

## **Revitalizing America through struggle and threat: The contingency approach to President Joe Biden's pandemic leadership**

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**Abstract:** This study seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of President Joe Biden's leadership in the first year of his presidency in the context of the Contingency Theory proposed by Fred E. Fiedler (1967). This article argues that the effectiveness of Joe Biden's leadership is contingent upon his relationship-based motivational system (high LPC score) and moderate power, control, and influence over American society. Specifically, the findings revealed that, while his relationship-oriented leadership style, which fell into Octant V of the model, predisposed him to collaborative forms of power (Griebe and Immelman 2020: 17, Körner *et al.* 2022: 636), the results of my study show that his leadership effectiveness operates through a coercive type of power, emotionalisation, and anticipatory action. This article aims to fill the gap in organisational studies on leadership effectiveness and presents a novel approach for examining variables in the model to account for the linguistic potential in the paradigm. It indicates the usefulness of the notions of the seven standards of textuality, speech acts, and coercion as a research apparatus supplementing the Contingency Model. The study also draws on correlational patterns identified in the analysis. The main results suggest a moderate positive correlation between the category of CC (cognitive coercion) and EC (emotive coercion), and strong positive correlations with the variables of struggle, threat, and praise. The analysis contributes to research on presidential rhetoric and, more specifically, the role of the president in managing crisis and adapting to change.

**Abstrakt:** Niniejsze badanie ma na celu wykazanie skuteczności przywództwa prezydenta Joe Bidena w pierwszym roku jego prezydentury w kontekście teorii kontyngencji zaproponowanej przez Freda E. Fiedlera (1967). Niniejszy artykuł dowodzi, że skuteczność przywództwa Joe Bidena zależy od jego systemu motywacyjnego opartego na relacjach (wysoki wynik LPC) oraz umiarkowanej władzy, kontroli i wpływu na społeczeństwo amerykańskie. W szczególności wyniki badań wykazały, że podczas gdy jego styl przywództwa zorientowany na relacje, który mieścił się w oktancie V modelu, predysponował go do współpracy (Griebe i Immelman 2020: 17, Körner i in. 2022: 636), wyniki mojego badania pokazują, że jego skuteczność przywództwa działa poprzez przymusowy rodzaj władzy, emocjonalizację i działania antycypacyjne. Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu wypełnienie luki w badaniach organizacyjnych dotyczących skuteczności przywództwa i przedstawia nowatorskie podejście do badania zmiennych w modelu w celu uwzględnienia potencjału językowego w paradygmacie. Wskazuje na przydatność pojęć siedmiu standardów tekstualności, aktów

mowy i przymusu jako aparatury badawczej uzupełniającej model kontyngencji. Badanie opiera się również na wzorcach korelacyjnych zidentyfikowanych w analizie. Główne wyniki sugerują umiarkowaną dodatnią korelację między kategorią CC (przymus poznawczy) i EC (przymus emocjonalny) oraz silne dodatnie korelacje ze zmiennymi walki, groźby i pochwały. Analiza stanowi wkład w badania nad retoryką prezydencką, a dokładniej rolę prezydenta w zarządzaniu kryzysem i dostosowywaniu się do zmian.

**Keywords:** leadership communication, leadership effectiveness, contingency theory, presidential discourse, President Joe Biden

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja przywódcza, skuteczność przywództwa, teoria kontyngencji, dyskurs prezydencki, prezydent Joe Biden

## Introduction

The last four decades have seen an influx of research in political science, management realms and communication studies on situational leadership, that is, the type of effective leadership which is “in match with” or “contingent to” the situations of its occurrence (Ayman *et al.* 1995, Fiedler 1967, Grint 2005, Poguntke and Webb 2007, Vroom and Jaago 2007), reflected in the degree of situational control and influence that the leader has over the group processes. The current study focuses on the rejuvenating area of leadership research: **contingency leadership**. It is especially important to determine the type of leadership during times driven by the contingent event of a COVID-19 pandemic. In examining this threat-based sociopolitical context, the article seeks to further our understanding of the mechanisms and strategies that are central to establishing the degree of effectiveness of President Joe Biden’s leadership.

The first year of Joe Biden’s presidency provides impetus to studying his leadership performance in the interim of COVID-19 dynamic politics, which is also termed as the politics of crisis (Lipsky 2020: 99). The pandemic frame brings into focus the role of leaders who implement the reparative policies and make high-stake decisions under time pressure, uncertainty, and threat. In the context of the last couple of decades of the various socio-cultural changes underlying threats caused by wars and terrorist attacks, including the US president facing criminal charges, culminating in the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the Russia-Ukraine war, there has been an increase in research on contextual or contingency leadership. Much of the research on U.S. President Joe Biden’s leadership has been limited to the establishment of his personality profile and associated leadership traits (*e.g.*, Allen and Parnes 2021, Griebie and Immelman 2020, Körner 2022, Wagner-Pacifici 2023), but as far as I know, no corpus-based research to date has been carried out to proximate Joe Biden’s leadership effectiveness in the first year of his presidency in terms of linguistically distinctive patterns and their evaluation. This article aims to address this gap by considering in

detail Biden's linguistic practices that are anchored in the pandemic context and which substantially indicate key practices that seem to be helpful for creating effective leadership in the pandemic context. The crux of the matter is, therefore, to not only have a reactive and problem-solving approach that leaders take but, most importantly, to implement the restructuring processes, that could allow people to develop key mechanisms and strategies which would have an impact on building resilience against the pandemic.

One of the cornerstones of the contingency theory of leadership is that successful leaders are those who meet the requirements of contexts *in situ* and respond adequately to the constraints of the specific situations (Fiedler 1967, Ayman *et al.* 1995). From this perspective, the idea of leadership is polarised between the structuralist approach that links leadership behaviour to systematic patterns of situational occurrence and the pragmatist view that favours functionality of human performance that is derived from interactional dimensions within given events or state-of-affairs (Austin 1962). Thus, there is an assumption that leading a nation in times of peace and prosperity does not require the same type of response that is needed during a worldwide crisis, time of uncertainty and threat. Therefore, the discussion surrounding a contingent situation and its impact on leaders' behaviour ought to be concerned with specific cultural practices on HOW that situation is handled by a leader. In this way, the situational model of leadership accounts for the bi-directionality as a basic principle of establishing effective leadership. On the way towards a general comprehension of the understanding of the model, it is natural to consider the interplay between the situation and a person to acknowledge the context-behaviour interface as evidence for the leadership's cultural context.

In this article, I explore four domains that pertain to the contingency model of leadership effectiveness (Fiedler 1967) - LPC Scale, Leader-Member Relation, Task Structure, and Position Power- to define the specific variables that play a crucial role in the formation of Joe Biden's leadership style in the first year of his presidency. The model is meant to predict leader's effectiveness which is based on two factors: (1) Leader's Characteristics, referred to as a motivational orientation (or favourability) into a task accomplishment or relationship building, and (2) Leader's Situational Control determined by the degree of (2a) Leader-Member Relation, (2b) Task Structure, and (2c) Position Power Scale. According to this framework, those in power who have a task motivational orientation in comparison to those who have a relationship orientation, perform better in high- and low-control situations. On the other hand, the leaders who are more inclined towards relationship orientation achieve the effects of successful leadership in moderate control situations (Fiedler 1978). The basic premise of Fiedler's contingency theory is that the leadership style required for the effective performance of a group(s) is contingent upon the degree of "favourability" of a group(s) situation and upon the leadership style that enables the leader to exert influence over group members.

Interest in studying the leadership effectiveness of U.S. President Joe Biden, as well as the situational factors contributing to his leadership situation (the favourability aspect), allows for mapping those areas of his performance that influence the American society during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this study contributes to the understanding of more than President Biden's response to a wider socio-cultural context of post-pandemic reality. Most importantly, this paper demonstrates how the concept of leadership can be redefined by studying the linguistic level of the contingency model, accounting for the cultural identity of the president which is contextualised through language (Fishman 1991, Giles *et al.* 1977, Schechter 2015, see also Strukowska 2024, 2024a).

Table 1 provides a summary of the model's variables along with the proposed linguistic realizations which can serve as tools for exploring the main strategies and mechanisms of building effectiveness of Joe Biden's leadership.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Tool</b>
<b>Leader's motivational orientation</b>	LPC Scale	LPC Grid (Fiedler 1978, Ayman and Chemers 1995)
<b>Situational control</b>	Leader-member relation	Polls projected from <a href="https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/biden-approval-rating/">https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/biden-approval-rating/</a>
	Task structure	7 standards of textuality (de Beaugrande and Dressler [1972] 1981)
	Position power	The macro-strategy of coercion/speech acts (Searle [1969] 2011, Austin (1962), Cap 2013, Hart 2010)

**Table 1. Contingency model's variables with their anthropolinguistic level of analysis and measure. Author's own elaboration**

## **1. On the framework of Fiedler's contingency model of leadership**

### **1.1. Leadership motivational orientation**

Among the main factors for predicting a leader's effectiveness would be the individual's attributes, which can be addressed at the level of a task or relationship motivational orientation. The measures of this component can be based on the individual leader's responses (the subjective level) or in the multi-level and multi-source domain, outcomes of which have been assessed by experimenters

(Ayman *et al.* 1995: 148). The leadership style is assumed to rest on the measures relating to interpersonal perception scores, which ask the leader to choose the least preferred person to work with or interact with. This variable is called the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale and falls within the range of 16 and 22, eight-point, bipolar adjective scales on which the attributes of the least favourable coworker are described. The term “coworker” covers a wider range of relations than purely work-related ones, so the frame of reference may include “a subordinate”, “a follower”, or a “peer” (Ayman *et al.* 1995: 150). Generally, the focus is on obtaining a global, evaluative affective reaction toward the person who would hinder the attainment of task accomplishment. In terms of two main trends that emerge from the LPC score scale are: (a) **high-LPC** leaders who are more concerned with establishing good interpersonal relations and perceiving the least preferable “follower” in a more favourable manner, and (b) **low-LPC** leaders who put emphasis on task accomplishment and who describe their LPC in the most unfavourable terms. Given these caveats connected to the measurement of the leader’s style, it is to be pointed out that the LPC scale asserts the centrality of the leader behaviour in the *means* that are used to achieve a leader’s ends.

Although, both the task-centred and people-centred leaders are concerned with task accomplishment and use interpersonal relationships, they are driven by various motives. Under various conditions, the high-LPC leader would strive to effectively perform a task in order to develop and cement his relations with a group, while low-LPC leaders derive major satisfaction from task accomplishment regardless of poor interpersonal relations or try to keep them in good condition only to complete the task successfully. At that point, it is crucial to highlight that both high and low LPC leaders can be equally effective. The only determinant of this effectiveness, the dynamic variable, is the situation upon which the leadership is contingent. Although the leader’s preferred style of interacting is the point of departure in this analysis, it is highly correlated with the three situational dimensions that pertain to the so-called “situational control” and is labelled as the “favourableness of the situation.” Below is an account of these levels of generality that tie in with leadership effectiveness and if maximised, they establish the greatest amount of situational control.

According to the Contingency Model, the high LPC leader obtains rewards and seeks success based on extrinsic satisfaction derived from good social relations that are mirrored by positive others’ evaluations of performance. The relational nature of leadership is also reflected in presidential leadership research. Specifically, Joe Biden is likely to exhibit an interpersonal leadership style, characterised by cooperativeness, flexibility, compromise, risk avoidance, and emphasis on teamwork (*e.g.*, McAdams 2022: 257, Ghani and Hussain 2021: 10180, Griebie and Immelman 2020, Olsen 2022: 161, Turak 2021). However, on an emotional plane, when high-LPC leaders are faced with unsatisfying relations, their emotional state is triggered and they are prone to interact on an emotional

level (Fiedler 1967: 54). Furthermore, in socially-strained situations (unfavourable conditions), they tend to produce a higher rate of relationship-oriented comments (*ibid.*).

## 1.2. Situational control

The contingency model of leadership effectiveness has also tied its orientation to core variables of situational control, *i.e.*, (1) **leader-member relations**, (2) **task structure**, and (3) **position power** (Ayman *et al.* 1995: 158). According to its premise, leaders gain sense of influence and control from contingencies. In this study, I discuss how situational control can be operationalised within the three components of (1a.) polling, (2a.) seven standards of textuality (de Beaugrande and Dressler ([1972] 1981), and (3a.) coercion (Cap 2013, Chilton 2004, Hart 2010) as contributors to control and predictability. Interestingly, the last category is defined as a political dimension that is not alien to any culture and contributes to the enforcement of rules in the process of establishing authority (Malinowski 1944: 99). I argue that the three optional variables essentially serve as **anthropo-linguistic tools** to study leadership effectiveness and are common to leadership performance. There exists a clear analogy at the conceptual level between the initial variables of the contingency model and the reformulated categories presented by the author that allow some modest generalisations with regard to the general rationale of the method for measuring leadership effectiveness.

Based on the analogies, leadership can be conceptualised as a transformational process of a transactional nature that takes place between the leader and his followers. Following from this two-way interactive event is the need to recalibrate the view of situational leadership via the prism of the interdisciplinary field of **anthropolinguistics** (Ahearn 2012, 2022; Duranti 2003; Einfield *et al.* 2014; Foley 1997; Klein 2006; Völkel and Nassenstein 2022). This involves above all the understanding of leadership as the feature of a specific socio-cultural context realised through language, which is "[r]elated to the knowledge, values, technologies, and practices that make up culture" (Einfield *et al.* 2014: 2). The cornerstone of this analytical specification is that leadership effectiveness is a system of practices that becomes a cultural system pertaining to a given society, its processes, structures and social life (Einfield *et al.* 2014: 2, Völkel and Nassenstein 2022: 4).

Analysis of effective American presidential leadership within the framework of the contingency model is much affected by a range of situational factors that are derived through the situational control, which is committed to the principles of the 'probabilistic modelling' for the dynamic situation processes and mechanisms as well as the 'positional power', *i.e.*, the authority bestowed on the leader. We are dealing here with central standards of texts produced by the President that allow him to guide the audience and move them toward the collective goal. The sense of clarity, certainty and predictability must be grounded in power that is the

source of administrative authority of the president. As such, the components of situational control provide the leader with credible discursive tools to influence and gain control.

### 1.2.1. Leader-member relations

The analysis of situational control can significantly benefit from the application of the reformulated concepts that govern contingent leadership. Central to Fielder's model is **the leader-member relations** parameter that "[s]eems nonetheless to be the most important single element in determining the leader's influence in a group" (Fiedler 1967: 29) and which is defined as a "[s]et of individuals who share a common fate, that is, who are interdependent in the sense that an event which affects one member is likely to affect all" (Fiedler 1967: 6). By the term "group" we generally mean a society whose members exist as individuals having a common cognitive dimension such as shared knowledge, values, beliefs, and representations, which are determined by the dynamically fluctuating context, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of the favourableness of the situation for the leader, his important dimension is given the highest priority since a leader who is supported and trusted by his members will be in the highest position of power to influence his group (Fiedler 1967: 143).

In the presidential discourse, leader-member relations seem to be of utmost importance because at the centre of the status function of the president also lies the synergetic relation with the society. Specifically, the role of the president entails that he is "[m]any men, or one man wearing "many hats", or playing "many roles" (Neustadt 1960: 2). Therefore, a test for the presence of these institutional "traits" is whether or not leader could gain group support validated by group's cohesion derived from multiple sources, *i.e.*, polls on President Joe Biden's approval ratings.

As can be seen in Table 1, the LPC Scale parameter is assigned the status of a relationship-based orientation. In general terms, the indirect assessment of Joe Biden's leadership style can be recognised as the relationship-oriented type for two main reasons. First of all, the high LPC individual perceives his least-preferred workers or "followers" in a relatively favourable manner and is primarily concerned with gaining maximum support from the society. Consequentially, he gains prominence through these supportive relations. Secondly, the role of the president requires cementing the relations with society members and gaining the recognition received by others, *e.g.*, by means of impression management (Goffman 1959: 3, Hall 2009: 365, Strukowska and Chruszczewski 2022: 262). This suggests that, it will be in the interest of Joe Biden to achieve the strategic effect of building a favourable self-presentation for the purpose of establishing "[a] favourable definition of the service or product" (Goffman 1959: 77) that is dependent on the evaluation of the society.

### 1.2.2. Task structure

Among the main components partaking in an effective leadership construction, **task structure** emerges as the second crucial factor. In the contingency model, this variable is recognised as the aspect representing the clarity and certainty in task goals that allow the leader to gain control over the response of groups as well as guide them towards their collective goal. Because the creation of situation control entails building an authorial (presidential) effectiveness by communicating tasks in a clear and transparent way, it is especially imperative to have insight into leadership practice that exists within the ramifications of a COVID-19 pandemic. The need for a high task structure in times of crisis might help those in power to stay connected to and mobilize the society during a crisis. In view of the abnormal circumstances caused by the pandemic, society's sense of safety also lies in the hands of media, journalists, scientists, and politicians to provide credible and transparent information where presenting evidence and facts is key (Beilstein *et al.* 2021: 466, Dirani *et al.* 2020: 7, Finset 2020: 873).

An overview of situational leadership in “extreme” times of the COVID-19 pandemic is given, for instance, in Dirani *et al.* (2020) who signal that the government, organisations and various institutions have activated an emergency mode and are desperately in need of direction from their leaders. However, skilful leadership is frequently performed during pandemics with varying degrees of effectiveness. Recent studies report that there has been an increase in destructive politics with policies working against human interest (*e.g.*, Bieber 2022, Boin *et al.* 2021, Carney and Bennett 2014, Lipsy 2020, McKee *et al.* 2021, Maor *et al.* 2020, Wodak 2021a). It is to be noted that communicating tasks is assumed in the study as a common act of linguistic communication, *i.e.*, performance of speech acts which are the building blocks of social reality (Searle [1969] 2011: 16). Therefore, this part of the article postulates that the analysis could benefit from incorporating the methodology of seven standards of textuality proposed by Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler who view text as a communicative occurrence (de Beaugrande and Dressler ([1972] 1981). Measuring task structure by means of the seven standards of textuality contributes in significant ways to reformulating and supplementing the existing model. The possibilities provided by incorporating seven standards of textuality as credible tools for researching the degree of communicativeness (task structure) ought not be underestimated for the following two reasons: first, they are parameters that exhibit relations that have a function contributing to the workings of the whole process of communication between a leader and members of the society in terms of clarity and coherence. Second, this measure of task structure requires that one uncovers the principles and mechanisms that manipulate the use of language under realistic conditions.



### 1.2.3. Position power

At the **position power level**, the review of leadership effectiveness is focused on the presidential authority bestowed on the leader. Concerning power as a component of situational control, I approach it from two convergent perspectives. In a broader sense, I approach it as the ability to influence others and gain control (Ayman *et al.* 1995: 157, Fiedler 1967: 22) and as a potential that the organisation provides for the leader's use (*ibid.*). In a narrower sense I understand it in terms of "coercive power" (Cap 2013: 32, Cap 2022: 7, Fiedler 1967: 143, Hart 2010: 64, French and Raven 1958: 83) viewed as a macro-strategy involving cognitive and emotive effects (Hart 2010: 9). Having said that, Biden's presidential power serves as a persuasive function which regulates the degree of influence and control. In this narrowest sense, coercive power is the type of macro-level discourse strategy that "[i]ntends to affect the beliefs, emotions, and behaviour of others in such a way that suits one's own interests" (Hart 2010: 63). This strategy would also be one correct description of any political communication.

Such type of power usually remains implicit, but it may be made explicit by means of speech acts, specifically their illocutionary force, that is a function of meaning of an utterance (Searle 1979: 64). Therefore, communicating coercive power at a high level is equal to acting coercively so that text-producers establish a certain type of reality by creating cognitive representations or producing certain "cognitive effects" (Hart 2010: 64, Sperber and Wilson 1995: vii). Following the perspective of speech acts theory, I approach coercive power as a mechanism organising the power-knowledge by means of "cognitive effects" achieved through cognitive coercion (Hart 2010: 64) occurring through speech acts that are mental representations "[c]apable of being realised in the form of actions" (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 31). In this framework, the practice of forming frames, schemas, and conceptual metaphors stems from the strategy of conceptual coercion which is employed to explicitly communicate relevant information for the smallest possible processing effort on the part of a hearer (Sperber and Wilson 1995: vii). Therefore, coercive power is also a display of shared knowledge, which does not merely imply the communicated information but, most importantly, constitutes the communicated information that is relevant for both parties.

Following this premise, the study adopts the view that all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts, also called speech acts (Searle [1969] 2011: 16). Hence, studying language practices involves assigning utterances to various speech-act types that are functionally significant basic units of linguistic communication. Moreover, they are rule-governed forms of behaviour that impart predictable perlocutionary effects. It seems that speech acts create a controlling environment for causing text-receivers to construct cognitive representations based on the effects that are intended to be achieved by text-producers. For these reasons, coercive power is considered central to any situational control in determining leadership effectiveness.

Emotive coercion, on the other hand, takes advantage of the “emotive effects” (Hart 2010: 64) in text-consumers. In this framework, the audience is “swayed” by *pathos*- the appeal based on emotions that follow directly from cognitive effects. This chain reaction allows for the activation of emotion programmes that come from cognitive representations (Bruni 2019: 29, Tooby and Cosmides 2008: 116) and allows for the emotionalization of discourse that enhances the persuasive function of a leader’s power claim. I argue for the strong pragmatic effect of emotionalisation that has the underlying purpose of achieving personal goals and influencing opinions and judgments. The construction of various types of representations by means of strong emotions, and their impact, have been extensively discussed in media studies (Altheide 2021, Alba-Juez & Mackenzie 2019, Döveling *et al.* 2011, Döveling and Konijn 2021, Furedi 2018, critical discourse analysis studies (van Dijk 2006, Glapka 2019, Milani and Richardson 2020), or political discourse studies (Breeze 2019, Cap 2017, Chilton and Kopytowska 2022, Wetherell *et al.* 2015). As Alba-Juez and Larina (2018) point out, “[I]ndeed, when people feel emotions they may not only show their internal states physically, (...) but also perform speech acts which are interpersonal in nature and have particular consequences. And by so doing speakers manifest, and at the same time affect, certain aspects of the cognitive, social and discourse systems they belong to” (Alba-Juez and Larina 2018: 10). The performative potential of emotions resides in their high degree of expressibility combined with the type of effect they intend to produce in their hearers. In addition to their interactional pragmatic effects, they carry wide negative consequences, especially when leaders manipulate the public using fear by creating uncertainty in the time of conflict and construing closeness of an external threat in order to solicit legitimisation of preventive means to offset the effects of threat and claim power (Cap 2018: 285).

Another way to consider position power in leadership effectiveness is by appreciating the centrality of speech acts in connection with the concept of legitimisation which is often defined as a linguistic enactment of the speaker’s right to be obeyed (Chilton 2004). Legitimation as a speech-act-based strategy involved in coercion has a number of features that lend it to an explanation of Joe Biden’s presidential authority. Firstly, speaker’s performance is legitimised by means of speech acts, mainly assertions which are made explicit by their criterion of commitment to the truth of the claimed propositions. This level of explicitness allows to give reasons as to why the audience ought to accept the messages as true. The performative character of presidential authority through legitimisation has crucial epistemic implications that can be related to the status of President and his particular political role realised through *ethos* appeal, which refers to his credibility (Hart 2010: 90). The perspective of ethical behaviour is principal in establishing the success or failure of the presidency (Bornstein 2009: 1, Buthelezi 2022: 11, Tuomo *et al.* 2013: 149). Secondly, approaching presidential position power in terms of legitimising his actions casts the interpretation of his leadership

effectiveness in adaptive terms. Given certain features of context, meanings of the sentence(s) are made clear by means of the illocutionary force, which communicates the truth of the proposition. Thus, the function of assertoric force of utterances is grounded in an implicit claim that there exist certain conditions in the world under which it is appropriate to render the meaning of a given proposition as true or false. Therefore, the criterion of speech-act function is a *sine qua non* of accepting cognitive representations as true or false. By locating the processes of power enactment in legitimisation strategies, I make a clear set of predictions about the types of adaptive strategies that Joe Biden uses to enact his presidential credibility in times of crisis.

## 2. The analysis of the data

The data presented in this type of study is based on the collection of statements produced by President Joe Biden in his first year of presidency, derived from the webpage <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>. In this study, I adopt a mixed-method approach including both a qualitative analysis and a statistics-based correlational procedure to give an insight into President Joe Biden's leadership effectiveness during the first year of his office. In particular, I present an interpretive perspective guided by general principles of the contingency theory variables and offer empirical support for their statistical co-occurrences in the form of positive/negative correlations leading to the areas of a statistically significant activity between the variables, which amount to Biden's degree of effective leadership. Looking at emerging tendencies allowed to observe the correlation coefficient between variables that create real impact sources within the active leadership environment.

The methodology section included a corpus-based study, and the data was analysed in two steps. Initially, the sample consisted of 261 records (presidential statements in the form of transcribed documents). I conducted a preliminary filter analysis and created a keyword list which presented the statistically significant lexical items with the highest measure of saliency (Hardaker and McGlashan 2016: 85, Baker 2006: 125) using the log-likelihood (LL) test and the effect size. To create such a list the analysis was performed by comparing the frequency wordlist generated from the focus corpus by means of a software programme for a concordance analysis called *Ant Conc*. Then, the corpus was set against the reference corpus of American English. The results showed the strongest occurrence of the word [pandemic] with a very high keyness score at (910,383) and frequency at (202). In performing an examination of the keyword list, it was possible to recognise some culture-specific concepts in the form of keywords (Wierzbicka 1996: 25) that were the underlying factors in establishing effective leadership in the times of COVID-19. Consequently, such a systematic study of the most frequent lexical co-occurrences allowed us to map the predominant cultural

concepts because keywords always remain in referential relation to a wider socio-cultural context in which they operate.

The next step was to filter the existing corpus and look for texts that only included the keyword *pandemic*. The final corpus consisted of 66 texts, (28,394) words, delivered by Joe Biden from Feb. 01, 2021 to Jan 3, 2022. This preliminary twofold research design allowed the study of the context-specific patterned framework in order to tease out the dataset, which was recognised as a valid sociocultural background to the analysis of President Joe Biden's contingency leadership. By combining structural methods of description, the keyword *pandemic* being the starting point in my analysis, followed by the study of the contingency model and its variables, I propose a characterization of **the culturally contingent leadership behaviour** of Joe Biden in the first year of his office.

### 2.1. Contingency model assessment: a case of President Joe Biden's leadership

This part of the study employed an interpretative design based on the variables of the Contingency Model proposed by Fiedler (1967). The findings obtained in this study suggest that the leadership style represented by Joe Biden in the first year of his presidential office is based on **moderately favourable situations**. According to the contingency model, in the moderately favourable conditions, in which the leader has high power, communicates well-structured tasks, but does not receive maximum support of the society (moderate approval rankings-*Median: 51%*<sup>1</sup> derived from the online web-based platform <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/biden-approval-rating/>) (accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021), **the relationship-oriented leadership** style is more likely to result in effective leadership. Under these conditions, Biden's leadership is found in Octant V situations (moderately accepted leader, structured task, high position power) (Fiedler 1967: 148) (see Table 2).

Variables	Measure	Score	Octant
Leader's motivational orientation	LPC Scale	Relationship-Oriented	V
Situational control	Polls	Moderate ( <i>Mean: 51%</i> )	
	7 standards of textuality	High	
	Coercion	High	

**Table 2. Perceived parameters of President Joe Biden's leadership based on a contingency model of leadership (Fiedler 1979). Author's own elaboration**

<sup>1</sup> Analysed data derived from the website covers the time in the first year of Joe Biden's presidency, specifically texts from Feb. 01, 2021 to Jan 3, 2022.

My aim is to determine President Joe Biden's degree of leadership effectiveness. Therefore, I have tested the hypothesis that posits that in the situation represented by Octant V the effective leader is "[a]pt to be diplomatic and indirect in his dealings with his group members" (Fiedler 1967: 148). Furthermore, the relationship-oriented leader is more likely to be considerate and mindful of the feelings of the group. Such a framework also includes making commitments that are true and relevant for his group (Fiedler 1967: 148). These ways of dealing with society are articulated as strategic priorities that enable the president to achieve goals through taking a nondirective role and following a relatively permissive course of action.

In the next part of the study that follows, I look closely at the quantitative and qualitative findings, which were most likely to affect the degree of favourableness of the situation for the leader, *i.e.*, the extent to which the situation enables the leader to exert power and control the American society.

### 2.1.1. Qualitative findings

As demonstrated by the keyword analysis, the token of the highest saliency was **pandemic** in the focus corpus. This suggests that content-wise, it is aligned with a cultural knowledge map embedded in the midst of pandemic turmoil. Such a point of reference creates a semantic area that reflects culturally specific "ways of thinking and living" during Joe Biden's presidency. The function of the keyword pandemic goes beyond a domain of social *in situ* experience that taps into local discourses but presents cognitive importance of this word in terms of its projecting potential (Dunmire 2011) that triggers threat, uncertainty, and most importantly, focuses on the consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic poses to the future of the civilisation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, its control, public perception and awareness of it, or even denial of its existence (Wodak 2021a: 145-6, Wodak 2021b: 338, Flinders and Wood 2018: 608). I postulate that the projective function of the keyword [pandemic] legitimises Joe Biden's leadership for one simple reason; it creates **a past-present-future trajectory that creates narratives** of strategic, functional and purposeful nature (Riessman 2008: 8, Holmberg and Lundgren 2018: 109, Leach and Dry 2010: 6). These framing processes are realised through the themes based on the destruction caused by the pandemic which has surged across the globe and has created a snowball effect of pandemic precedents, leading to the current crisis situation. As a result, keeping the continuity of this link is one step in legitimising his power as president of the U.S. This symbolic progression creates space for presidential agentivity in the form of preemptive action (Cap 2013, Dunmire 2011) that needs to be taken as a response to imminent threat; the enemy-the virus. As noted above, having demonstrated the keyness of the word pandemic, it became evident that lexically-driven thematic

frame is suggestive of the general socio-cultural frame centred around pre-, inter-, and post-outbreak pandemic phases.

### 2.1.2. Correlational analysis

This part of the study employed a correlational design to examine the relationships between the variables of the Contingency Model, specifically position power variables, and it shows some meaningful correlative patterns. The computer program IBM SPSS Statistics 22 was used for data analysis. To test the relationship between each contingency model variable, I employed statistical analysis using Spearman's rank correlation technique. This test is a method to determine the significance of the correlation (its strength and direction represented by a negative or a positive value) based on a relationship between two variables. The result will always be between 1 and minus 1. In this part of the study I assessed the correlational links between the elements of the contingency model and President Joe Biden's relationship-oriented style of leadership.

Table 3. summarises correlations between the variables of the Contingency Model. This analysis enabled to tease out the following correlation patterns which were statistically significant.

	informativity (LD)	CC (cognitive coercion)	assertive	commissive	EC (emotive coercion)	Threat	struggle	criticism	praise	hope	wishes
informativity (LD)	1.00										
CC (cognitive coercion)	0.07	1.00									
assertive	0.04	<b>0.94</b>	1.00								
commissive	-0.04	<b>0.36</b>	0.12	1.00							
EC (emotive coercion)	-0.01	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.57</b>	0.14	1.00						
threat	0.04	0.40	<b>0.46</b>	0.20	<b>0.55</b>	1.00					
struggle	0.06	<b>0.47</b>	<b>0.50</b>	-0.09	<b>0.84</b>	0.11	1.00				
criticism	-0.07	0.52	0.31	0.39	0.52	-0.10	-0.30	1.00			
praise	-0.01	0.34	0.40	0.07	<b>0.71</b>	0.36	<b>0.61</b>	-0.83	1.00		
hope	-0.29	-0.24	0.30	0.15	-0.58	0.50	0.00		-0.50	1.00	
wishes	0.87	0.87	0.87	1.00	1.00		1.00				1.00

**Table 3. Correlations of President Joe Biden's position power variables based on the Contingency Model (Fiedler 1967)**

Table 3. demonstrates that: (i.) the two general areas of CC (Cognitive Coercion) and EC (Emotive Coercion) positively correlate with each other (+0.53); and (ii.) within the respective areas, other significant positive correlational variations have been observed. They are shown in the Table 4. I have selected only those correlations whose value was above (+0.40), which is the threshold of statistically relevant data.

<b>Position power patterns</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>
CC with EC	0.53
CC with struggle	0.47
EC with threat	0.55
EC with struggle	0.84
EC with praise	0.71
EC with assertive	0.57
Assertive with threat	0.46
Assertive with struggle	0.50
Struggle with praise	0.61

**Table 4. Spearman's correlation coefficient of Joe Biden's leadership performance by position power patterns**

### **CC and EC correlation**

The observed correlations suggest that, the discursive construction of President Joe Biden's leadership effectiveness involves primarily the parameter of Position Power reformulated for the sake of this analysis as coercive power consisting of two fluctuating variables of **CC (Cognitive Coercion) and EC (Emotive Coercion)** which show a moderate positive correlation of **(+0.53)**.

Most importantly, what is particularly striking about the results in Table 3. is that, out of eight correlations that have been distinguished, four correlations deal with EC. This observation supports the view in Section 2.1 and Section 2.2.1 above, according to which the relationship-oriented style of leadership also pertains to the presidential leadership that is anchored in keeping a synergetic relationship with society and reacting emotionally to unfavourable situations. Therefore, the results of the study corroborate the assumptions of Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership that high-LPC leaders are more emotionally inclined towards the group(s) they manage. It is markedly demonstrated in the frequent use of speech acts of praising, expressing threats and focusing on the previous and ongoing COVID-19 struggles. The investigation of the relations-oriented leadership style of Joe Biden from the perspective of coercion demonstrated that in a position of power level, he skilfully used this argumentation technique to exert influence and control over his nation.

The positive correlation between CC and EC indicates the type of relation that is also in line with a broad theoretical account of emotions derived from the Evolutionary Psychology perspective that highlights the emotion-cognition interface (Toby and Cosmides 2008: 98). According to this theoretical framework, emotions coordinate mental mechanisms, *i.e.*, discourse achieves emotive effects in text-consumers when emotion programs get activated in response to specific cognitive representations (Hart 2010: 64). In causing text-consumers to activate certain cognitive representations (in the forms of frames, conceptual metaphors, and image schemas), text-producers may act intentionally to influence and control text-consumers' actions. These mental associations are automatic and deeply ingrained in the behavioural patterns and it is only through knowledge and affect that they can be activated, maintained and developed. This mechanism works well in political discourse presented by Joe Biden; he establishes his position of power by inducing emotional effects by specific categories of language usage, in this case, speech acts of assertives, commissives, and expressives, which allow him to act coercively due to their illocutionary force and the perlocutionary effect that is achieved. The above correlational pattern laid the foundation for a detailed correlation-based analysis, which is provided below.

### **CC correlation with struggle**

The results of the analysis demonstrate a pattern of a moderately high positive value of **CC with struggle (+0.47)**. Based on the assumptions that text-producers may act coercively by producing information that relies on rules and conditions that govern speech acts (Hart 2010: 66), the study points to co-occurrence of assertives and commissives with Struggle. It has been shown that Biden's position of power is located in the illocutionary force of assertions, which are always commitments to the truth of the speaker's propositions. Commissives on the other hand, *e.g.*, promises, are obligations that the speaker makes which are commitments to changes that he will make in the future. The former type of illocutionary force is based on the beliefs of Joe Biden, and the later refers to his intentions, which act as the sincerity conditions of these acts (Searle 1979: 5), *i.e.*, the beliefs of the speaker that they are true based on the factual information that he presents as the actual state of affairs. These dimensions are given more attention in relation to Struggle. With reference to this correlation set, the findings of the study highlight one main area of Joe Biden's position power claim. It relies on the illocutionary force of CC specified in the sincerity conditions of assertions (the Speaker believes that a presupposition is true) and commissives (the Speaker makes an obligation to the promisee to perform some future action). It follows from my analysis that President Joe Biden's leadership discourse involves undertaking a high degree of obligation to speak truthfully represented by assertives (consisting of 67.3% of all marked speech acts) and a rather low degree of commitments and obligation to perform a given course of action in the future (11.2 %).



What is most striking in this analysis is that Joe Biden's discourse is observed to include statements that are concerned with a struggling society (a relatively high positive correlation of  $+0.50$ ). This suggests that the more he commits to the truth of his propositions by stating facts about the world, the more he reflects on the struggles of the American nation with the pandemic. Central to his leadership discourse is the inclusion of arguments that ultimately refer to the massive destruction caused by the pandemic, as well as his concern that it continues to bring devastating consequences across the country. President Joe Biden's truth-based claims with reference to a struggling American nation are among the most noticeable features of his discourse and include the following examples:

- (1) The pandemic has further ripped the path of destruction through every community in America, but we see its acute devastation among Black Americans who are dying, losing jobs and closing businesses at disproportionate rates in the dual pandemic and economic crises. (...) We are already seeing rising mental health concerns due in part to isolation. (...) Educational disparities that have always existed grow wider each day that our schools remain closed and remote learning isn't the same for every student. (...) We have sacrificed so much in the last year. (...) We are very much in a battle for the soul of America. (...) But since the start of this pandemic, more than 400000 small businesses have permanently closed and millions more are hanging by a thread.

As observed, Joe Biden's presidential leadership has its point of departure in its functions, here assertions, which are ways of creating the representation of his presidency. What I mean by that is that Joe Biden gives meaning to his actions through the functional deployment of his power, which takes place by means of information that he communicates, that consequently give reasons for his actions. Given this background, when Joe Biden makes statements (assertives) about the pandemic, he also asserts that the Covid-stricken America has not yet recovered from this great socio-economic depression. As noted above, although he has extensively built his position power based on assertions which raise the credibility of his propositions, he has failed to maintain his credibility as president since he cannot provide solutions for social recovery in times of crisis.

It has also been argued that commissives, being elements of CC, have played a significant part in establishing Biden's position of power. In the case of promising, these acts involve the intention to do something for someone in the future and an obligation to perform it. Furthermore, a promise is a highly situational feature of context since it normally requires some sort of situation that calls for a promise. For that reason, the correlational pattern found in the data revolves around the idea that Joe Biden is committed to taking action to confront the COVID-19 pandemic by making an obligation that he will address the immediate challenges brought on by the pandemic. I restrict myself to an illustration of only some of the promises he makes to tease out the most predominant thematic tendencies, which are the following:

- (2) We will get through this crisis if we look out for one another and work together to expand coverage, lower costs, and ensure that health care is a right for all Americans. (...) My administration will not make the mistake of taking this threat lightly or just assuming the best. (...) And if we work together with our democratic partners, with strength and confidence, we will meet every challenge and outpace every challenger. (...) We will build back better our economic foundations; reclaim our place in international institutions, lift up our values at home and speak out to defend them around the world, modernize our military capabilities, while leading first with diplomacy; and revitalize America's unmatched network of alliances and partnerships. (...) We will strengthen collaboration on G7 action on clinical trials for vaccines and therapeutics. (...) We will work together to help increase global vaccine supply. (...) The U.K. and U.S. will work together with like-minded countries to explore options for a new sustainable, catalytic health security financing mechanism.

Example (2) shows that these promises frequently involve the use of the Pluralisation of the 'I' pronoun strategy such as 'we', which refers to the plural of authority, solidarity, power, and social status (Ilie 2005: 182, Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 199). This also shows his commitment to cooperating in joint action. The use of the first-person plural also demonstrates his membership to a group and displays the fundamental social standing that he derives from the American nation. Another striking feature of this study is the global collaborative effort that needs to be made to combat crisis. The study demonstrated that his promises obligate him to initiate collaboration with other countries to fight the global scale of the pandemic. Biden's promises as seemingly collaborative power forms (see a discussion in Körner *et al.* 2020: 636) are powerful tools to create social coordination, solidarity, and concern for others.

However, the data presented in my study shows that his use of action-fuelled promises constitute only (11.2%) of his texts, compared to assertives (67.3%). The results show that although he stated that American nation is in the state of a pandemic emergency, apart from the dramatic wording of his assertives we do not learn much about formal declarations which would allow for a prompt presidential executive action. His first-year administration has also been characterised by a lower positive emotionality, lower achievement motivation, and more negative emotions such as threat, struggle and criticism, which are indicative of a coercive power leader (Cheng *et al.*, 2010; Körner & Schütz, 2020; Körner *et al.* 2020; ten Brinke & Keltner, 2022; see also Widmann, 2021). Interestingly, the study has revealed an issue that has not been reported by any research findings. My analysis provides relevant information about the preponderance of coercive power over collaborative power, which is characteristic of Biden's leadership. I propose that the differences mainly comprise **passivity and emotion**. Therefore, this paper fills this gap and argues for another perspective on power type through the level of speech act analysis in terms of performing language according to certain rules and conditions. The negative emotional tone of President Joe Biden's rhetoric is further analysed in the Section "Correlations with EC."

## Correlations with EC

Another cluster of correlations that has been identified deals with EC and its emotive effects which relevantly cooccur with the variables of **threat (+0.55)**, **assertives (+0.57)**, **struggle (+0.84)**, and **praise (+0.71)**. Given the fact that all four variables demonstrate positive correlations with EC, I have analysed them under one heading.

Empirical results from the analysed data found much evidence of linguistic features which provide cognitive representations triggered by emotive effects and which are based on predications that refer to the deep-seated emotions such as fear. Crucially, activating these biologically determined emotion programs can be one simple way of taking over the reactions of the nation and taking advantage of them. Following the premise of contingency theory, position power rests on leader's ability to influence others and gain control. Furthermore, it acts as the potential which the organisation/nation provides for the leader's use, and which is established and built by intending to "[a]ffect the beliefs, emotions, and behaviour of others in such a way that suits one's own interests" (Hart 2010: 63). Given this background, the instrument of emotive coercion is a strategy used to produce the position power claim that enables the leader to get the nation to accept his leadership. With regard to the analysis, the variables that relevantly cooccurred with EC, *i.e.*, Struggle, Praise, Threat, and Assertive, are examined as crucial determinants of Joe Biden's leadership effectiveness.

A correlational pattern obtained in the study for EC and **threat** demonstrates rather clearly that President Joe Biden uses emotionalization of threat that enhances the persuasive function of his power claim. It has been observed that the threat construction pattern found in Biden's speeches draws upon the "anticipatory mode" activated by the existing effects of the pandemic but also is based on projecting its future trajectory through the lens of sequential catastrophes that are bound to happen following the COVID-19 pandemic. The threats in Example (3) show the two most pronounced topics which project particular representations of the future that necessitate prompt action.

- (a) VIRUS: As I have said many times, things are still likely to get worse again as new variants spread, and the current improvement could reverse./ We must continue to remain vigilant, act fast and aggressively./ We are still on a wartime footing/ (...) in the face of the more transmissible Omicron variant.
- (b) GLOBAL CRISIS: New crisis demand our attention./ (...) preparing for the next biological threat/ (...) this moment of accelerating global challenges- from the pandemic to the climate crisis to nuclear proliferation to the fourth industrial revolution./ (...) from the COVID-19 pandemic to the threat of climate change./ We agree to deepen cooperation (...) to ensure the effective joint response against the emerging threats./ contemporary threats and challenges require us to deepen our partnership in new areas./ (...) a time of considerable international hardship and rapid global change./ (...) to better prevent, detect, and respond to the next threat./

The climate crisis has reached a critical point./ We call on partners (...) to prepare countries for COVID-19 and future biological threats.

Interestingly, the threat-based pattern shows a relevant characteristic of Biden's rhetoric that is based on designing present actions as sequential disaster events. It seems that the momentum of recovery in the pandemic times has been determined by the catastrophic visions that bring crucial implications to triggering effective and dynamic social change. His anticipatory type of discourse (Scolon and Scollon 2000, de Saint-Georgs 2012) allows to position himself and the American nation with respect to knowledge of the "here and now" and agency over the future (Dunmire 2011: 56). Bearing in mind the context of the pandemic and global crisis, the future orientation is manifested linguistically through representing consecutive events shown in (3a) and (3b) as consequential to the American nation (Cap 2013: 12). As a result, it essentially acts as a preventive measure taken to offset the negative impact of a pandemic, to rationalize the present by projecting certain visions as "potentialities" of imminent danger, and to legitimise Biden's actions through **assertives** which involve fear appeals. The catalogue of threat-based mechanisms used by Joe Biden have been identified as potentially powerful tool to materialise the direct threat and build a rationale for a prompt pre-emptive response.

Regarding the **struggle** variable, the study shows a clear correlation with the EC component that mainly focuses on the use of *pathos* as the emotional bridge between Biden's statements and the "emotive effects" they create in the American nation. The relevance of this observation may be that Biden builds trust through emotion dynamics which are triggered by the message of struggles multiplied in post-Covid times. As for the thematic scope of struggle-related topics, the most common remarks that reappear are:

- (a.) The downgrade of the economy, *e.g.*, "COVID-19 is hitting the poorest and most marginalized"; "America works to recover from the devastating challenges of a deadly pandemic, an economic crisis"; "since the start of this pandemic, more than 400,000 small businesses have permanently closed and millions more are hanging by a thread"; "while our recovery is far from complete"; "inflation is a global challenge",
- (b.) The increase of hate crimes/social inequality, *e.g.*, "the systemic and persistent obstacles that fuel gender disparities and undermine women's potential"; "1 in 3 women are subjected to domestic violence, COVID-19 has only exacerbated the threat of intimate partner violence"; "ongoing struggle for racial equity and social justice"; "anti-Asian bias and violence have accelerated",
- (c.) The crisis of press, *e.g.*, "the truth is increasingly under attack"; "online abuse and harassment of journalists"; "authoritarians are striving to undermine the free press, manipulate the truth, or spread disinformation"; "threats to a free and independent media."

With regard to *pathos*, we see the examples that bring to the fore the type of post-pandemic agenda that has nothing to do with Biden's manifesto of "Building Back Better Plan." It is argued that the emerging dimension in this study is dissatisfaction, lack of social resilience, and instability. The combination of these issues resonating in Biden's leadership discourse has potentially significant implications for dealing with crisis and adapting to change. In catastrophic times, the core mission is to build resilient organisations and resilient leaders who can lead a disrupted society. The findings highlight that Biden's leadership hinders agile response to disruption, mainly caused by the negative attitudes that he projects toward society. In this vein, he has shown his inability to withstand the pandemic effects and, therefore, his incompetence in performing effective risk management.

In terms of EC and Praise correlation (+0.71), the pattern shows that the emotive aspects are combined with a public speech act of praising. This group comprises statements made with positive sentiment that manifest Biden's favourable assessments of his own actions as well as the performance of other public actors. In general, the corpus of praise shows a tendency to positively evaluate the following areas: (i.) Biden's administration: (healthcare programmes, job/economic growth), (ii.) The strength of America: (the brilliance of scientists, the resilience and eagerness of the people, strong military force), and (iii.) High morals: (bravery, truth, courage, commitment, strong work ethic). It can be observed that the gamut of topics is forms of Biden's favourable assessment of the post-pandemic situation, which mainly focuses on maintaining a positive self-face and demonstrating praise as solidarity-oriented actions. These messages communicate that while acknowledging the difficulty of the pandemic situation in which society has been immersed, Biden's leadership also acknowledges accomplishments that serve as examples of successful persuasive efforts. Using Biden's applaudable speech may suggest distracting the public from his response to the unfolding stages of the pandemic crisis. In line with these findings, I postulate that ingratiating was the *pathos*-based tactic consistently used by President Joe Biden to gain a significant rhetorical advantage, which affects persuasiveness.

### 3. Concluding remarks

The conclusions to be drawn from the present study have potentially significant implications for presidential discourse and leadership communication studies. As for this study's research question, regarding President Joe Biden's leadership effectiveness, the findings show that it exhibits a low degree of effectiveness in the pandemic times. It has also been observed how the reformulated framework of the contingency model works, one which is modified by the anthropolinguistic elements and which can be a solid platform for documenting Biden's culturally contingent leadership practices. The results add to linguistic knowledge on how

certain mechanisms operate to produce leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, there are still no similar studies within the anthropolinguistic studies that would encapsulate features of president's leadership language in the pandemic context. In terms of my specific hypotheses, first, I have argued that Joe Biden represents a relationship-oriented leadership style falling into Octant V of the model, which predisposed him to collaborative forms of power. Although there already exists a bulk of studies which support this outcome, my analysis has not corroborated these findings and highlighted that he deploys the coercive stance in claiming power and control.

Following Austin's (1962) original proposal that speech acts not only impart information but most importantly, perform specific actions through language, the pragmatic functions of Biden's leadership mainly rest on assertives which potentially raise his credibility, but at the same time undermine his performativity in the context of risk management as they do not provide the solutions for the social recovery in the times of crisis (a limited number of commissives). In addition, the data quantitatively demonstrates that there exists a strong correlation with EC and CC, which consistently reports that the increasing *pathos* presence in the leadership rank can be a strategy for promoting, maintaining, and developing power and control over American society. To further support this claim, this study shows that Biden legitimises his actions through the strategy of emotionalization as a discursive practice that creates patterns of social thinking which become social facts. Due to these patterns, society attributes emotional quality to pandemic messages that carry threat-based evaluations and attitudes that lack hope.

As a concluding remark, apart from the findings which deal with Biden's response to the pandemic, the study emphasises the potential effect that his leadership style could have on community resilience as a type of cultural change. Here, this phenomenon is recognised as the “[c]hange in social practices and ideas from a broader perspective (...) that occur in the larger field of collective struggles and individual strategies, which shift depending on values assigned to them and adjust as new positions take hold, and alter other positions in the field” McCabe and Briody 2018: 15). Indeed, building resilient communities requires large-scale assessment and involves a continuous process that is often not planned and purposeful. However, on this higher plane, the study has brought to the focus of attention the anthropolinguistic tools incorporated in the contingency model (Fiedler 1967) which help to document the shifting practices and explore disruptive changes determined by the pandemic context. Specifically, at the macro level dynamics of Biden's power, this analysis accentuates that his relationship-oriented style ought to come under the rubric of sharing (furthering mutual goals), action (taking steps to achieve practical effects), and rational logic. Such analytical focus must also take into account the fact that emotionalisation serves as a proximising strategy that “[p]resents physically and temporally distant occurrences, events and states of affairs (...) as increasingly and negatively consequential to the political

speaker and her addressee” (Cap 2020: 228). From a leadership perspective, the change that is taking place draws on the societal struggles with the pandemic and on the imagining of the closeness of a looming danger, which ultimately demobilizes the society and triggers the deactivation mode in the process of building post-pandemic resilience.

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