promise (Underwood, 2008). The possessive determiners *your* and *our*, related to the government and people, demonstrate the responsibility and determination Trump possesses to protect his citizens by relating himself as belonging to the general public during this time of crisis. *Your* further appeals to the emotional ties between the audience and the president by giving American citizens a sense of priority and importance for playing a lead role as part of the population the federal government strives to honor and protect.

13. *“Wash your hands, clean often used surfaces, cover your face and mouth if you sneeze or cough, and most of all, if you are sick or not feeling well, stay home.”*

Speech Act: Directive

President Trump issues a series of orders from a position of authority that illustrate the intent of the speaker (himself) in getting the hearer (American citizens) to perform a number of actions.

The direct expression of a command prompts Trump to utilize a Negative Politeness strategy aimed to minimize the imposition of the face threatening act's unavoidable effects on the hearer by molding and stating the face threatening act as a general rule (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Since Trump does not want to impinge on the freedom of American citizens, but is forced to by the circumstances brought forth by the health crisis, he therefore establishes the direct imperatives as social rules or regulations. The pronoun *you* speaks directly to American citizens and increases the illocutionary force of ordering and commanding as the president strongly urges citizens to “*stay home*” and actively participate in the health and safety guidelines set forth by the government and the CDC that are deemed necessary for the overall wellness and safety of the



country. Trump, as a crisis manager working alongside healthcare professionals, executes directives that reveal how the pandemic must be tackled in order to prevent the crisis from continuing to gravely affect the lives of American citizens.

14. *“The spirit and the will of our nation is unbreakable. We will defeat this threat. When America is tested, America rises to the occasion.”*

Speech Act: Representative

President Trump exhibits values of freedom, duty, and democracy while trying to demonstrate his crisis management skills as a political leader in decision making and executing actions. The words “*spirit*” and “*will*” evoke a feeling of unity and solidarity as Americans rise to overcome adversity together in light of unprecedented challenges. The United States is personified as Trump refers to the body and soul that comprise the nation and the determination the country has in overcoming the threat of disease and personal loss many individuals have had to endure. As the rhetoric gains emotional attention from the audience, it also gains the support and acceptance needed to perform future actions when necessary. By putting forth a claim, Trump demonstrates the psychological state of belief with the purpose of committing himself to a truth through the utterance. The authority Trump holds to lay down facts determine how the audience deduces the relations between the existing state of affairs and their future outcome (Searle, 1975). Trump’s assertions demonstrate a way for politicians to control the audience’s beliefs and attitudes by getting them emotionally invested in the current crisis. Trump makes the confident prediction that the country and its citizens will overcome the global crisis through the statement “*We will defeat this threat*” instills a sense of purpose and hope by means of creating a collective group, *we*, that further connects the president with his audience.

15. *“Tonight, I want to speak with you about our nation’s unprecedented response to the coronavirus outbreak that started in China and is now spreading throughout the world.”*

Speech Act: Representative

As the president, political leader of the country, and in this case a crisis leader, Trump’s statement *“I want to speak with you about”* indicates his obligation and need as the country’s leader to present all information outside of the political system. Trump’s assertion to American citizens demonstrates his initiative in conveying clear and trustworthy information of an unforeseen circumstance to an audience. As part of crisis communication, the president demonstrates his ability to be an effective communicator by presenting information, *“outbreak that started in China”*, on the current state of affairs in order to minimize any uncertainty. By being immediately transparent and honest about the crisis event and actions taken by his administration, Trump does not alienate his constituents and instead frames himself as a poised and reliable leader.

**4.2.4. President López Obrador**

President López Obrador held press conferences to address the country at the onset of the coronavirus outbreak. Initially, López Obrador comments on the government’s previous commitment to multiple budgets focusing upon educational scholarships, pension and disability, and medical expenses. Information concerning the economic affairs of the country and measures to be taken in order to avoid public disruption demonstrated the government’s position on the banks taking a non-intervention stance in the depreciation of the peso during the pandemic. López Obrador emphasized the importance of having faith in the natural course of political and economic stability and advised banks to hold back on intervening by means of creating artificial

demand for Mexican pesos or any currency manipulation. Shifting from economic talk to the global crisis, President López Obrador distances politics and public health by establishing that they are two separate systems that must not be mistaken as the same. As a political leader, he attempts to express sincerity about his inexperience with virus outbreaks or health crises by informing Mexican citizens that his expertise remains within the bounds of politics and that he relies on the expertise of individuals in the medical field to successfully overcome the pandemic, a health crisis.

President López's second press conference commences with a brief introduction to provide public commentary on the spread of misinformation. He utilizes his short moment of dialogue to establish his strong position in allowing the experts such as scientists, doctors, and technicians working in the medical field to take control in the sharing of decision-making power and leadership during the unprecedented crisis event. López Obrador establishes that he does not intend to politicize the situation while humbly stating his administration will continue to put their trust in the hands of the experts. Therefore, the rest of the speech time is left to the healthcare professionals and scientists to effectively convey any information, demands, or data necessary pertaining to the outbreak.

#### ***4.2.5. Speech Act Examples***

16. *“La política es un noble oficio, pero no se sabe de epidemias de virus, yo de eso no sé, no soy todólogo, no soy sabelotodo y es un asunto muy serio como para estar opinando sin conocimiento.”*

Speech Act: Representative

The representative speech act highlights President López Obrador's ideology that public health and politics are two separate systems. The emphasis on the gravity of the situation is shown

through the usage of the intensifier *muy* that draws attention to the crisis and increases the seriousness and importance of listening not only to the president, but to the public health and scientific experts. The employment of the pronoun *yo* allows López Obrador to construct an incontestable self that operates within a political subjectivity (Pennycook, 1994). The sentence fragments “*yo no sé*” and “*yo no soy*” demonstrate that López Obrador speaks about himself in first person to sincerely state that a healthcare crisis is beyond his personal scope of knowledge as a political leader at the same time presenting his power within the confinement of politics. By stating he is not omniscient, López Obrador reveals that efforts to tackle the public health crisis will be made through the collaboration of himself, his administration, and public healthcare workers and other professionals.

17. “*Vamos a tener una política económica que proteja a los más débiles*”

Speech Act: Commissive

The verb ‘*vamos*’ corresponds to the subject pronoun ‘*nosotros*’ that signifies that López Obrador includes himself in a shared sense of responsibility during the crisis. By not referring to himself as a separate individual, he displays solidarity in diligently working with his administration and other government professionals to ensure that the health and safety of the Mexican public is the top priority. The establishment of a unified *nosotros* is utilized as a factor of authority and communality, but also to define a *you*, the at-risk individuals in need of protection (Pennycook, 1994). López Obrador devotes himself to future action that implies even the weakest individuals or those who have taken a mental, physical, or economic toll from the pandemic will be protected by the future actions of their president and government.

18. *“Esto es muy importante, una cosa es la política y otra cosa es la salud pública, porque se cae en mucha desinformación, opinan, todos se vuelven expertos y desinforman, mienten [...]”*

Speech Act: Representative

President López Obrador’s claim is implemented to highlight not only the undeniable fear that the pandemic instilled in numerous countries worldwide, but to draw attention to the surge of widespread misinformation. His response to reporters that have misconstrued his presidential speeches in media exposure illustrates an attempt to delimit the spread of falsehoods during his presidency. López Obrador’s action of informing the public about the spread of misinformation reflects positively on his image as a public leader and negatively on the individuals that do not separate the notions of politics and public health. Words such as “*desinforman*” and “*mienten*” correspond to the subject pronoun “*ellos*”. This delimitation of in-group and out-group conveys to the audience that they must not trust or rely on those stating opinions or false information outside of formal political discourse. López Obrador presents the claim that the accuracy of factual information is more dependable if it is given by an elected official or a health expert.

19. *“Lo segundo en lo general es decirle al pueblo de México que, ante esta situación especial por el coronavirus, por la caída en el precio del petróleo, que tengamos calma, que estemos tranquilos, nuestra economía está fuerte, tenemos finanzas públicas sanas, tenemos reservas suficientes para enfrentar cualquier crisis que se pudiese presentar.”*

Speech Act: Directive

President López Obrador issues a command for Mexican citizens to remain calm and focused throughout any consequences that arise due to the global pandemic. The directive speech acts

*“que tengamos calma, que estemos tranquilos”* are followed by statements that direct the public to stay strong and place their trust in the government to take initiative and accomplish what must be done in order to ensure the economic and social stability of the country. The verbs *tengamos* and *estemos* in the phrase correspond with the subject pronoun *nosotros* that present another instance of in-group language. López Obrador designates a positive connotation to the acts of remaining calm and tranquil by associating them with socially desirable behavior. The in-group language serves to unite the population as a manner of managing moral distress and taking part in the crisis event by sharing the responsibility and moral obligation for the virtue solidarity (Knappert, 1968). While expressing his understanding and acknowledging public sentiments, the directive commits the president to a desire that he wants the audience to perform alongside him (Underwood, 2008). In this case, the president requests a course of action that requires the mental state of calmness and tranquility from Mexican citizens suggested for the overall well-being of both the speaker and the hearer during the crisis event. López Obrador exhibits that, despite the new situation that has arisen, it is important to reassure Mexican citizens that the government, as part of the Mexican population, has developed plans of action to target any severe health or socio-economic consequences. President López Obrador eases the minds of citizens by reminding and reassuring them of the strong and steady economy and the abundant resources that have aided the country over the years in the midst of crisis.

### **4.3. U.S.-Mexico Border Crisis**

Over the course of 200 years, the relationship between the United States and Mexico has developed into cordial and strategic bilateral relations tied together by economic, social, cultural, and political interests. This long-standing partnership shared history and times of turmoil stemming back to the annexation of Texas in 1845 followed by the Mexican-American War from 1845 to 1848 which resulted in Mexico being forced to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe, by which the United States obtained the Mexican territories of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, California, Nevada and Colorado. In the case of the immigration and border crisis, the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Mexico plays an important part in the international affairs of both countries since the signing of NAFTA in 1994. Briefly speaking, the NAFTA agreement between the United States, Mexico, and Canada intertwined these countries “in a trade partnership to eliminate barriers and promote the movement of goods among the three countries” (Velasco, 2018:16). During the course of 28 years, political and economic ties have guided the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico that has fostered their strong and cooperative partnership. Historically speaking, immigration has been an intermestic issue, meaning it affects international and domestic affairs of both nations during the making of policies and reforms. The shared geographic borders between the two countries have undeniably been a key issue in politics for numerous decades as it has transformed into a crisis event due to lack of border security, an influx of illegal immigration, and economic issues. Further igniting the bilateral attitudes toward the immigration crisis, the governor of Arizona passed a law on April 23, 2010 that amended several immigration-related provisions. The signing of the act into law incited numerous manifestations, protests, and boycotts against the controversial law across the U.S. Due to the nationwide reactions, both nations’ presidents were presented with the responsibility of

addressing the key issues of border security and illegal immigration while providing solutions to the present and future challenges.

#### ***4.3.1. Speech Act Frequency***

Political discourse entails various communicative events important for addressing important issues, making public announcements, or emphasizing government actions. Press conferences, a type of media event, are a way for politicians to communicate to the general masses about important news, upcoming changes, or general information. In a joint press conference, presidents from differing countries come together in a professional atmosphere attended by representatives of mass media, other political individuals, and interpreters in which typically the speakers are required to answer media questions. The interpreters during the event allow for a clear translation of speech to avoid misunderstandings due to a language barrier. These translated transcripts become part of government archives that are available for public access. It is important to note that since President Obama took part in these press conferences and meetings, the translated speeches of Peña Nieto and Calderón were obtained through the U.S. press briefing archives, thus their speech act samples are in English. The English language translations of these press conferences were used for this study, as Spanish-language transcripts are not publicly available. The purpose of the selected press conferences were intended for a broader and more in-depth analysis of presidential discourse in times of crisis. As previously stated, American and Mexican presidential terms differ in length, so these discourses were essential in order to perform an analysis on an equal number of presidents corresponding to each country.



Table 4. Crisis 3

Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Obama	Key Words/Phrases	Peña Nieto	Key Words/Phrases	Calderón	Key Words/Phrases
Declarations	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
Representatives	296	Let's be clear about what it isn't/Those are the facts/Today, we have more boots on the ground/Our task then is to make our national laws/Immigration reform is not exception	71	Basically, I have summarized the commitments made during the summit/ For instance, let me inform you/Yesterday we announced that the migrants in the United States/We have revised our security agenda/I would like to refer to the outcome of the North American Leader's Summit/We have made great strides	57	My government does not favor breaking the rules/I strongly disagree with the recently adopted law in Arizona/So the time has come for the United States and Mexico to work together on this issue/Divided we cannot overcome these enormous challenges
Commissives	4	I'll make it easier/We're going to offer the following deal/We will take steps to deal responsibly	5	Mexico will be a tireless supporter/We will reinforce the measures/We will work to provide better well-being to the citizens of our countries/I make a pledge	0	N/A

(table cont'd.)

Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Obama	Key Words/ Phrases	Peña Nieto	Key Words/ Phrases	Calderón	Key Words/ Phrases
Directives	6	We need to do more/We have to demand/Pass a bill/Everyone please have a seat	2	I must insist in terms of our binational agenda/So be welcome to this very warm weather	1	We must find a better way
Expressives	22	Thank you/God Bless you/I want to thank/I believe we can put politics aside/I want to work with both parties/I believe it's important	15	It is a great honor/I would like to welcome you to our country/I would like to congratulate myself/Thank you very much, Mr. President/We believe that these investments can be so helpful/I finally want to offer my best wishes/I hope that we have been able to build an even stronger relationship	8	I appreciate the kind invitation/It is a great honor to stand before you today/I want to express my gratitude/I also salute the Mexican Americans and all Latinos

#### ***4.3.2. President Obama***

In 2010 and 2014, President Obama delivered a presidential speech and address remarking on the issues of border security and illegal immigration among other national issues. The presidential discourse presents to the audience the essential elements that encompass the creation of a comprehensive immigration reform as a solution to these challenges and addresses

the key issues the U.S. faces due to the immigration crisis. Obama reiterates more than once that the system is broken while presenting statistical information in order to gain the support for “a system that reflects our values as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.” Although the U.S. arguably lacks an effective immigration system, Obama condemns the controversial law passed in Arizona, as he sees it as the doorway for racial discrimination and profiling that puts all immigrants at risk, regardless of their citizenship status. He acknowledges the hardships immigrants endure in leaving behind their home country, facing dangerous obstacles during travel, and adapting upon their arrival to a foreign country. While recognizing the hardships of immigration, Obama provides fundamental historical acknowledgements of the flow of immigration throughout the years that took part in the development of the nation the U.S. is today and the economic, technological, cultural, and societal contributions immigration has brought to the country.

#### ***4.3.3. Speech Act Examples***

20. *“We’ll take steps to deal responsibly with the millions of undocumented immigrants who already live in our country.”*

Speech Act: Commissive

The employment of a commissive speech act denotes the president’s sincere intention of fulfilling the future course of action he is proposing as a political leader to the audience. The usage of “*we will*” encompassing himself and his administration, demonstrates the objective to ensure a successful comprehensive immigration reform that will target all the initiatives set forth. The phrase “*millions of undocumented immigrants*” augments the emphasis on the fact that, in order to achieve a successful solution to the migration crisis, the high population of illegal immigrants spread throughout the United States must be addressed in order to move forward

towards stable border enforcement and the creation of effective legal citizenship pathways. Here, Obama highlights the significance behind aiding the individuals that want to take part in legally building a life in the U.S. and contributing to the well-being of society.

21. *“And to those members of Congress who question my authority to make our immigration system work better, or question the wisdom of me acting where Congress has failed, I have one answer: Pass a bill.”*

Speech Act: Directive

President Obama bestows a command on Congress as a preemptive response to any backlash that may arise from the strategic goals he has proposed to combat the issues of border security and immigration. The usage of a command shines a light on the fact that Congress holds the power to enact laws that could regulate immigration, thus proving that over the years, the previous divisive political climate had failed to introduce consistency. Obama puts scrutiny on Congress' failure to efficiently pass a law that targeted the existing flawed immigration system. Directly speaking *“to those members of Congress”*, Obama addresses the political divide within Congress between the Senate and the House of Representatives and those who continuously *“question”* or oppose any step toward the achievement of comprehensive immigration reform. In issuing the direct imperative *“pass a bill”*, Obama displays the usage of the bald-on-record strategy to maximize efficient communication with no minimization of the face threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The speaker, Obama, intentionally performs the face threatening act and chooses to ignore or make irrelevant the hearer's face demonstrating that he does not fear any retaliation or non-cooperation from Congress due to their incapability of establishing an effective solution for the U.S.-Mexico border security and immigration crisis.

22. *“But I believe we can put politics aside and finally have an immigration system that’s accountable. I believe we can appeal not to people’s fears but to their hopes, to their highest ideals, because that’s who we are as Americans.”*

Speech Act: Expressive

The clause “*I believe*” states an opinion that presents the beliefs and attitudes of the president toward a solution aligned with U.S. values that protect individual rights and liberties since “*that’s who we are as Americans*”. The expressive speech act demonstrates Obama as hopeful and motivated to incorporate immigrants into American life and society as active participants by shaping an easier pathway to citizenship. By evoking the pronouns ‘*I*’ and ‘*we*’, Obama constructs a personal link between his sentiments, ideals, and his respective audience.

23. *“Those are the facts.”*

Speech Act: Representative

The president is perceived as a public figure who resembles and upholds the values and morals of the country as an authentic voice of the people. The “*facts*” presented to the audience are implemented with the key intention of defining the fundamental issues and framing solutions for the overall prosperity of the country. Asserting “*those are the facts*” increases the popular belief that the information conveyed to them is from an individual that possesses authentic information. In this case, Obama finds himself within the sincerity condition that defines the psychological state of the speaker “thus, an illocutionary act with an assertive point commits the speaker to believing the propositional content” (Underwood, 2008:9). As Obama recalls the country’s history, he is implementing discourse from a political standpoint as a credible source of

information and a strong, supportive, and honest leader that American citizens can rely on because he means what he says.

24. *“I want to work with both parties to pass a more permanent legislative solution.”*

Speech Act: Expressive

“*I want*” emphasizes Obama’s desire to ensure a collaborative effort between political parties, state and federal governments, businesses, and individuals. The importance of bipartisan support and efforts in order to achieve conflict resolution and political transformation with regard to immigration policies. Obama presents the necessity of a “*permanent legislative solution*” stressing that the process entails bridging the bipartisan divide, taking responsibility to make an action-oriented agenda, and finding common ground for the well-being of American citizens and those who desire to become a part of American society.

#### ***4.3.4. President Peña Nieto***

In February 2014, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper, President Obama, and President Peña Nieto came together for a bilateral meeting in Toluca, Mexico to discuss topics such as immigration, international regional security, economic vitality, sustainable and clean energy, and NAFTA. President Peña Nieto addressed citizens, a body of delegates, and members of the media as he presented a summary of the scope of their meetings to demonstrate the collaborative and coordinated efforts of Mexico, Canada, and the United States in establishing and implementing an agenda.

A year later, President Obama welcomed President Peña Nieto to the White House, a meeting in which the two presidents discussed improving immigration, border security, economic growth, cross-border commerce, and educational exchanges. President Peña Nieto

shared two fundamental topics within the multi-thematic agenda that focused upon plans for immigration and border security. The bilateral meeting demonstrated the deep bonds of the U.S.-Mexico relationship that is based on mutual respect, friendship, and shared interests.

#### ***4.3.5 Speech Act Examples***

25. *“And we will maintain the greater control of the southern border to continue having orderly migration and to avoid the items that I have just mentioned.”*

Speech Act: Commissive

President Peña Nieto makes a promise to demonstrate his intentions of maintaining legal immigration between the United States and Mexico while decreasing illegal immigration. As a political leader possessing the power to enact changes, “*we will*” frames a solution to a problem by emphasizing that Peña Nieto and his administration acknowledge the current issues and the role his administration holds in establishing “*greater control*” over any type of migration. The implementation of “*to avoid*” demonstrates a manner of gaining support for future action while guaranteeing that those actions will prevent the occurrence of a surge in illegal crossings and improve positive border conditions.

26. *“It is a great honor to have hosted you for the North American Leaders’ Summit here in the state of Mexico and Toluca, its capital city, a State that I had the great honor of being the Governor of before I took office with the greatest honor in the world of politics, and that is to lead the course of my country.”*

Speech Act: Expressive

Peña Nieto expresses a feeling and attitude by evoking a state of pride. In expressing “*it is a great honor*”, Peña Nieto grants a sense of high respect and esteem for the position he holds as a

politician. Through the words “*honor*” and “*lead*” he adds desirability and privilege to a political role that includes the power to guide a country and the entirety of its citizens. Within the expressive speech act, Peña Nieto presents the information that he once held the title of Governor and now holds the title of President. By doing so, Peña Nieto illustrates the notion that it is the highest form of flattery to be the president of a country. The speaker-oriented approach of the expressive serves the purpose of expressing personal gratitude (Underwood, 2008) in this case not for something the hearer has done, but for something the speaker has achieved. The effect of the personal pronoun *I* presents to the hearer that Peña Nieto is responsible for this current state of affairs.

27. “*And I must insist, in terms of our binational agenda with the United States, we have added up Canada to work on a program to train professionals by increasing our academic exchanges and ensuring mobility of students between our three countries.*”

Speech Act: Directive

“*I must insist*” intensifies the importance of making sure all three countries work together to increase the exchange of students and expand educational partnerships. Peña Nieto insists and requests that Canada actively participate in “*ensuring the mobility*” of exchange while demonstrating that a strategic and positive dialogue is continuously maintained between the countries. This demonstrates that migration also constitutes a business and educational standpoint as it has the capacity to fuel economies by increasing the size of the labor force, creating a diverse work-force, and providing opportunities to future leaders.



28. *“We have revised our security agenda and we have agreed to maintain a strategic dialogue, to coordinate efforts so we can face a common issue: security in both of our countries and, specifically, security at the border.”*

Speech Act: Representative

The usage of a declarative sentence brings forth that Peña Nieto is asserting something as being the case while bound to the sincerity condition that commits him to the truth of the propositional content of “*we have revised*” and “*we have agreed*” (Clark, 2021). The assertion gives value to international collaboration for the purpose of establishing the prosperity and vitality of the United States and Mexico as they confront shared issues. The past tense statement “*we have*” informs the audience of an action that has already been completed, thus demonstrating that the presidents have previously discussed the issues that affect both countries on a separate occasion. Peña Nieto places responsibility on all branches of government that operate within the law for a situation that is reflective of the heritage and values of each country while ensuring the audience that strategic and coordinated plans have been set to target the common issue, border security.

29. *“And I would finally like to thank you for your openness, for your willingness, your always very cordial and frank tone, President Obama, to continue building a relationship between both nations of friends, mutual respect, to continue promoting the development of our countries.”*

Speech Act: Expressive

The diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico are not solely bound by history and geography, but extend to the shared business owners, students, families, educators, tourists, and workers who bring prosperity and culture to both countries. In thanking President Obama

and praising the bilateral relationship that has been built between the two countries over the years, Peña Nieto frames himself as a collaborator, friend, trustworthy partner, and reliable leader that understands and empathizes in the collaborative work of facing common issues. Peña Nieto displays a positive politeness strategy to imply a common ground in the efforts of prioritizing and constructing a bilateral relationship for the well-being of their respective countries (Brown & Levinson, 1978). While implementing this common ground strategy, Peña Nieto manipulates another positive politeness strategy, giving gifts to the hearer, as an extension of intimacy through compliments that frame the hearer as an admirable and interesting leader and political partner. The illocutionary force of praising and thanking is elevated by the words “*openness*”, “*willingness*”, “*cordial*”, and “*frank*” as they determine the attributes that make Peña Nieto fond of working alongside President Obama and further his desire to continue the development of not only the countries, but also their mutual friendship.

#### ***4.3.6. President Calderón Hinojosa***

In 2010, President Obama extended an invitation to President Calderón Hinojosa to address and discuss key issues in a joint press conference at the White House. During the arrival ceremony and the joint session of the U.S. Congress, President Calderón affirms the vision he has for the future prosperity of Mexico. He shows appreciation toward the cooperative and supportive bilateral relationship between the countries by establishing the common values as well as the common challenges shared by the United States and Mexico. Throughout both speeches, Calderón displays agreement and acknowledgement of the urgency and importance of fixing a broken immigration system, improving border security, and ensuring a shared prosperity. Aside from discussing border security, immigration, firearms trafficking, economic structural reform, and climate change, Calderón clearly states his strong disagreement and

condemnation of the Arizona anti-illegal immigration law, signed and passed on April 23, 2010 that allows for racial profiling and imposes additional criminal penalties on violations.

#### **4.3.7. *Speech Act Examples***

30. *“We cannot ignore this threat to civil rights and democracy, two core values that we share; we must find a better way to face and fix together this common problem.”*

Speech Act: Directive

By utilizing the words “*we share*”, Calderón appeals to the shared bond between the United States and Mexico while assigning responsibility to the U.S. to take initiative in the coordinated efforts of addressing border security and immigration. This usage of the inclusive *we* form highlights Calderón’s implementation of a positive-politeness strategy to redress the face threatening act as a form of cooperative assumptions (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The directive is softened through framing the speaker, Calderón, and the hearer, U.S. citizens and Obama, as being cooperatively involved in the handling of the crisis. He heightens the importance of finding a solution as a unified team since border security and immigration is an issue that presents itself in both countries. The implementation of “*we cannot*” denounces threats that jeopardize civil rights and democracy while emphasizing the act of ignoring as an absolute forbiddance from a political standpoint. Instead, “*we must*” protect these rights by working in a collaborative manner to fix the problem. These directives impose an obligation on an individual that establishes an expectation to be bound to morally act as a rule of conduct during a crisis event (Koike, 1989). Calderón issues two commands directed towards Congress, President Obama, U.S. citizens, and the press to highlight that comprehensive immigration reform does not have to breach core values in order to be an effective solution. If a solution breaches the core

values of both countries, then an alternative proposal must be selected to ensure the safety and protection of immigrant individuals.

31. *“However, I strongly disagree with the recently adopted law in Arizona. It is a law that not only ignores a reality that cannot be erased by decree, but also introduces a terrible idea, using racial profiling as a basis for law enforcement.”*

Speech Act: Representative

The statement draws a sharp criticism on the lack of cooperation between state and federal systems in formally and professionally addressing the U.S.-Mexico border crisis without impeding civil rights and democracy. The personal pronoun “I” defines the personal stance President Calderón has taken against the Arizona law by informing the audience that this controversial action opens up a legal way for law enforcement officers to racially profile citizens and provides them with the power to make warrantless arrests. The illocutionary force of condemning and claiming is strengthened by Calderón stating the law is “*a terrible idea*”. This display of transparency Calderón demonstrates to Congress gives insight to the audience into the speaker’s feelings and thoughts on a specific reality.

32. *“I want to tell the migrants, those who are working here for the greatness of this country, that we admire them, that we miss them, that we are fighting for their rights and that we are working hard for Mexico and for its families.”*

Speech Act: Expressive

Through his demonstration of personal emotions, President Calderón alludes to the notion that his feelings are associated with the fact that immigrant families and individuals contribute to a

workforce, an educational system, and their communities in a foreign country. “*I want*” highlights the need and desire Calderón has to directly address Mexicans living in the United States. By employing the subject pronoun “*we*”, Calderón emphasizes that his administration shares the same sentiments when he evokes the verbs “*admire*” and “*miss*” to express a sense of respect and admiration for those individuals who left their home country to seek a different life. Calderón demonstrates the capacity to relate to others through his implementation of an expressive to communicate feelings and emotions about the world around him (Mey, 2001). The truth embedded in the speech act is supposed to present that the speaker, Calderón, is sympathetic toward unauthorized and authorized immigrants in the U.S. Calderón feels their absence in Mexico and asserts that his administration alongside the U.S. is “*working*” and “*fighting*”. In other words, they are engaged in combatting any challenges that create unbearable hardships that cause citizens to flee to another foreign country. The usage of an expressive attempts to deliver hope to immigrants in the U.S. that political transformation and progress is near at the same time showing emotional transparency to gain trust and support in the dependability of political leaders.

33. “*Today, Mexicans and Americans share a decisive moment for our respective countries.*

*We face common challenges of great magnitude: organized crime, economic crisis, climate change, migration.”*

Speech Act: Representative

President Calderón asserts that a strategic partnership makes it feasible to obtain opportunity and progress in light of numerous challenges. The statement “*a decisive moment*” brings attention to the necessity of finding common ground as a choice toward the future and a new era for the

bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico and their respective citizens. The utterance of a declarative sentence permits Calderón to create the image of a reality shared by the U.S. and Mexico intended to represent the truth condition of commonality (Clark, 2021). Calderón stresses the shared responsibility both countries hold in facing and overcoming “*common challenges of great magnitude*” as a unified team by standing up to all of their common enemies in order to provide citizens with the opportunities, progress, and solutions they deserve.

34. “*It is a great honor to stand before you today. I would like to thank Congress and the American people for this invitation. I want to express my gratitude to all of you here who have supported Mexico during very challenging times.*”

Speech Act: Expressive

As President Calderón commences his speech with “*it is a great honor*”, he denotes a high level of esteem in possessing the opportunity to speak before American citizens and members of Congress. This privilege is further elevated by the sentimental appeal of “*I would like to thank*” and “*I want to express my gratitude*”. The action of thanking constitutes the speaker, Calderón, giving recognition and appreciation to the hearer, Congress, the United States, and the American people, as a way of expressing gratitude for their kindness and support in Mexico’s troubled past. The expressive speech act signifies that Calderón continues to hold expectations for the cooperation, partnership, and commitment these countries share simultaneously increasing the importance of continuing this prosperous partnership to confront the challenges put before the countries today.

## **Chapter 5. Results & Discussion**

This chapter aims to provide a pragmatic viewpoint of speech acts in political discourse. The discourse analysis as a part of the pragmatic investigation enables a more profound look into the manner in which political discourse establishes itself through political leaders as a way of not only exhibiting ideologies or leadership, but also within a context that draws attention to the complexities of a political reality at a time of crisis. The power behind political rhetoric lies within these leaders as they capture their intended audience by presenting information, making promises, expressing sentiment, or issuing threats while adhering to public interests, values, and morals.

### **5.1. Speech Acts in Political Discourse**

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) devised the fundamentals of Speech Act Theory that establishes the conception of language as a means of performing an action through words. This discursive tool enables the ability to comprehend a speaker's intention behind pragmatic features that distinguish speech act types and demonstrate what is being conveyed to a hearer within social, cultural, and political contexts. When discussing politics and political discourse we encounter this rhetorical strategy that on a pragmatic level reveals the contradictions, inconsistencies, intentions, and communicative functions of a speaker.

Since there is a relationship between linguistic utterances and their pragmatic functions, Table 5 demonstrates the raw frequencies of each speech act type in the political discourse of the U.S. Presidents under analysis. As displayed on the data table, U.S. presidents frequently utilized representatives to state, conclude, report, or inform the audience about their respective crisis event. The data table serves to demonstrate that each president, although leaders of the same

country, possesses a distinct manner of utilizing language in a time of great uncertainty and distress.

*Table 5. U.S. President Speech Act Frequency*

Speech Act Frequencies							
Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Number of Speeches	Biden	Number of Speeches	Trump	Number of Speeches	Obama	Speech Act Total
Declarations	2	0	2	1	2	0	1
Representatives		269		186		296	751
Commissives		14		7		4	25
Directives		19		21		6	46
Expressives		17		15		22	54
Total:		319		230		328	877

The implementation of discursive strategies in the political discourse of a crisis leader during a state of political, social, and economic turmoil conveys the manner in which a leader of a country molds and structures language to cautiously execute intention. Table 6 displays the raw frequencies of speech act realization in the discourse of Mexican presidents during their respective times of crisis. As illustrated by the data table, representatives were the most frequently implemented at the onset of a crisis event for the purpose of communicating about the current state of affairs to an audience. The data presents the notion that Mexican presidents share similarities within their discourse, but also differ in their speech act frequencies in comparison to one another.

*Table 6. Mexican President Speech Act Frequency*

Speech Act Frequencies							
Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Number of Speeches	López Obrador	Number of Speeches	Peña Nieto	Number of Speeches	Calderón	Speech Act Total
Declarations	4	0	2	0	2	0	0
Representatives		77		71		58	206

(table cont'd.)



Taxonomy of Speech Acts	Number of Speeches	López Obrador	Number of Speeches	Peña Nieto	Number of Speeches	Calderón	Speech Act Total
Commissives	4	4	2	5	2	0	9
Directives		8		2		1	11
Expressives		5		15		7	27
Total:		17		22		8	253

The findings of the study indicate that in the political discourse of both American and Mexican presidents, Representative speech acts are the most frequently employed in crises at a total of 958 out of 1,129 speech acts. Expressives constitute the second most recurring speech acts with a total of 81 out of 1,129 while Directives make up the third most employed speech acts at a total of 56. Finally, Commissives and Declarations have a lesser usage totaling at 34 out of 1,129 and 1 out of 1,129 speech acts. The noticeable pattern of the prominent usage of representatives across the board comes as no surprise. A time of crisis presents a politician with the political leadership and central roles of an integrator, visionary and executor. As leaders, presidents must articulate assertions in a time of crisis as a matter of importance to maintain public trust and confidence in the crisis leader and his administration. These utterances emphasize how a politician operates limited by the circumstances of context, the time of crisis, and their point of view as a speaker in conveying truthful and factual information with regard to a time of uncertainty, collective stress, and pressure (Mey, 2001).

## 5.2. American Presidents

### 5.2.1. Biden

The presidential discourse of President Biden at the onset and after President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine reveals the implementation of 0 declarations, 269 representatives, 14 commissives, 19 directives, and 17 expressives. The results demonstrate that as opposed to

Trump and Obama, Biden was the American president who most commonly utilizes commissive speech acts while being the second president behind Trump to heavily implement representatives. Biden's rhetoric reflects the United States' response to this tragic event and stresses the importance of unity and commitment with NATO and European allies.

The use of representatives aids President Biden in establishing that the country is on the side that fights against oppression and the invasion of other countries. Biden's implementation of an 'us' versus 'them' frame is a way for a politician to control the audience's beliefs and attitudes by getting them emotionally invested in the current crisis since "languages unite and divide, and it is precisely this double potential that has tempted rulers to make use of it as a tool for the extension and the maintenance of their power" (Knappert, 1968:62). Biden frequently refers to President Putin's administration with the possessive pronoun *their* such as "*their* ability", "*their* military" and the subject pronoun *they* in the case of "*they* fell", "*they* have to share in the pain", "*they* crossed the border" in order to refer to the Soviet Union in its prior existence and anyone partaking in the actions of present-day Russia. This out-group language enhances the notion of the politics of pronouns as they possess the capacity to portray "a homogenous and different they" (Pennycook, 1994:176) to generate a separation between Russia and democratic countries since "these are not the actions of a great nation". By implementing out-group language, Biden indicates to the audience that he condemns these actions while he creates a psychological distance as a means of getting the audience to support his views. His clear intention is to render the truth hard to question when the essential principles of a free society are under threat. The sentence order of example 1 reflects upon the group he wishes to emphasize for his own communicative goals. Biden could have said "*We stand up for freedom. America stands up to bullies. This is who we are*", but chose to frame the issue as one of 'us'

versus ‘them’. In the chosen sentence order, he gives a higher level of importance to the image of the U.S. as a collective group and frames the ‘other’ as a bully, an outsider from the collective, and someone who seeks to do harm and intimidate the vulnerable. By doing so, Biden distributes responsibility to the American society as a group that must seek justice and action against perpetrators of this horrific crime against liberty.

Undoubtedly, Biden’s usage of in-group language entails the function of the pronoun *we* as highlighted by the representative speech act examples 1 and 4. The implementation of the subject pronoun *we* refers to the collective identity and membership of the U.S., its citizens, and its political leader. *We* in these examples shines a positive light on inclusivity and appeals for solidarity and support, request for improvement, and hopes for the future (Pennycook, 1994). The inclusive *we*, referring to both the president and the American citizens, sets a shared responsibility that has the power to make people feel obliged to support and defend as a “sacred obligation” to the U.S. and those in other countries facing a threat to their liberty, freedom, and democracy. Interestingly, Biden implements the pronoun *we* in his issuing of directives due to the important notion that politicians in issuing directives mitigate politeness through the usage of indirect speech acts. For instance, few directives are formulated as imperatives or explicit performatives (I command, I request, I order, I recommend) and instead implement indirect strategies to achieve the success of the speech act through politeness, sincerity, and appropriateness. Under preparatory conditions, a speaker is required to have the power of authority when evoking a direct speech act to a hearer. In the appropriate circumstance, the speaker determines and possesses the belief that the hearer has the ability perform situationally appropriate actions established by the speech act (Searle, 2011). Biden manipulates these preparatory conditions or presuppositions by attempting to convey a unified obligation tied to an

American identity comprised of values and morals in order to issue his commands and requests to avoid impoliteness or any imposition or threat on the hearer.

Through representative speech acts, President Biden draws a clear distinction between when he refers to his administration and NATO's role in the conflict of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the American public. The pronoun *we* is initially implemented for the purpose of establishing a collective and is then implemented to portray a different *we* subject, Biden and his administrations and institutions by utilizing the pronoun in the following manner "*we* will limit", "*we* have cut off", "*we* are imposing", and "*we* have sanctioned". The subject pronoun *we* is paired with the possessive adjective *our* through instances such as "*our* actions", "*our* allies", "*our* forces", "*our* commitment", and "*our* considerable power" to assert authority and that the initiatives taken by President Biden, NATO allies, and the nations helping the U.S. confront and combat this threatening power will have serious consequences for Russia. The pronoun choice puts emphasis on the use of *we* and *our* as "a persuasive strategy materially supported by reminding Americans of the potentials and capabilities of the U.S. plus the abstract ideals for which such strengths should be utilized and exploited" (Minoo et. al, 2018:185). Interestingly, similar to Trump, Biden asserts the possessive adjective *my* in two instances "*my* administration" and "*my* country" as a tool to display a sense of ownership and direct responsibility for the actions being used to protect Americans and Ukrainian citizens. Biden positions himself as speaking truth to power as he negotiates the idea of being part of a collective American identity at the same time that he distinguishes his position of authority.

As previously stated, Biden employs commissives as his second most frequent speech act by incorporating statements such as: "*I will do everything in my power*", "*the United States will*", and "*we will*". The frequent usage of commissives emphasizes President Biden's attempt to

portray an image of himself as a strong, trustworthy leader capable of taking responsibility and action during a major national crisis while presenting a certainty to Americans. As shown through examples 2 and 3, President Biden exhibits values of freedom, duty, and democracy while trying to demonstrate his crisis management skills as a political leader in decision making and executing actions.

As he dominates the conversational floor, Biden violates the maxim of quantity (*do not provide too much or too little information*). His extensive discourse concerning the crisis event consists of several anecdotes, historical references, facts, and quotes. Although Biden provides information appropriate to the context, he arguably delves too far into denouncing Russia's actions and establishing rhetorical justifications for retaliatory action.

### **5.2.2. Trump**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a profound change worldwide that prompted political leaders to formally speak about the crisis event in communicative environments. Trump, as the chief executive of the U.S. during the onset of the crisis, utilizes discursive strategies while addressing an audience which revealed that he employs 186 representatives, 1 declaration, 7 commissives, 21 directives, and 15 expressives.

Regarding the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic under the administration of President Trump, the usage of representative and commissive speech acts reveal a set of American values. Trump's commissive speech acts present both future plans of action and make promises to his audience while defining a reason for the future courses of action earlier proposed and to inspire trust in him and American institutions to achieve these actions. As shown by example 12, not only do these commissives offer reassurance to Americans, but they also take on a sense of achievement, initiative, and solidarity while committing the speaker to a truth about facts or

opinions. The use of commissives align with the President's point of view on the crisis as Trump simultaneously believes that the country will triumph in despite of this health crisis and that he is capable of successfully executing his intentions, "thus committing himself, the political speaker cannot be honest without believing that would keep the agreement" (Mirela, 2015:623). Trump gives strength to his administration and political institutions through the sincerity condition that paints a picture of honesty asserting that Americans will "emerge from this challenge stronger and more unified than ever before". As the rhetoric gains emotional attention from the audience, it also gains the support and acceptance needed to perform future actions when necessary.

Trump's usage of representatives indicates the need for the country's leader to present all information outside of the political system in spite of the clinicians and scientists present at the communicative event. Instead of the professionals serving as political advocates and sources of information, Trump utilizes most of the conversational floor to set a presidential image of power as the source of information during the most critical time in the nation. Embedded within representative speech acts, Trump frequently implements expressives to show his appreciation for the healthcare professionals, pharmaceutical companies, and technological industries that diligently worked to help the American population impacted by COVID-19. Through his position as a political speaker, the expressive speech acts present the strong psychological states of appreciation and hope. Despite the sense of appreciation for those essential workers ensuring global preparedness against COVID-19 and dutifully caring for the well-being of American citizens, Trump exhibits a sense of ownership and recognition of his administration by indicating that these economic and medical institutions are operating within the demands and boundaries of "*my* administration".

Trump employed one declaration as demonstrated by example 11 “*I am officially declaring*”, in which case the personal pronoun *I*, in the employment of a declaration, implies the president is speaking on a personal level while showing authority, individual commitment, involvement, and responsibility. This speech act displays the “illocutionary force of a declaration, since it would cause a profound change in the American social- political reality; the correspondence between propositional content and this reality is achieved within the presidential institution” (Mirela, 2015:622). Trump follows the declaration with a representative speech act that provides the audience with the reasoning behind taking the step of unleashing governmental power. The action stresses the notion that a change has been made to the current state of affairs, thus we can identify that the illocutionary force has achieved the permanence of change upon the world.

Furthermore, in comparison to Biden and Obama, Trump devotes the smallest number of representative speech acts to his discourse, but the most directives. The 21 instances of directive speech acts mirror Trump and his administration’s tendency of enforcing political authority by issuing direct orders to his audience. The issuing of direct orders to an audience in Trump’s discourse portrays the occasional use of “illocutionary force of the directive; the degree of strength of illocutionary goal is expressed through a weak performative, “*recommending*” (Mirela, 2015:623) that seeks to prompt the responsibility and involvement of Americans in actively combatting the crisis by taking the appropriate measures indicated by the CDC to reduce and prevent the spread of COVID, since “each of us has a role to play in defeating the virus”. However, Trump employs directive speech acts through flat imperatives such as “*wash your hands*”, “*cover your face and mouth*”, “*clean often-used surfaces*” and explicit performatives such as “*I am instructing the Small Business Administration to*” and “*I am calling on Congress*

*to*” that enhance impoliteness. Due to the fact that directive speech acts can have an imperative force that can be perceived as face threatening, Trump’s directives could be interpreted by the hearer as something that is intrusive to their freedom of action because it is an exercise of power from the speaker that violates politeness. A direct speech act demonstrates that a speaker has a right of authority and relative power to impose a desire or wish on the hearer, in this case abiding by health protocols and guidelines (Koike, 1989). All in all, these specific directives were implemented alongside representatives in order to establish an “all hands on deck” initiative.

As part of the discourse analysis, the pronominal usage in Trump’s discourse was considered to better understand the strategic usage of his speech acts. Throughout his discourse, Trump refers to his administration using the first person plural *we* in the following examples “*we* are monitoring”, “*we* appreciate”, “*we* are discussing”, “*we* are strongly advising”, “*we* have been working”, and “*we* made tremendous progress” while also referring to himself through the first person singular *I* in occurrences such as “*I* have decided”, “*I* signed”, “*I* met with”, and “*I* appreciate”. The institutionalized usage of *we* asserts a power differential as “*We* is always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion” (Pennycook, 1994:175). By excluding civilians, on one hand, Trump takes direct responsibility and ownership in pursuing certain political ends, and on the other hand centers discourse around the fact of the president as the sole leader and decision maker by using *I* to both distance himself from the audience and to refer to himself in the image of president, leader, chief executive, and elected official. The implementation of *I* phrases accompanied with *we* phrases enables a politician to present their individualized perspectives, opinions, and sentiments to highlight their own accomplishments, leadership qualities, and appreciation for the purpose of demonstrating their personal involvement in the lives of Americans. Moreover, the pronoun *we*



is seen throughout the discourse only to incite hope and increase the overall morale of the audience speaking on behalf of the government. *We* in these cases is used to refer to the U.S. the country and how the U.S. will prevail even through the most difficult crisis and to imply that since the audience forms a part of this country, they will also prevail. It is quite compelling that the possessive pronoun *our* in examples such as “*our banks*”, “*our unemployment*”, “*our federal health experts*” reflects group membership while Trump employs the possessive adjective *your* in “*your local officials*” in the occurrence of a representative speech act. The usage of *your* demonstrates a manner of indicating that Trump speaks to ‘you, the civilians’ that need to listen, obey, and execute the health guidelines since it is critical for *you* and *your* well-being. Trump supports the psychological sentiments of Americans as they face numerous hardships during the crisis through the utilization of *our* to refer to the political institutions that belong equally to the people while distancing himself through the use of *your*.

### **5.2.3. Obama**

The results indicate that Obama employs 0 declarations, 296 representatives, 4 commissives, 6 directives, and 22 expressives in his presidential discourse regarding the U.S.-Mexico Border Crisis. Compared to Presidents Trump and Biden, Obama utilizes the most representatives and expressives throughout his discourse.

As the speech act frequencies highlight, Obama’s discourse primarily focuses on stating facts and information about past and present states of affairs with regard to border security, illegal immigration, and the lack of action from Congress. Through the implementation of representative speech acts, Obama acknowledges the social, economic, and cultural contributions Mexico brings to the vitality of the United States and honors the immigration history the U.S. has had over the course of many decades. Furthermore, the multiple representatives are stated as

facts with the inclusion of both personal and possessive pronouns being that the most common subject pronouns are *I*, *we*, and *they* while the most common possessive is *our*. The possessive adjective *our* is primarily utilized to establish a connection between American citizens and the U.S. By using *our* in cases such as “*our* immigration system”, “*our* country”, “*our* border”, “*our* economy”, “*our* government”, “*our* society”, and “*our* character”, Obama gives a sense of ownership and belonging to American citizens while including himself as a part of this sense of ownership, belonging, and responsibility. Moreover, it is evident that there are numerous instances of pronominal choice throughout his political discourse, specifically the implementation of subject pronouns. For instance, the first-person plural *we* is mostly reserved for posing questions to the audience that deliberately compels them to reflect on their individual identity as part of the political culture of the U.S. and to give recognition to himself alongside his administration for performing exemplary actions and taking initiative to combat a threatening situation. Only in certain parts of the speech does Obama employ *we* to create a collective identity as a small attempt to reflect that he holds the same desire of finding a solution for border security and the broken immigration system while maintaining a collective identity comprised of shared values and morals that define American citizens and their great nation. Evidently, the discourse analysis revealed the frequent utilization of the first-person singular *I* in occurrences such as “*I* committed”, “*I* began”, “*I* worked”, “*I* believe”, “*I* want”, “*I* understand”, “*I* know”, and “*I* hear”. The representative speech act example (“*there are actions I have the legal authority to take as President*”), and expressive speech act examples 22 and 24, highlight his claim to superiority as an individual that possesses the power to incite change in the world. While he speaks to the political parties involved in the transformation of the immigration system while

managing politeness, Obama maximizes his expression of the beliefs that are favorable to the hearer for the common good (Fraser, 1990).

Due to the current crisis event and the existing state of affairs between the U.S. and Mexico, Obama employs the third person plural *they* to refer to the “11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States”. Interestingly, Obama’s discourse demonstrates the manipulation of in-group and out-group language by alluding to undocumented immigrants in the examples “*they* work hard”, “*they* worship at our churches”, “*they* support their families”, “*they* live in the shadows”, “*they* should be required”, “*they* must get right with the law”. From a position of leadership, in employing the pronoun *they*, Obama constructs an image of the ‘other’ to draw a distinction among those who are legal American citizens and those who reap “the rewards of living in America without taking on the responsibilities of living in America”. The use of in- and out-group language in political discourse denotes a concept of other where the speaker self-identifies with a group that does not include the *other* such that “if ‘we’ claims authority and communality, it also constructs a ‘we/you’ or a ‘we/they’ dichotomy” (Pennycook, 1994:176).

Furthermore, it is important to note that commissive, directive, and expressive speech acts were skillfully placed throughout the speeches intertwined within representatives. For instance, Obama offers a deal to those residing in the U.S. that are currently undocumented in order for them to “*come out of the shadows and get right with the law*”. The commissive speech act is followed by a series of assertions that remark on his point of view in making these lawful actions in order to address those who will criticize his actions and to affirm that these actions should have been put in motion years ago. Immediately following these assertions, a directive speech act is directed to Congress. The directive speech act of example 21, “*pass a bill*”

highlights how even chief executives are “blocked or forced to modify their goals by the other powers that be in the political system, especially in the domestic sphere” (Greenstein, 2005:220). Issuing a command from an authoritative standpoint after making statements with regard to initiatives being taken to target the broken immigration system and the issue of the numerous undocumented individuals currently residing in the U.S., Obama increases his sense of authority as president within the constraints of a political system in addition to demonstrating he “is open”, seeking to maintain the adherence of the audience who already shares his choices and values, but he also seeks to conquer the “hesitant” or to cause “changings of mind”, seeking to determine the adherence of a larger segment of the population” (Mirela, 2015:622).

### **5.3. Mexican Presidents**

#### ***5.3.1. López Obrador***

To discern an underlying pattern in the manner that López Obrador establishes his political stances and communicates with the audience as a political leader during a time of crisis, the strategic employment of speech acts and pronouns are analyzed in the discourse. The results reveal that López Obrador employs a total of 0 declarations, 77 representatives, 4 commissives, 8 directives, and 5 expressives throughout his four presidential speeches. Prior to elaborating upon the discourse, it is fundamental to note that Spanish is considered a ‘pro-drop’ language in that subject pronouns may be omitted if they are pragmatically and grammatically inferred by their corresponding verb conjugations. For example, López Obrador tends to implement the first person plural *nosotros* through the verbs “*vamos*”, “*queremos*”, “*tenemos*”, “*estamos*”, “*condenamos*” “*aceptamos*”, and “*consideramos*” and the first person singular *yo* through the

verbs “*quiero*”, “*voy*”, and “*soy*”. In these instances, he does not explicitly state the subject pronoun, but still establishes the referent via person and number subject agreement.

The overall speech act results show that in both speeches López Obrador utilizes expressives exclusively to greet the audience, express hope, and, in one occurrence, to conclude his speech. As previously noted, expressive speech acts convey a speaker’s emotions about themselves and the state of affairs in the world. The overall usage of 5 expressive speech acts conveys the minimal emotional engagement López Obrador has in the crisis events. The fact that López Obrador employed the smallest number of expressives in his discourse emphasizes that his rhetoric is primarily used for pointing to facts, points of view, and actions. On the contrary, he most frequently includes directives and representatives that specify that the tone and nature of his political discourse is reserved for the purpose of actively presenting a realistic assessment of a crisis event, an action based agenda, or a political stance.

49 out of the 77 representatives are employed by López Obrador when addressing Mexican citizens about COVID-19. Regarding his COVID-19 discourse, López Obrador maintains that “*nuestra postura como gobierno*” is to foresee and prepare for any consequences that may arise due to the health crisis with regard to the economy in cases such as the depreciation of the Mexican peso and the decline of petroleum prices. Since representatives serve the purpose of presenting a reality through a declarative sentence, the representative speech acts are implemented to highlight not only the undeniable fear that the pandemic instilled in numerous countries worldwide, but also to draw attention to the surge of widespread misinformation. Some statements and claims are used to highlight the political complexities of the COVID-19 Pandemic and López Obrador’s ideology that public health and politics are two separate systems as indicated by speech act examples 16 and 18. The rhetoric reveals his humble

efforts to not politicize the crisis event and to reassure the Mexican public that their health and safety is not only in the hands of policy makers, while simultaneously positively framing the image of public healthcare workers and other professionals. In praising and supporting business, science, and medical professionals, López Obrador reflects his ability to work with other intellectuals while putting his own trust in the hands of individuals outside of his administration.

The 8 directive speech acts implemented in the discourse portray the need for López Obrador, his administration, and Mexican citizens to adjust perspectives to the opinion of the professionals, so that they may provide insight and advice to best confront the situation as a united population. As López Obrador seeks to keep Mexicans factually informed, he frames scientists and medical professionals as honest, confident, knowledgeable, and morally good individuals since they are “*incapaces de mentir*”. Indirect requests are implemented by López Obrador to enhance the fact that “conversational requirements of politeness normally make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences (e.g., Leave the room) or explicit performatives (e.g., I order you to leave the room), and we therefore seek to find indirect means to our illocutionary ends (e.g., I wonder if you would mind leaving the room)” (Searle, 2011:30). By not employing flat imperatives or explicit performatives, López Obrador mitigates the manner in which his message is presented to the public in order to avoid any impositions on the hearer. While only 3 commissives are employed in his discourse, López Obrador utilizes them to reassure Mexican citizens that if the case arises, the Mexican government will oversee all plans of action as shown in example 17. When López Obrador makes a promise or guarantee, the audience is holding him accountable to his sincerity and commitment as a leader due to the fact that “an illocutionary commissive act is respected only if the speaker turns the propositional content into the truth, assuming and fulfilling the future course of action represented by the commissive” (Mirela,

2015:621). The sincerity condition is vital in a politician's behavior as it applies to his responsibility to the future execution of the promised actions. The preparatory and sincerity conditions of commissive speech acts determine that the speaker is able to and intends to perform the proposed future action while the hearer wants the speaker to perform said action (Searle, 2011). If the commissive was not made in good faith, López Obrador could suffer the severe consequence of developing both mistrust and distrust among his citizens since the verbal contract was broken.

Since the Russia-Ukraine invasion, worldwide responses and initiatives have reflected the military, political, and economic positions of various countries in the crisis. With regard to the onset of this crisis, President López Obrador's press conference and public social media statement exhibit a brief discourse as the data reveals only 28 out of the 77 representatives, 1 commissive, and no directives. The lack of directives and commissives in the discourse point to López Obrador's notion that "given that I want to communicate, what I do communicate depends on what I can communicate, given my circumstances, and on what I must communicate, given my partner's expectations" (Mey, 2001:70). While being questioned about his political stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, López Obrador employs representatives to emphasize that Mexico will remain neutral in all foreign affairs and take a non-intervention approach as it has for many years, as reflected in speech act examples 6, 8, and 9. As opposed to President Biden, who demonstrated an action-based front, President López Obrador's rhetoric reveals the frequent use of representative speech acts in order to condemn the invasion while affirming Mexico's neutrality and non-intervention in foreign affairs. The political stance exhibits the Mexican values of independence, patriotism, honor, and loyalty that further establish the underlying message that his support and dedication remain with Mexico and its citizens and will not permit

any economic or political reprisals from being involved in the Russia vs. Ukraine conflict. This form of action establishes the presidential qualities of the courage it takes to make an unpopular decision and the ability to create an environment of safety. Furthermore, representatives are equally employed in the presidential rhetoric to make statements and claims of contingency plans as demonstrated in speech act example 7. In order to assert his strong leadership image, López Obrador provides reassurance to the audience that plans of future actions have been made in the event of rising issues due to the conflict. The discourse calls attention to the heavy implementation of the subject *nosotros* in the usage of representative speech acts. As argued by Brown and Gilman (1960), pronouns have the ability to show either solidarity and equality or social distance and inequality. This implicates López Obrador's focus on maintaining a neutral front and abstaining from the conflict by exemplifying a united image of remaining impartial. He moves down the power dimension to bring his status to a lower level of superiority in order to remain part of an equal and solidary group as fellow members of the same country. Solidarity in this case triumphs over power differentials, thus reflecting a sense of togetherness that indicates the strategic role discursive pronouns play in establishing that "behavior norms are practices consistent within a group. So long as the choice of a pronoun is recognized as normal for a group, its interpretation is simply the membership of the speaker in that group" (Brown & Gilman, 1960:123) in López Obrador's discourse.

### **5.3.2. Peña Nieto**

The analysis results of President Peña Nieto's discourse exhibit that he overall employs the most commissives in comparison to Calderón and López Obrador and when speaking about the border crisis he employs the most expressives in comparison to Obama and Calderón. This is



reflected by the frequency of distributions of 0 declarations, 71 representatives, 5 commissives, 2 directives, and 15 expressives.

Unlike López Obrador and Calderón, at the beginning of his discourse, Peña Nieto implements an expressive speech act to congratulate himself for establishing a communicative space where political dialogues can take place. Interestingly, Peña Nieto incorporates an expressive speech act to bring recognition to himself to then follow the expressives with two representatives and one directive speech act “*so be welcome to this very warm weather*”. At the same time the news conference was taking place, the 2014 Winter Olympics were being held in Sochi, Russia, so Peña Nieto takes the opportunity to state that the audience should feel grateful and appreciative for being in a warm environment since “*I can be certain*” the individuals participating in the Olympics during cold weather do not share the same level of comfort. This piece of information flouts the Cooperative Principle maxims of quantity and relation due to the fact that Peña Nieto contributes more information than required that is not a relevant contribution to the discourse. It is quite compelling that he deliberately chooses to issue a bald imperative “*so be welcome to this very warm weather*” that denotes the negative face threat of the utterance (Mey, 2001).

The pronominal choices in the political discourse of presidents emphasize the manner in which politicians are capable of appealing to the interests, desires, and concerns of an audience in order to achieve an end goal whether it is the increased political participation, share of responsibility, or redefining of a leadership image (Knappert, 1968). As opposed to the other presidents, Peña Nieto’s discourse demonstrates heavy employment of the first person singular *I*. Although the subject is often in first person, it is mostly employed in his usage of representatives and expressives, in examples like “*I am very glad*”, “*I want to thank you*”, “*I would like to*

present”, “*I would like to welcome*”, “*I would like to summarize*”, “*I must note*”, and “*I would like to say*”, the excessive use of the first person in the discourse of the news conference denotes Peña Nieto’s attempt to construct his self-identity in his role of government as a good politician by assuming all responsibility in either asserting information or evoking sentiments. This is verified through the commissive speech act “*I make a pledge* so that the seventh summit of leaders of North America serves its purpose” since as the host president and country of this political event he carries the responsibility of ensuring that the initiatives established serve the country. Speech act example 26 exemplifies that the implementation of this pronoun to an audience in his discourse indicates where he, as the speaker, is positioned relative to the hearer. Peña Nieto breaks the norms of power and solidarity through a pronoun that implies superiority as shown by example 26 (Brown & Gilman, 1960). Nevertheless, when the first person is included with emotive language through his implementation of 15 expressive speech acts, Peña Nieto portrays himself as a sincere and open individual that is grateful to work alongside President Obama or other presidents on their main objectives to increase trade, modernize border crossings, Cuban diplomatic relations, academic student exchanges, and guarantee citizen security. The meaning of the expressive speech acts is sought through the emotionally charged words that attract the attention of the audience (Brown & Gilman, 1960). For instance, 5 out of 15 expressive speech acts are dedicated to expressing his honor, appreciation, and recognition to President Obama during the bilateral meeting held at the White House. As reflected by example 5, the expressives make reference to the outstanding characteristics Obama’s presidency brings to the good friendship and relationship that the U.S. and Mexico have held and developed for numerous years. Through the implementation of expressives Peña Nieto brings attention to the

level at which he holds a high regard for Obama and the amount of importance and honor directed toward maintaining a solid and respectful relationship.

The frequent expression of appreciation and thanks as a linguistic strategy threatens Peña Nieto's negative face (Fraser, 1990). As a guest in the White House, his freedom of action is in question, thus Peña Nieto continuously decides to evoke this type of speech act even though it is threatening to him for the sake of appealing to Obama's positive face in making him obliged to accept the compliments. Peña Nieto makes an effort to continue establishing solidarity and partnership through the first person plural *we* and the possessive *our* when summarizing the multi-thematic agenda that was created by the joint efforts of President Obama, Prime Minister Harper, and himself. The examples "*we* want", "*we* believe", "*we* share", "*we* have", "*our* border", "*our* entrepreneurs", and "*our* countries" are illustrative of his willingness to share the responsibility with Obama and other administrations. This sense of unification and inclusiveness carries over to his implementation of commissive speech acts. Example 25, along with three other commissives, illustrate the application of *will* in a commissive that presents volition, as opposed to an obligation of Mexico's efforts in immigration control and the well-being of citizens. Peña Nieto, in making his promises via the use of *will* instead of *shall* presents a lesser determination to carry out his obligations (Fraser, 1990) while reaffirming and strengthening his political relationships and his personal relationship with the audience. This suggests that his administration has the intention of carrying out future actions but does not desire to ascribe the future events to his own will.

### **5.3.3. Calderón**

When addressing his audience about the U.S.-Mexico border crisis, Calderón strictly maintains his usage of representatives and expressives as demonstrated by the data in his

implementation of 0 declarations, 58 representatives, 0 commissives, 1 directive, and 7 expressives. Unlike Peña Nieto and López Obrador, Calderón does not utilize commissive speech acts in his discourse. The lack of commissive speech acts indicates Calderón's priority in presenting positive economic, social, and political notions while being focused on the future of finding a strategic solution for the U.S. and Mexico's surging migration and decline in border security.

When communicating with the general masses, Calderón's use of the first-person plural *we* over the first-person singular *I* reinforces a connection and association between the speaker, himself, and audience members. *We* constructs an image of collectivity at the same time that the role of speech and language aid in establishing a connection between personal experience and unified political and social structures (Marlin, 2017). The usage of *we* in Calderón's discourse produces a personal and collective viewpoint as a form of appealing to an image of social togetherness for the U.S. and Mexico. The president speaks not as a separate individual, but as a representative of a group, Mexico, and its citizens. By referring to themselves as a part of their audience, politicians reveal the usage of discourse as a form of persuading the audience through the presentation of the same shared values, morals, and ideologies. For instance, the possessive *our* and the subject pronoun *we* applied through representative speech acts in cases like "*our* governments", "*our* common enemy", "*our* people", "*our* two economies" "*we* face common challenges", "*we* are friend and partner nations", and "*we* confront" Calderón alludes to strength in mutual collaboration by bridging the social distance between himself and the hearer, Obama. The pronouns identify the subjects, the U.S. and Mexico, including their respective citizens, as a unified group in order to establish two options in facing the common challenges both countries face. Calderón states that they must either mutually work together to fulfill concerted actions or

face “mutual recrimination”. As opposed to Peña Nieto, Calderón’s usage of pronouns and speech acts to address his relationship with Obama highlight the professionalism and distance maintained in the strategic partnership. Calderón does not exhibit pride when speaking of unity and togetherness with the United States, but rather focuses upon the necessity of the bilateral relations for ensuring the prosperity and wealth of Mexico.

It is compelling that Calderón chooses the subject pronoun *I* to portray a slightly personal level of discourse when he utters instances of “*I* know”, “*I* am sure”, “*I* want to express”, and “*I* fully respect”. Speech act example 31 demonstrates one of these incidents where the first person singular in the statement “*I* strongly disagree” evokes his personal emotional reaction to the state of affairs. The use of *I* in the directive cultivates a social division to exemplify that the political community must strive to overcome these types of issues for the shared prosperity of both countries. This reflects upon Calderón’s personal stance and opinion while reflecting that he is cognizant of the ramifications the Arizona anti-immigration law can bring upon numerous documented and undocumented immigrants residing in the state. The representative speech act highlights his confidence in expressing a potent act of resistance against the solutions that impede human rights and safety to the U.S. Congress and President Obama. This again calls to mind the theory of politeness developed by Brown & Levinson (1987) that proposes the notion of positive and negative face and which determines that certain types of speech acts are more face-threatening than others. By expressing his disagreement with the Arizona law, Calderón threatens the hearer’s (Obama) positive face indicating that Obama’s self-image is negatively evaluated by Calderón (Fraser, 1990). In other words, although Obama also condemns the law, as the president of the United States he encompasses a representative image of all 50 states despite the fact that federal and state governments have exclusive and concurrent power. By

stating his blatant disagreement with the Arizona anti-immigration law, Calderón demonstrates an impolite approach of communication since he performs his representative act bald, on-record without cushioning his criticism. Calderón maintains a textual structure throughout his discourse that elaborates on the rhetorical features of the pragmatic context that accounts for a functional relationship between the sequence of sentences and speech acts in his coherent discourse while addressing his audience locally and nationally (Van Dijk, 1980). His speech acts are strategically intertwined to create a connection between his statements, opinions, and sentiments. When adding further information to the negative assertion by following it up with a directive as seen in example 30 “*we cannot ignore*”, Calderón utilizes the speech act for it to serve as an explanation for his expression of condemnation. On another note, the expressive speech acts employed in Calderón’s discourse, as demonstrated by examples 32 and 34, express attitudes and feelings toward Mexicans residing in the U.S., Obama, and the U.S. Congress. By choosing to be polite in order to preserve face and give emotive meaning to the interaction, Calderón utilizes language in order to do things like express gratitude, pride, hope, and encouragement through expressives which require him to maintain the truth behind the sincerity of his emotions (Mey, 2001).

#### **5.4. Ideology**

As they craft their text and talk, presidents as crisis leaders in a political context need to skillfully integrate effective communicative strategies to lead their citizens through challenging times. The discourse of politicians, more importantly the chief executive of a country, reflects priorities, intentions, and power involving social, cultural, and ideological aspects implemented in rhetoric. As established by Van Dijk (2003), “political discourse is the site where politicians’ multiple ideological identities are enacted...” (215), therefore they have the power to reveal ideological differences between countries, cultures, and societies. Through discourse analysis,

the ideology of politics can be displayed through the analysis of grammatical structures within speech acts and the implementation of specific words, phrases, and pronouns in accordance to the speaker's aims (Wilson, 2015).

It is important to note the cultural and social differences revealed through the data regarding leadership, ideologies, and values. Discourse plays a role in illuminating the social conventions of a culture within a sociopolitical context that politicians operate to encompass all of the voices from all ideological apparatus of the nation. Forms of political discourse such as press conferences, bilateral meetings, or presidential statements are produced by an individual speaker but belie collective ideologies and personalize group beliefs to portray personal beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. These socio-political ideologies reflect group membership and how politicians adhere as a member of a political party or social groups. Often these ideologies form a part of a system of beliefs shared by the members of a social group that in turn form a social representation (Van Dijk, 2006). The results of the investigation reveal intuitive differences between the United States and Mexico's handling of a crisis event and the portrayal of leadership, nation, unity, democracy, and freedom through their respective ideologies.

#### ***5.4.1. Religious expression in presidential discourse***

As reflected by the presidential discourses, the difference between U.S. and Mexican politics concerning religious expression is striking. The marked contrast is quite compelling such that a divide of political party ideology did not take part in the discourse of American presidents pertaining to the notion of religion. The discourse analysis reveals that all three American presidents, Biden, Trump, and Obama, exhibit religiosity in concluding their discourse with religious expressions as presented by the following expressive speech act examples: "God bless you all.", "God bless America.", and "God bless this country." In fact, President Biden took his

discourse a step further by evoking “And may God defend our freedom.”, “And may God protect our troops.”, and “God bless the people of a free and democratic Ukraine”. Political actors are deliberate in the manner that they display discourse to their respective audience; thus, in the case of American politicians, the intersection of religion and politics is merged with the view of the United States reflective of its values and ideals as part of an American identity. Although religious expressions are exhibited in the American dollar, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the National Anthem, the use of religiosity in the discourse of a leader representative of all the inhabitants of the country highlights an attempt to bridge the gap between politics and faith through the moral and religious dimensions of their political discourse. Through the invoking of God, American presidents convey the notion that God will bless the nation and its citizens and allow the U.S. to prosper and prevail against any circumstance. Politicians are assertive in the manner in which they present a sense of moral superiority and make religion a part of the public’s overall engagement and American identity emphasizing the political nature of religiousness that motivates, justifies, or legitimizes human action (Paraschivescu, 2012). The political sign-off “God bless you” as a standard conclusion of American discourse develops the notion of religious identity as a cultural unifier, but does not encompass the religious diversity of the country. Furthermore, the political discourse of American presidents reveals what reality does not; the lines of a Church and State division that are rhetorically blurred while the separation of Church and State is ignored and violated to portray the ideals of the U.S. and God as a form of faith that unites the country under one entity.

The signaling of aspects of religion in American discourse create a stark contrast to the discourse of Mexican presidents. The absence of religious expressions in the political discourse of Mexican presidents denotes a separation between religion and politics as a general attitude for



Mexican politicians leading a country that contains a history of Catholicism as the dominant faith. The ideology of secularism is reflective of the wider gap Mexico has established in terms of Church and State that emphasizes the differing role religion plays in both countries.

#### ***5.4.2. Russia-Ukraine Crisis***

The press conference with reference to the Russia-Ukraine crisis draws attention to representative speech acts. As opposed to President Biden, who demonstrates an action-based front and condemns Vladimir Putin's aggressive actions, President López Obrador's rhetoric discussing the crisis reveals the frequent use of representatives to affirm Mexico's neutrality and non-intervention in foreign affairs. Biden and López Obrador state and make reference to Russia's violent actions against Ukraine as a violation of international law through representatives, but differ in their foreign policy stance. The speech act data unearths that while both countries uphold peace and freedom, signifying a common ideological ground, their discursive and political approaches portray the differences in their stances whether for political necessity, order, or interest.

Biden embodies the manner in which a political figure spins language to establish who they are and what they want as he builds a persuasive case for foreign intervention by the United States. The Russia-Ukraine crisis rhetoric demonstrates Biden's embodiment of American values through the ideological appeals for liberalism and patriotism as a way of incorporating American individuals in the social conscience with the idea that the citizens are trying to help and support others by becoming involved in foreign affairs. This notion is enhanced as Biden displays a positive representation and action of *us*, Americans, through the negative representation and action of *them*, bullies and those who threaten democracy (Van Dijk, 2006, 2003). Biden, acting as an advocate for intervention, amplifies the negative properties of President Putin through

representative speech acts and the usage of *we* to characterize himself, his administration, and Americans through key words and phrases representing the concepts that stand for a national identity. The ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy indicates that while U.S. stands for equality, freedom, and human rights, the *other* performs anti-American actions such as the invasion of another country. Biden emphasizes these negative traits of the *other*, President Putin, as a threat to the established international order and as someone outside of the collective. Biden’s diverse employment of directives, commissives, and expressives embedded alongside representatives as a strategic discursive structure, demonstrates the priority he has given to humanitarian aid, the promotion of democracy, U.S. determination as a characteristic of the American identity, and solidarity with NATO allies determining that this action warrants U.S. intervention to hold Russia accountable.

On the other hand, López Obrador’s linguistic style reveals the national character, social structure, and group ideology of Mexico. He dedicates brief discourse to establish the underlying message that his support and dedication remains with Mexico and will not permit any economic or political reprisals from being involved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This form of action establishes the presidential willful resistance and qualities of courage it takes to make an unpopular decision and the ability to produce an environment of safety. His usage of representative speech acts signifies the importance of a strict non-intervention ideology to avert the political and socio-economic repercussions or other profound risks of actively participating in a foreign crisis. By means of speech act implementation, López Obrador demonstrates how the crisis is presented to the public, the manner in which he generates world views in accordance to his goals and ideals, and how he frames a situation to achieve acceptance toward his political decision making (Wilson, 2015). His discourse reveals that López Obrador continuously asserts

his strong support for the right of peace and freedom as the ultimate political goal alongside stating his disapproval of Russia's act of aggression in order to clearly define his stance and reassure the audience the country's neutrality does not indicate that he favors oppression, domination, or imperialism. The ideological foundation of López Obrador is founded by making reference to Mexico's historical past. As indicated through his representative speech acts, Mexico is a country that has faced foreign invasions and civil wars throughout its history. The historical information of Mexico's past reflects López Obrador's underlying rationale for the legitimacy behind neutrality favoring resolutions that dismiss violence and conflict. Although López Obrador finds it difficult to intervene in the international conflict, he condemns actions of aggression as attacks on democracy and advocates for his foreign policy stance as the pursuit of peace through diplomacy.

#### ***5.4.3. COVID-19 Pandemic***

The political and ideological reactions in presidential press conferences at the onset of COVID-19, a major public health crisis rapidly spreading worldwide, enhance the manner in which presidential discourse is strategically formulated to avoid any increased paranoia, stubbornness, fear, or desperation while conveying goals and guiding principles of mitigation behaviors. Many individuals lack the professional expertise to assess factual information or make inferences, so they rely on trusted resources, such as a political leader, to address and regulate important information. Often the political decisions of presidents in the appropriateness of policy responses as a reaction to a global health crisis cause controversy among citizens highlighting that "the social controversy directly attributed to COVID-19 suggests that the strength of people's informational environments, the voices they listen to, and subsequent beliefs and attitudes should not be underestimated as factors influencing health behaviors" (Geana et al.,

2021:2). The impact of speech act realizations in political discourse can resonate differently from one president to another as observed in terms of political speech and ideology in times of hardship, uncertainty, and distress.

In accordance with an action-based preventive approach, Trump and López Obrador exhibit an “all hands on deck” and “we are all in this together” ideology, so that society can partake in the unified action of engaging in COVID-19 preventive behaviors by assuming personal responsibility over their actions when in public areas or when ill not only for self-benefit, but also for the benefit of others in the community at greater risk. The perception that these behaviors will be beneficial illustrates that citizens alongside politicians and healthcare professionals are responsible for the outcome of the health crisis by associating these outcomes in the name of health, security, and prosperity.

Rhetoric presents different styles of leadership in confronting a crisis. President Trump held press conferences to declare a national emergency, to assert facts regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide Americans with an update on the new actions being taken or to be taken in order to combat the pandemic as established through commissives. Representatives outnumbered other speech act types reflective of the discourse that emphasizes the fact that aside from the press conference speakers that were allowed a short moment to address the public, Trump was the primary figure in showcasing the key concepts. Trump’s ideology of nationalism transcends through his implementation of speech acts as they denote the idea that in worldwide chaos, America emerges. His ideologically-driven actions of perseverance and optimism as a way forward past the perception of an external threat emphasize the importance of the recommended preventive actions proposed by the CDC. As Trump employs promises, suggestions, and demands, his presidential image is constructed as he addresses the nation as the

symbolic leader of the crisis. His establishment of speech acts reflects the “terms and conditions imposed by the social institutions applicable to the interaction” (Fraser, 1990). For instance, he issues directives to request that citizens abide by the COVID-19 restrictions in order to secure healthcare compliance to reinforce and regulate the principles of citizen conduct throughout the crisis which in turn could be perceived as diminished personal liberties by the audience. His textual structure brings forth how he mitigates the spread of information through a position of authority to safeguard the welfare of individuals and collective communities. Trump’s discourse frames the threat of the virus as significant while diminishing its risk perception through reassuring Americans that the United States has a strong foundation to combat the crisis. By controlling their perception and understanding of the crisis and inherently constructing the beliefs of Americans, Trump forms a part of the institutions that possess the power to shape the social, cultural, economic, and political lives of citizens.

The COVID-19 press conference draws attention to the differing ideology that President López Obrador shows in his use of representatives by exhibiting the viewpoint of the separation of health and state. He characterizes technicians, doctors, and scientists as respectful, honest, and well-educated in order to reassure the public of their credibility in asserting the truth and gain the public’s trust. Obrador’s rhetoric was limited to asserting statements so as to primarily direct the press conference to other important figures aiming to continuously draw a distinction between politics and public health. López Obrador’s brief discourse indicates the press conference is an instrument for the purpose of allowing coordinators, public health workers, and business leaders to present information to the public about the spread of COVID-19 and future health and economic actions. This ideological stance portrays Mexican values of independence, honor, and loyalty in giving value to the human life of Mexicans. López Obrador formulates his discourse to

enunciate that an individual's political partisanship should not influence their beliefs or attitudes on this complex issue for it presents personal consequences for everyone (Geana et al., 2021). In other terms, López Obrador presents himself as a politician with no ground as a policy maker to discuss healthcare matters. As a manner of boosting compliance through health institutions that have the capacity to make an effort in encouraging and stressing the need of these behaviors, López Obrador alludes to the political action of connecting the public with scientists and healthcare professionals through the exchange of reliable information in order to influence the audience's willingness to participate in increasing favorable outcomes during the crisis. In order to assert his strong leadership image, López Obrador warns the public against the spread of misinformation and disinformation dispersed on social media or other media platforms. The Q&A interaction, between López Obrador and the press denotes journalists as an authority of the media that control the means of production and their control over institutions that reinforce certain political notions (Geana et al., 2021). Through his rhetoric, López Obrador intervenes against false content as a way of combatting the abundance of misinformation, promoting reliable sources in the dissemination of COVID-19 information, and presenting his own accountability measures to avoid any intergroup distrust.

#### ***5.4.4. U.S.-Mexico Border Crisis***

The long-standing immigration and border crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border over the years has deepened the concern over illegal immigration, border security, and the high number of undocumented immigrants currently residing in the U.S. The geopolitical proximity of the United States and Mexico has encouraged their rich diplomatic, political, and economic relations that have developed into the shared responsibilities of overlapping crises for the sake of social well-being, prosperity, and vitality. By means of their discourse, presidents as the guiding

leaders of a country manage their discursive strategies and techniques to portray how their respective governments handle the situation and generate their political image “since many citizens care about the personalities of their leaders as well as their policy positions, presidential candidates and presidents emphasize positive aspects of their characters as they sell themselves to the public...” (Farnsworth, 2015:63).

A president must aim to internalize the job duties of a leadership role while figuring out how to embody the nation’s values, morals, and ideals since “as head of state, the president is expected to represent all Americans, but in his political capacity he must engage in the divisive process of advancing his administration’s policies” (Greenstein, 2005:229). Obama as a dominant figure uses and manipulates discourse to appeal to the symbols and representations that American citizens believe to be the essence of the country. Obama, in addressing the issue at hand, reflects his attempt to shape American public attitudes toward immigrants through the notion of “The American Dream” as a promised land of equal opportunity and success to assert a migrants’ fundamental objective of reaching said dream in hopes of rebuilding their lives, pursuing a higher education, or achieving upward economic mobility for the ability to provide for their children and loved ones (Gries, 2016). Obama first constructs a positive presidential image through the ideology of multiculturalism in the acknowledgement of the United States’ historical past to enhance the contributions of immigrants in the political, social, cultural, and economic landscape of the U.S.. This concept is then elaborated to build upon the central topic of his discourse, utilizing his authority to implement a comprehensive immigration reform. Obama constructively presents a plan that targets the root of the problem, undocumented criminals, and identifies the involvement of policy while presenting himself as a president who is guided by a set of objectives that will lead to his accomplished goals, the creation of a comprehensive

immigration reform and the expulsion of illegal immigrants that are criminals and drug dealers. He presents his policy vision through his strategic usage of rhetoric to evoke public sentiment and place blame on Congress for the purpose of gaining support on border and immigration policies. He enhances his commitment to a “whatever it takes” approach by evoking a directive to reveal Congress is ideologically polarized as a tool to emphasize their failed attempts at finding a plausible solution intelligently framing his intense personal commitment to a moral policy.

In their approach for crisis communication, American and Mexican presidents vary in their ideologies as revealed by individually demonstrating their own discursive reality. For example, Peña Nieto associates his political position with an importance of pride and self-esteem through positive self-representation whereas Calderón exhibits pride through the sense of national unity, honor, and duty. Additionally, Peña Nieto focuses a portion of his speech to incorporate discourse as a tool to frame the presidency with the symbolic roles of power, security, and reliability. Promises and assertions directly present to an audience his intentions of guaranteeing the fulfillment of the bilateral agenda through emphasizing his administration’s responsibility and obligation to ensure Mexico will be doing its part to secure their side of the border to confront the increased number of people traveling through Mexican land to their shared border seeking asylum. In his discourse, Calderón shows intent to encompass the viewpoint of all Mexicans both in the United States and Mexico in assessing and condemning the intentions of a law that negatively impinges the rights of undocumented and documented immigrants in the United States by promoting racial discrimination. The choices of his words reflect the choices of his ideas in utilizing discourse to target the notion of a unified approach to a problem that severely affects the perception of the Mexican population by others.



Although distinct in their realization and strategic usage of speech acts in their discourse, Peña Nieto, Calderón, and Obama, as lead political actors during their terms, present to the audience the idea that their political decisions are in the national interest. Ideology constitutes a system of beliefs shared by a collective; it is plausible, then, that political statements are aimed to align with the beliefs of an audience (Van Dijk, 1997). All three presidents strongly frame crisis resolution with the constructed belief that the crisis is a problem that requires large-scale solutions and a collective process to achieve a comprehensive reform. The socio-racial ideology frames both countries as being capable of assuming responsibilities and duties by promoting a discursive sense of belonging to a social group that socially shares the same mental representations of the group beliefs or attitudes pertaining to the crisis event. “The pronoun *we* is one of these structures, typically used to deictically refer to the ingroup of the current speaker” (Van Dijk, 2006:124). The context indicates the pronoun *we* is ideologically marked to bring recognition to the fact that *we*, Americans and Mexicans, share a common ground through *our* values, morals, hopes, and vision for the future. The presidents demonstrate their countries’ competence and strength in determining future action and targeting the profound concerns of the public in terms of border security while intertwining a reliable and effective process that will grant legal status to those residing in the country and those wishing to reside in the U.S. American and Mexican presidents alike form a prominent positive view of their unified leadership qualities as political leaders who rise to the demands and concerns of their people and countries.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

Historically, times of crisis grant insight into the dilemmas that a nation faces through qualities and actions that distinguish presidential leadership. Times of crisis as complex historical circumstances obligate political leaders, in this case presidents, to address their country and confront a new reality during their presidencies. As such an event presents various social, political, and economic difficulties for a country, presidents as crisis leaders must implement discursive tools to construct and manipulate their discourse to weigh the costs and benefits of their decisions associated with the contextual environment of their political discourse, determine how they will rise to the challenge, and decide in what way they will present this information to an audience. In the present study, times of crisis bridged together the discourse of politicians in the United States and Mexico by reporting the news of an unforeseen challenging situation.

The aim of this investigation was to perform a critical discourse analysis to examine the type of speech act realization that occurs in the presidential discourse of Mexican and American presidents during times of crisis. Speech acts in political discourse depict the manner in which words and sentences are implemented to present information, to carry out actions, evoke demands, and appeal to public sentiments. As they present different viewpoints, interests, and intentions through speech act realization, presidents reveal the notion that ideology, discourse, and politics form a pragmatic triangle (Van Dijk, 2006). The methodological approach revealed similarities and differences in the discourse of Mexican and American political leaders as indicated by the raw frequencies of speech act realization per president. It was evident that representatives were the most frequent type of speech act to be employed in discourse for the purpose of asserting facts and opinions about the crisis events. As representative speech acts were the most commonly employed by both American and Mexican presidents, the employment

of other speech acts is worth noting. The use of directives, expressives, and commissives, although varied in use, brings attention to the differing styles of leadership and values. American presidents frequently utilized their speech acts in their discourse to present themselves as politicians that possess the power, authority, and obligation as a way of portraying the importance of solidarity in taking unified actions and framing political and social participation as a vital part in overcoming any crisis. Mexican presidents, on the other hand, bring attention to their position as politicians through positive self-representation and collectivity, as in the case of Peña Nieto. Mexican presidential leadership solely within the confines of a political context demonstrates the importance of politicians to indicate the essential elements of reliability, sincerity, and commitment.

A cross-cultural pragmatics dimension of the study addressed the manner in which speech acts reveal cultural, social, and political differences between the United States and Mexico via a politician's capability of implementing language to exhibit power, ideology, intention, and leadership images. The in- and out-group language in American and Mexican political discourse implemented to reveal an 'us' versus 'them' frame demonstrates the capability of political discourse in the hands of politicians to denote that "political discourse as the use of words and phrases, syntactic processes, and discursive positioning, to either hide or distribute responsibility in certain ways, or designate specific individuals or groups as belonging to categories that may serve particular political purposes" (Wilson, 2015:781-782). The strategic selection of pronouns has the capacity of demonstrating a leader's choices to identify with an audience that in turn reflects how pronouns and adjectives embedded in speech acts serve a function between the speaker and the hearer. The social position of the speaker within an institutionalized context denotes the existence of a social hierarchy, as pronouns chosen by

politicians reflect status, power, social identity, and ideological orientation. Discourse is constructed and transformed by a speaker to serve the purposes of the institution emphasizing the conscious control a speaker has over their speech in terms of the maintenance of situation-specific identities and topic managements (Philips, 2015). Often in times of crisis, U.S. presidents set their crisis leadership image by conveying strength, duty, and decisive action. U.S. presidential discourse is aimed at enhancing a shared vision of the U.S. through the ideals of unity, nation, and liberty believed to encompass the nation as one determined collective group that possesses every unifying quality of what it is to be American while denoting anti-American characteristics through the *other*. Mexican presidents portray a crisis leadership image of respect, independence, nationalism, personal achievement and dignity. Typically, when international issues are involved, Mexican presidents present a “hands off” approach as an important way of representing freedom of choice and respecting their historical past. This seems to be important in the traditional societal values of Mexico that transmit into politics through the promotion of stability, neutrality, and peace.

The investigation focused on specific political speeches set in periods of crisis. The study is subject to several limitations that must be taken into consideration for the overall validity and reliability of the data. For instance, the general results cannot be applied to other types of political discourse such as debates, presidential campaigns, or inaugural addresses due to their distinct contexts. However, it does not hinder the implementation of the methodological procedures set forth in the study that may serve as a model for other pragmatic studies focusing on the analysis of political discourse. While beyond the scope of the current study, a methodological approach involving computerized software such as SUPPLE by GATE would increase the depth of the statistical analysis of speech acts.

This investigation brings forth analyzing and understanding discourse that characterizes a president and the political mind of a crisis leader on a pragmatic level. Linguistic insight is brought into the articulation of cultural, social, and ideological values to emphasize the power of a speaker in achieving certain actions and public sentiments through strategic discourse in the understanding of major crisis events.

In addition, the investigation contributes significant information to two fields, Pragmatics and Hispanic Studies, by signifying the influence of political communicative strategies such as the implementation of speech acts that in the discourse of politicians possess the ability to realize actions through speech as a part of their political institutions and reflect cultural and social attributes of a country through the ideological values and morals of an elected official representative of a collective group. The contributions of the investigation bring forth a perspective that emphasizes the study of U.S.-Mexico relations while comparing and contrasting the discourse of politicians to demonstrate how their attitudes and handling of crisis moments differ and/or coincide in accordance to ideologies and leadership identities that emerge and thrive. The investigation fosters an understanding of the Spanish language explored through the unique context of political crisis events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and allows for the gain of valuable insight into Hispanic studies as it pertains to the manner in which history, language, and cultural identity are intertwined during unforeseen situations through political leaders of a Latin-American country.

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## **Vita**

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Currently, Kassandra is aspiring to continue her career in the field of education and is anticipating graduating in May 2023 with a Master of Arts in Hispanic Studies with a minor in Linguistics.