

## Turn-Taking Mechanism and Power Relations in United States Presidential Debates between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris on September 11, 2024

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### Abstract

This research aims to examine the Turn-Taking Mechanism and Power Relations that emerged in the 2024 United States Presidential Debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. This research uses a qualitative method with the theory of Turn-Taking Mechanism proposed by Jacob L Mey and Michel Foucault's theory of power, which places power as something that is spread in a network of social relations and manifested through language. Turn-Taking Mechanism in political debates serves as an important mechanism to reveal the dynamic of power relations between candidates. Data were obtained from official transcripts and video recordings on the ABC News debate YouTube Channel, then analyzed to identify patterns of the Turn-Taking Mechanism, such as Taking the Floor, Holding the Floor, and Yielding the Floor. The analysis showed that the Turn-Taking Mechanism in this debate was not as orderly as it should be in cooperative communication. Through Foucault's candidate perspective, power relations in this debate can be seen through the way candidates organize and distribute discourse in the public communication space. The research also found that moderator interventions, which aim to maintain the rules of Turn-Taking in the course of the debate, were often undermined by the candidates' discursive power practices, thus showing that power in debates is fluid, resistive and constantly shifting depending on the dynamic of interaction.

Moreover, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Linguistic studies, especially Pragmatics in the field of politics, as well as explore further the relation between discourse analysis and power relations.

**Keywords:** *Conversation Analysis, Power Relation, Presidential Debate, Turn-Taking Mechanism*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is essential for human beings to communicate daily. Besides being a tool of communication, in human life, language can be used as a medium for conveying ideas, values, and ideologies of a person. According to Edelman (1971), language takes an important role in the process of thinking, remembering, planning, understanding, or changing views on various things that cannot be symbolized or even expressed. Akmal, Syahriyani, and Handayani (2022) state that pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that highlights how social and cultural contexts in communication can determine the meaning contained in an utterance. The social context in this case can be in various aspects, such as the cultural background of each speaker.

This is also related to the connection between language, thoughts, and actions that influence each other. It shows that in communication, language is influenced by the related social environment, as well as action and ways of thinking that are influenced by language in describing a phenomenon. Moreover, Fairclough (2001) argues that language also has an important role in the power structure in society. Communication patterns formed in society are not only a reflection of language use but also a reflection of deep social interactions and are related to power relations in society.

In power relations in society, language occupies a central position in achieving certain goals. Through the use of good communication skills and language, people's views, attitudes, and behavior will change because they are influenced by how these utterances are conveyed. Besides that, according to Nasira, Syahriyani, and Abdurrosyid (2025), power relations can also be shown visually by portraying

influential figures who represent dominance over power. In this case, political debates are one of the places to show the use of language carried out to achieve certain goals and the intent of the utterances conveyed, whether it is to build a positive image in front of the public or to convince the audience.

According to Branham (1991), debate is the process by which opinions are presented, supported, refuted, and defended. This means that when conducting a debate, in conveying an idea about something, it must be followed by evidence that supports it. Furthermore, every idea that is expressed always has an argument against it, which means that opinions about things that are believed to be true must be defended to maintain views in these views.

Based on the Foucault (2003), debate is a communication medium used in politics to show one's view on certain issues, especially debates conducted by presidential candidates in responding and sharing their views on issues that occur in society. Moreover, Subuki, Akmal, and Hudaa (2023) argue that the language used to convey meaning and have a certain value can be said to be a form of discourse. This means that discourse can also be used to shape views on a particular identity and form views on certain social conditions in society.

Therefore, according to Rieke et al (2012) debates are not only seen as a place for campaigning in an attempt to convey ideas. Debates can be used as a tool for the public to assess the abilities and prospective candidates who will be elected through public votes. However, one of the interesting things that often happens in debates is Turn-Taking.

Presidential debates are one of the things that are in the public spotlight both nationally and internationally, especially in a country that has a huge influence, such as the United States. In debates, the interactions that occur can reflect the dynamics of power between candidates, including how the Turn-Taking Mechanism occurs. For instance, interruptions, pauses, and overlaps are often used to assert the candidate's position it to limit the interlocutor's time. This makes Turn-Taking

analysis an important tool for understanding the dynamic of interaction in political debates, particularly in the 2024 United States Presidential Debates between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris on September 11, 2024.

Benoit (2014) shows that presidential debates involve complex rhetorical strategies, where candidates attempt to convince voters through well-crafted arguments. In the 2024 debates, international public attention centered on the candidates' interaction, which was often characterized by tension, interruptions, and overlaps. Although these debates followed formal rules intended to ensure fair speaking turns, both Trump and Harris frequently broke these rules by cutting off each other's speaking turns or extending their own.

This research will discuss the Turn-Taking mechanism in the United States presidential candidate debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, as uploaded on the ABC News YouTube channel. In Conversation Analysis, the Turn-Taking theory proposed by Mey (2001) and reinforced by Stenstrom (2014), offers a framework for understanding the mechanisms that speakers use in conversation. Various research on Conversation Analysis with the Turn-Taking mechanism has been conducted. Therefore, to identify gaps and prevent repetitive analysis, this research reviews several previous studies. For example, "The use of turn-taking in the 2020 US presidential debate: A conversation analysis study", conducted by Maya Lisa Aryanti, Susi Yuliawati, Dian Ekawati, and Nani Darmayanti. This research aims to identify the Turn-Taking mechanism used by Joe Biden and Donald Trump and how these mechanisms affect the dynamics of the debate. Besides, there is another research that discusses "Turn-Taking Mechanism and Gender Dominance" by Amani M. Huddrin (2020), which explains the differences in Turn-Taking Mechanism performed by men and women. Furthermore, other research discusses the Turn-taking Mechanism through one of the TV show programs entitled, "Turn-Taking Mechanism in Mata Najwa Talk Show ragu-Ragu Perpu episode: Conversational Analysis" which was researched by Firdaus Habibi, Didin

Nurhuddin Hidayat, and Alek (2020). This research analyzes the Turn-Taking Mechanism in the special episode of Ragu-Ragu Perpu in the Mata Najwa Talk Show. The findings of this research are that the Interruption and Overlapping mechanisms are most dominant in the Talk Show. Some previous research has focused on how speakers take turns in talking to each other, identifying interruptions, pauses, etc. However, most of this research tends to be limited to observing and explaining how utterance turns occur in verbal interactions. Not only focusing on the Turn-Taking Mechanism, this research also examines how these dynamics are closely related to the power relations built between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.

Meanwhile, Foucault (1977) argues that power is a network of relations that are scattered in various social practices and not only owned by certain individuals or groups. This means that through the practice of power, knowledge can be constructed into discourse so that it can determine what can be said, thought, and carried out in a society. In political debates, power relations can be seen through the use of language as a tool of domination, control, or reinforcement of political positions used by debate participants. This also means that language in political debates is an area where power can be negotiated and maintained. According to Bourdieu (1977), political debate is part of the political field. This means that in the debate, each participant has symbolic capital that can determine their authority in the conversation. This can be seen in politicians who have greater symbolic capital, which can be seen from their status, experience, or far greater political support; they will tend to have far greater influence in organizing in the course of the debate. Meanwhile, Foucault (2003), argues in political debates that a discourse is formed, which is an area for power and knowledge to intersect. This is because in political debates, it is not only about logical arguments, but also about who can define social and political reality. Moreover, based on Foucault (1993), there is a relation between Power and the Subject that mutually shapes discourse in a social community. According to Foucault, power is a mechanism that can shape truth,

identity, human subjectivity not only as a means of repression due to the occurrence of power imbalances.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research utilizes qualitative methods to analyze and delve into the Turn-Taking Mechanism and Power Relation in the 2024 United States Presidential candidate debate broadcast through the ABC News YouTube Channel. Moreover, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research methods are research methods related to the interpretation of real social life. In this method, the meaning that arises as a result of interaction between humans with one another is the main focus that tries to be understood and analyzed. Then, according to Creswell (2014), qualitative research methods are methods that can be used to understand hidden meanings and relate to society at large. In this research, data collection was conducted by applying documentation techniques. According to Nawawi and Hadari (1995), data collection techniques through documentation are techniques that can be conducted by collecting data and analyzing documents that can be in the form of written records, audio recordings, or videos by using transcripts related to the research.

One of the main aspects emphasized in Conversation Analysis is Turn-Taking. Yule (2018), argues that Turn-Taking is how speakers in a conversation organize who speaks and when speaking turns are to be given or taken. The concept of Floor is concerned with how these speaking turns are given and organized in social interaction. The right to “Hold the Floor” also means that when the speaker has control over the direction of the conversation, the topics discussed, and the determination of how the direction of the conversation will develop. In an ongoing conversation, the Floor is usually given to someone for a certain period of time, but it can later be transferred to another person through the Turn-Taking mechanism.

## ***Taking the Floor***

According to Stenstrom (2014), taking the Floor is the speaker's act of gaining speaking rights through verbal initiative, the use of fillers, repetitions, or metacommentary strategies. Based on Hayashi's (2013) Conversation Analysis, these actions are often associated with interrupting mechanisms, overlapping, and strategic planning by speakers to ensure they can deliver their arguments. In political debates, taking the floor becomes more complex due to the role of competition between speakers to control the space.

### ***1) Starting Up***

Starting up in Conversation Analysis is the initial step of introducing a speaking turn in a verbal interaction because it can determine a speaker's success in taking an active position in the conversation. There are main patterns for Starting Up, such as Hesitant start and Clean start. Hesitant start often involves the use of linguistic devices such as verbal fillers, repetitions, or short pauses that give the speakers time to plan their arguments. Based on Stenstrom (2014), expressions such as "Um", "Uh", or "Well" characterize this pattern and usually appear in situations where the speaker is hesitant or needs time to organize their ideas. On the other hand, Clean starts shows a more confident and direct pattern, usually characterized by strong opening statements or main arguments that are directly delivered without the use of filler devices. By utilising Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis, this research shows that the initial form of utterances reflects a position of power and control over the communication situation.

Clean Start- utterances that are direct, fluent, without pauses are generally associated with confidence and authority, thus reinforcing the candidate's dominant image. In contrast, Hesitant start characterised by verbal fillers such as "uh," or "well," tends to be associated with uncertainty and pressure. Clean start refers to a statement that begins directly with a response that is clear, structured,

and free of hesitation or filler. This creates a confident and authoritative impression, such as Harris start her answer without hesitation, going straight to personal and policy claims.

*“So, I was raised as a middle-class kid. And I am actually the only person on this stage who has a plan...”*

On the other hand, hesitant starts usually begin with “uh”, “um”, “well”, “you know”, or long pauses that do not go directly to the main topic. According to Phil (2019), speakers with filled pauses tend to be judged as less confident and less charismatic than fluent speakers, which has a significant effect on public perception, for example:

*“Well, first of all, I wasn’t given \$400 million. I wish I was. My father was a Brooklyn builder...”*

## **2) Interruption**

Interruption in Conversation Analysis is an activity that reflects power dynamics. Rhetorical strategies and social relations in verbal interaction. Schubert (2019) states that it is often perceived as a violation of idealized conversational norms. Interruption has diverse functions, ranging from showing dominance, offering clarification, to accelerating the course of discussion (Schubert, 2019). In formal situations such as political debates, Interruption is often used as a strategic tool to cut through opponents' arguments, create pressure, or demonstrate authority. Moreover, Tabassum and Hafeez (2023), show that the use of Interruption in formal interactions is also influenced by power position, where speakers with greater authority have a tendency to control the flow of conversation through this mechanism.



### ***3) Overlapping***

Overlapping is the process of two speakers speaking simultaneously during a conversation. Sacks et al (1974) argue that it is a natural part of verbal interaction that often reflects social dynamics, competition, and coordination between speakers. Based on Aryanti et al. (2024), Overlapping often appears as a strategic tool to disrupt debate opponents and impose dominance. Donald Trump, for instance, used competitive Overlapping to cut off Joe Biden's argument. Moreover, Schubert (2019), shows that in debates or interviews, overlapping is often used to emphasize arguments or create pressure on other speakers.

### ***Holding the Floor***

Holding the floor is a condition for speakers to maintain their speaking turn despite potential interruptions or signs that the interlocutor wants to take a turn. Based on Stenstrom (2014), this mechanism often involves the use of linguistic devices such as intentional pauses to signal that the speaker has not finished speaking. Moreover, Hayashi (2013) states that the ability to maintain a speaking turn is highly dependent on mastering Transition Relevance Places (TRPs), which are shown in a conversation where the speaking turn can naturally shift.

### ***Yielding the Floor***

Yielding the floor is an act in conversation in which a speaker yields a speaking turn to the interlocutor consciously or through verbal and nonverbal cues. Based on Sacks et al. (1974), in Conversation Analysis, this action is part of the Turn-Taking allocation system that is important for maintaining smooth interaction. Yielding the floor also includes Prompting, where the interlocutor is invited to respond, and Appealing, where the speaker asks for confirmation of an opinion. According to Schubert (2019), this is used to create an opportunity for the

interlocutor to respond, which can reinforce points or attack weaknesses in their argument such as “You know?”

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The analysis was carried out through transcripts during the debate in Philadelphia on September 11, 2024, which was broadcast live via the ABC News YouTube channel entitled VP Harris and former president Trump | ABC News presidential debate, which reached a total duration of 1 hour, 52 minutes, 10 seconds. The duration has covered all segments of the United States presidential debate conducted by Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The primary focus of this research is the Turn-Taking mechanism implemented by the debate participants, who are Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, and will be guided by the moderators, David Muir and Linsey Davis.

The following is the entire data set collected during the analysis of the 2024 United States presidential candidate debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Table I includes all instances of the Turn-Taking mechanism identified throughout the debate, which were then categorized into several specific types, such as: Taking the Floor (which consists of Starting Up, Interruption, Overlapping), Holding the Floor, and Yielding the Floor.

In this research, several pieces of dialogue related to the Turn-Taking mechanism are presented based on the transcripts of the video of the United States presidential debate on September 11, 2024. Hence, the first step for this analysis begins with identifying the types of Turn-Taking mechanisms that appear in each segment of the conversation. This identification includes various communication strategies used by debate participants, such as Taking the Floor which consists of *Starting Up*, *Interruption*, *Overlapping*, *Holding the Floor*, and *Yielding the Floor*.

## 1. The Taking the Floor

### a. Starting Up (1:03)

**DM:** *“Good evening, I’m David Muir. And thank you for joining us for tonight’s ABC News Presidential Debate. ↑ We want to welcome viewers watching on ABC and around the world tonight. Vice President Kamala Harris and President Donald Trump are just moments away from taking the stage in this unprecedented race for president.” ↓*

**LD:** *“And I’m Linsey Davis. ↑ Tonight’s meeting could be the most consequential event of their campaigns, with Election Day now less than two months away. For Vice President Kamala Harris, this is her first debate since President Biden withdrew from the race on July 21st. ↑ Of course, that decision followed his debate against President Donald Trump in June. Since then, this race has taken on an entirely new dynamic.” ↓*

David Muir begins with a clean start and the interaction with pre-sequence in form of a formal greeting, such as, “Good evening, I’m David Muir,” which serves as an opening cue while introducing himself to the audience as the main host. David’s speech sequence then includes an announcement about the presence of two major political figures, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, who will immediately appear on the debate stage. Moreover, this also reflects the agenda-setting process, where the speaker directs the audience’s attention to a particular topic or focus.

After David finished his part, the floor shifted smoothly and coordinated to Linsey Davis beginning with the similar manner, explicitly stating her identity, “And I’m Linsey Davis,”. The DM started with a formal greeting to the audience, then orderly handed over to the LD without any overlap or interruptions. Then, the LD continued the narrative by adding relevant political context, such as president Biden’s retirement and its impact on elections dynamics. Rather than repeating information that DM had already conveyed, LD demonstrated good discourse control as well as the ability to expand the discussion informatively as LD also did not start hesitantly and clearly so that this collaborative communication not only maintained the structure of the event but also established a narrative framework that debate was an important and historic political event.

From the utterances made by David Muir it can be seen that he emphasized the intense competition in the election. Schegloff (2019), this is important in Starting Up as it gives the audience an understanding of the political context before the debate begins. This utterance also builds tension by emphasizing that the outcome of the elections is still uncertain, which makes the audience more interested in following the debate. Moreover, this utterance is part of opening in a debate that serves as a formal introduction.

According to Hutchby & Wooffitt (2008), in political debates the role of the moderator is crucial in organizing the discussion. One of the main functions of their introduction is to affirm their position as debate hosts, so that candidates and the audience recognize their authority in managing the flow of the conversation. Therefore, in this conversation, the power relation lies in the Turn-Taking mechanism David Muir and Linsey Davis as moderators have the role to determine the initial structure of the conversation and have the power to guide the agenda of the discussion.

**b. Interruption (24:50)**

**LD:** *"Vice president Harris --"//*

**DT:** *[Excuse me, I have to respond.] Another lie. It's another lie. I have been a leader ↑ on IVF which is fertilization. The IVF -- I have been a leader. ↑ In fact, when they got a very negative decision on IVF from the Alabama courts, I saw the people of Alabama and the legislature two days later voted it in. I've been a leader on it. They know that and everybody else knows it. I have been a leader on fertilization, IVF. And the other thing, they -- you should ask, ↓ will she allow abortion in the eighth month, ninth month, seventh month?"//*

**KH:** *["Come on."] ↑*

**DT:** *"Would you do that? Why don't you ask her that question?"*

In the quotation from a conversation between Linsey Davis, Donald Trump, and Kamala Harris it is clear how interruptions and power relations take a role in shaping the flow of discussion. Donald Trump's interruption demonstrated an attempt to take control of the conversation and dominate the discussion. According to Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), interruptions can be used as a tool to

assert power in verbal interactions. In context, Donald Trump not only interrupts Linsey Davis but also aims questions directly at Kamala Harris, which shows an attempt to shift the focus and challenge his debating opponent directly.

The quotation clearly shows as the moderator Linsey Davis begins her turn to speak by saying the candidate's name, "Vice President Harris-" indicating an attempt to allocate the floor to Kamala Harris. However, before her turn was actually given to Kamala Harris, Donald Trump explicitly interrupted her by saying, "Excuse me, I have to respond". Furthermore, his speech, "Another lie. Its another lie", is a form of lexical repetition. This shows that Trump not only takes over the turn to speak but also immediately directs the conversation to issues that he considers strategic to control.

On the other hand, the power relations in this conversation are reflected through Donald Trump's ability to redirect the topic and demand a response from Kamala Harris. As Fairclough (1989), points out, control over topic and turn-taking are manifestations of power in verbal interactions. By interrupting and asking direct questions, Donald Trump attempted to assert his dominance in the debate and put Kamala Harris on the defensive.

### c. **Overlapping (30:13)**

**DM :** *"I just want to clarify here, you bring up Springfield, Ohio. And ABC News did reach out to the city manager there. He told us there have been no credible reports of specific claims of pets being harmed, [injured or abused by individuals within the immigrant community -"] //*

**DT :** *// ["Well, I've seen people on television"] ↑*

**DM :** *// ["Let me just say here this ..."]*

David Muir began this conversation by stating that ABC News had contacted the Springfield city manager, who stated there were no credible reports of specific claims of pets being harmed by the immigrant community. Trump immediately responded by saying, "Well, I've seen people on television," which was a direct interruption to David Muir's statement. This interruption shows Donald Trump's attempt to take control of the conversation and assert his dominance. According to

Schegloff (2000), this kind of interruption can reflect an attempt to control the topic and direction of the conversation, as well as demonstrate power in the interaction. During the conversation, there was some overlap where both speakers spoke simultaneously. For example, when Muir tried to explain the source of his information, Trump continued to speak, causing an overlap in the dialog. This kind of overlap often reflects competition for speaking turns and can indicate power dynamics between participants.

As stated by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), overlap can occur when speakers attempt to maintain or take over a speaking turn, which often reflects power relations in the conversation. It shows that Trump used interruptions and overlaps as strategies to control the direction of the conversation. Muir, on the other hand, attempted to maintain his speaking turn by emphasizing his sources of information, but was often cut off by Trump's interruptions. This dynamic reflects the complex power relationship between the two participants, where Trump seeks to assert his authority through conversational control, while Muir seeks to maintain his journalistic integrity by conveying information that conforms to the truth.

### ***Holding the Floor***

(42:32)

**DT :** *"She went out (↑) // [I'm talking now, please]-- she went out in Minnesota and wanted to let criminals that killed people, that burned down Minneapolis, she went out and raised money to get them out of jail. She did things that nobody would ever think of. Now she wants to do transgender operations on illegal aliens that are in prison. This is a radical ↑ left liberal that would do this. She wants to confiscate your guns and she will never allow fracking in Pennsylvania. If she won the election, fracking in Pennsylvania will end on day one. Just to finish one thing, so important in my opinion, so, I got the oil business going like nobody has ever done before. They took, when they took over, they got rid of it, started getting rid of it, and the prices were going up the roof. They immediately ↑ let these guys go to where they were. I would have been five times, four times, five times higher because you're talking about 3 1/2 years ago. They got it up to where I was because they had no choice. Because the prices of energy were quadrupling and doubling. You saw what happened to gasoline. So, they said let's go back to Trump. But if she won the election, the day after that election,*

*they'll go back to destroying our country and oil will be dead, fossil fuel will be dead. We'll go back to windmills and we'll go back to solar, where they need a whole desert to get some energy to come out. You ever see a solar plant? By the way, I'm a big fan of solar. But they take 400, 500 acres of desert soil—*

**LD** : // *["President Trump—"]*

**DT** : // *["These are not good things for the environment that she understands.]"*

**LD** : // *["President Trump,] we have a lot of issues that we have to get to. We're out of time. Thank you."*

Based on this quotation, the holding floor was conducted by Donald Trump by speaking considerably and covering many topics. Trump began by attacking Kamala Harris on her legal policies, then moved on to transgender issues, gun ownership, fracking, to energy policy, before going into criticism of renewable energy. Linsey Davis, the moderator, tried to interrupt Trump twice, once by directly mentioning his name, "President Trump," and the second time by explicitly stating that time was up. However, Trump ignored both of these attempts and continued to speak, unilaterally taking his turn to control the discourse. According to Rohmah and Suwandi (2021), this is often used in political debates to prevent transitions to topics that Trump does not want so he constantly introduces new issues without resolving previous arguments, which makes interruptions more difficult.

Moreover, Ramdhany (2023), states that in political debates, holding the floor is used to inhibit interruptions and maintain control over the flow of discussion. Thus, Trump's holding the floor mechanism not only allowed him to deliver his messages extensively but also limited the interlocutor's opportunities to respond or change the direction of the conversation.

## **Data 2 (50:32)**

**DM** : *"Mr. President —"*

**DT** : // *["Those people are killing ↑] many people, unlike J-6.↓"]*

**DM** : // *["We talked immigration here tonight.] I do want to focus on this next issue to both of you ↓. Because it really brings us, this into focus. Truth in these times that we're living in. Mr. President, for 3 and a half years after you lost the*



*2020 election you repeatedly falsely claimed that you won, many times saying you won in a landslide. In the past couple of weeks leading up to this debate, you have said, quote, you lost by a whisker, that you, quote, didn't quite make it, that you came up a little bit short."*

Donald Trump, in the quotation above, utilizes holding the floor in the Turn-taking mechanism as described by Jacob L. Mey (2001), by interrupting the moderator, David Muir, and trying to maintain his turn to speak even though the topic asked is different from what he wanted to discuss. When the moderator tried to open a discussion about the 2020 election claims, Trump immediately shifted the conversation to the issue of crime and the events of January 6 (J-6) as a form of controlling the debate narrative by avoiding questions that could potentially harm him. By associating the events of January 6 with other violence, Trump not only maintained control of the conversation but also attempted to change the framing of the discussion to lead the audience's opinion according to his perspective. Based on Sinaga, Tannuary, and Saputra (2021), this is used by politicians in debates to be able to avoid difficult questions by creating a more favorable debate for them. Furthermore, moderator David Muir kept trying to regain the speaking turn with the same or similar questions repeated to ensure the speaker stayed within the predetermined discussion course. However, Trump's holding the floor successfully delayed the topic switch for a few moments.

Furthermore, according to Fairclough's (2019), in political discourse speakers with higher status often use repetition and make sudden topic changes. Trump not only refused the moderator's turn to speak but also actively reframed the desired narrative, thus making the moderator lose control of the flow of the conversation. When the moderator tried to reframe the discussion regarding the 2020 election claims, Trump immediately shifted the topic to the issue of crime. This is where Trump, who has greater power can change the direction in order to maintain political dominance. As debates begin and the floor shifts to the candidates, the practice of interruptions and overlapping speech is often an indicate



of unequal power relations. The more politically or rhetorically dominant candidate, such as Donald Trump, tends to use interruptions to seize control of the discourse, ignore opponents' speaking turns, and even cross the line of moderator control. This reflects an imbalance of power because the interrupting candidate is not only trying to defeat the opponent's argument but also symbolically challenging institutional authority—namely, the moderator as the regulator of the rules of conversation.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research discusses in depth the implementation of the Turn-Taking mechanism in the context of formal debates, specifically in the United States presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris held in September 2024. In this debate, the accuracy of Turn-Taking is very important, considering that the debate format not only demands clarity of argument but also assertiveness, responsiveness to interlocutors, and the ability to manage speaking time well. The Turn-Taking Mechanism is classified into three main categories: Taking the Floor (Starting Up, Interruption, and Overlapping), Holding the Floor, and Yielding the Floor. Each of these categories takes an important role in keeping the flow of the conversation structured, orderly, and communicative. Moreover, from the analysis of several conversation quotations, it was found that the most dominant form is Interruption, which is part of the Taking the Floor category.

These interruptions were widely practiced by both candidates, especially in the form of quick responses, rebuttals, or clarifications to the arguments of the debate opponent. The Interruption is also inseparable from the aspect of power relation, where speakers try to show dominance, control the floor of the discussion, and maintain a position of authority in front of the public. In this case, power relations are manifested through who takes over the conversation more often, who is more successful in maintaining their turn, and how they use language to assert

symbolic power. Turn-Taking essentially serve to maintain a fair communication order, allowing each party to present ideas equally. However, when a candidate systematically interrupts, dominates speaking time, or disregards the rules set by the moderator, it indicates there is a lack of communication. When people witness a debate full of interruptions and aggressive rhetoric, they feel that debate is no longer a forum of finding common solutions but an arena for conflict and one-sided victory.

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