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Does She Talk Differently?: Exploring Implications of Gender in
US Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates

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1 Introduction

Language is not only a communication tool based solely on the content of the speech but also a way for people to create a persona for themselves based on how they decide to talk, write or sign. The way speakers convey their opinions can be affected by deliberate choices about how they would like to represent themselves or by learned linguistic norms based on their different identities such as age, gender and socio-economic background. Hence, analyzing speech patterns and linguistic choices could provide deep understandings of people or various groups they belong to. A major social group of interest for linguists since the last quarter of the 20th century has been women. While women and girls' linguistic behavior has been studied in many different contexts such as their family environments, schools or workplace settings, linguistic studies on women in politics have been only slowly accumulating as politics is still a field mainly dominated by men around the world. Even though there is a significantly lower number of prominent women politicians, due to the vast amount of records concerning important political events, the field of politics is still highly productive for linguists interested in gender studies.

In this thesis, I aim to analyze political discourse in the United States of America with a focus on gender. The presidential and vice presidential debates between the candidates for the Republican and the Democratic parties are televised, moderated debates of the highest scale in the United States and so, they are significant examples that can be analyzed and compared in order to better understand political discourse in the US. The debates in the years 2016 and 2020 are especially unique since they are the only examples of multi-gender debates due to the participation of Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris respectively. Moreover, Donald Trump and Mike Pence are the Republican candidates in both election years, resulting in them debating not only Clinton and Harris respectively, but also Joe Biden and Tim Kaine. As a result, it is possible to compare the mixed gender and single gender debates with Trump and Pence as unchanging participants.

The main research questions this thesis aims to answer are as follows:

How do candidates use language to persuade the audience, establish their credibility and increase their likeability in Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates in 2016 and 2020? How do the candidates differ in terms of politeness strategies and turn taking practices? Does speaker gender or the opponent's gender affect language use? If so, how?

In order to investigate the effects of gender seven debates from the aforementioned election years were selected. Across these seven debates, I will interpret the findings for the chosen parameters both based on speaker gender and the gender of the opponent in the relevant debate. Additionally, I will reflect on trends and tendencies based on the election year and the political party of the candidates since the historical time frames and other research on linguistic styles of specific political movements can enrich the analysis.

Firstly, the structure of the debates and the political environment at the time of the debates will be discussed in the contextual overview section. Following this, the theoretical framework for the analysis will be explained. After establishing the theoretical standpoint, the selected methodology and the tools for this paper will be defined. Then the results from the examination of the debates will be shared. Lastly, the results will be discussed as a whole along with comparisons with similar studies on the topic.

2 Contextual overview

Before moving on to the theoretical framework for this paper, I would like to outline some general information about the structure of the relevant debates and discuss the significance of them in the United States' political environment.

Although political debates have been a part of the United States' democracy since the time of Abraham Lincoln, the presidential debates as they are known today did not exist until 1960 (Freeley 1961: 60). With the televised debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960, the presidential debate tradition truly started with a similar format to those relevant to this paper. After the founding of The Commission on Presidential Debates in 1987, which is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization focused on election education, the pre-election debates started being organized by the commission under the terms agreed by the participating parties (CPD: 2020).

The seven debates chosen for this paper share a similar structure in general. In most cases, the debates have one moderator who has been selected by the commission based on their qualifications as a broadcast news anchor and their knowledge on the topics relevant to the current political environment and election campaigns. The discussion questions for the debates are prepared by the moderator and are not shared with the commission or the candidates prior to the event (CPD: 2020). However, the topics selected by the moderator are announced to the public and the candidates prior to the debates.

As for the general structure of the debates, there are 6 segments in presidential debates and 10 in vice presidential ones, each of which starts with a question by the moderator. The candidates then have two minutes of uninterrupted speaking time to answer this question and following their turns, they have six to eleven minutes of open discussion time to elaborate on their answers or to challenge each other. However, as it will be clear early on in the analysis section, despite the explicit rules of the debates, most of the time there are interruptions or interjections during the initial answers of the candidates.

An exception to these standards was the second presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016 which had two moderators. This debate was also unique due to its town hall set-up in which audience members or online participants could ask questions directly to the candidates.

As a result of these standards, although the language used in the pre-election debates could be regarded as spontaneous speech, the candidates' preparations after the announcement of the debate topics should not be disregarded. Moreover, due to the significance and audience size of the debates, as well as the prepared speeches the candidates are used to giving throughout their election campaigns, it can be assumed that the language use is much more stylized and rehearsed than the ordinary spontaneous speech.

2.1 Political environment

Both the 2016 and the 2020 elections were historic in terms of gender equality in the United States. As the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be nominated by a major party and later, she became the first woman to win the popular vote for presidency. On a similar note, with her win as the vice presidential nominee in 2020, Kamala Harris became the first woman to become the vice president of the U.S. and the highest-ranking woman in the nation's government. Moreover, Harris became the first African American and the first Asian American vice president with her historic win.

Aside from these significant aspects of the two elections, the well-known business person Donald Trump becoming a politician through the 2016 elections and the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020 election, only added to the major public interest in the pre-election debates both in the States and internationally. Excluding streaming views online, the first debate between Clinton and Trump in 2016 was the most viewed presidential debate in US history with 84 million viewers. In comparison, the first

debate between Biden and Trump in 2020 became the third most watched one with 73 million viewers (Koblin 2020: 1).

Considering the outreach potential of the pre-election debates, they are certainly an important tradition for the US election system, as well as an important opportunity for the candidates to communicate with the public and challenge their opponent directly. Nevertheless, there are many other factors that influence the result of the elections, for instance, poll data from Roper Center indicates that Trump has lost the 2016 presidential debates based on viewer opinion, however, he ended up becoming the president through winning the electoral vote (Cillizza 2020: 2).

2.2 Related studies

As highly publicized political events, the pre-election debates in the US have been a topic of interest for a number of linguistic research studies. While this paper has been inspired by those specifically interested in the debates in the recent elections, many aspects of these historic debates such as the use of humor and rhetorical strategies have been analyzed (Halmari 2008). Moreover, similar political debates in other countries such as England and political speeches of influential politicians have been analyzed and researched for various linguistic phenomena. For example, Cameron and Shaw discuss the relevance and impact of gender on the 2015 UK General Election in their study with a focus on media portrayals and poll data (Cameron & Shaw 2019) and Rakaj examines promising as a speech act in Barack Obama's speeches (Rakaj 2022). The vast number of studies on these related topics helped to narrow the research scope of this thesis and to choose the frameworks for the analysis. For instance, McDonnell's content analysis of tweets from the week prior to the presidential debates in 2016 provided insights into gendered linguistic stereotypes and highlighted some speech patterns Trump and Clinton demonstrate (McDonnell 2020). Likewise, Jakobsen's study on interruptions in the first debate between Trump and Clinton exemplified how interruptions could be defined and analyzed (Jakobsen 2019).

Through reviews of these studies and other similar ones, the methodology and the specific research points for this thesis were selected with critical discourse analysis as the main framework in mind. Unlike many of the reviewed research material, this paper aims to analyze a number of linguistic choices by the speakers throughout the seven debates with a focus on gender. Due to the variety of codes and the amount of data, the analysis will be

conducted in both quantitative and qualitative manners to achieve results, all the while aligning with the scope of the study.

3 Theoretical framework

Before moving on to the chosen methodology for this paper, a theoretical overview to understand the reasonings behind the methods will be valuable. Since this paper is concerned with gender, its relationship with language and various speech styles, a number of theoretical frameworks will be concurrently employed.

3.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) has made its way into the linguistics field in the late 1970s and has been a significant approach used to uncover the relationship between language, culture and power (Tian 2021: 516). Feeding off of many areas of research such as rhetoric, sociolinguistics and pragmatics, CDA makes use of different methodologies and theoretical approaches (Wodak 2011: 50-51). The school of CDA follows the idea that linguistic choices help create impactful social narratives, which can then be used to legitimize or empower ideological perspectives (Tian 2021: 516). As a prominent part of many cultural narratives, societal myths about gender and constructions of gender identities are rich areas of research. In order to examine the implications of multi-gender political debates, CDA was chosen as the general approach for this paper and different methodologies commonly used by CDA researchers will be employed for the analysis.

3.2 Gender and language use

To begin with how this paper defines gender, social-developmental and social-constructivist perspectives on gender will be followed for this analysis. To elaborate, the use of the term gender refers to a combination of the socially constructed norms, which are fluid and should be understood within the contexts they occur (Mullaney 2007). As Simone de Beauvoir wrote more than half a century ago, “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes a woman” and therefore, gender should not be understood as a fixed and essential identity but rather a “stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 1988: 519). Following this perspective, the terms feminine and masculine will be used in relation to the pronouns she/her/hers and he/his/his respectively and the terms male or female will not be included as the research is not related to sex.

Moving on to the implications of speaker gender on language use, the relationship between language and gender has been discussed often in the last decades, both in terms of speaker identity and representations of gender through language (Coates 2012: 90). For example, one of the key figures in the field Robin Lakoff published a number of studies focusing on speech patterns such as the use of hedges, preference for indirect commands and requests and back-channel support, suggesting these features were representative of “women’s language” (Jule 2017: 21). Though they were important building blocks of research on the topic, today these claims are often considered outdated and not representative (Jule 2017: 23). This is partly due to Lakoff’s focus on upper class white women in New York and partly due to changes in understanding of gender and other intersecting identities since the 1970s. Moreover, while Lakoff often attributed the use of these language patterns as a sign of insecurity due to women’s oppression, other researchers such as Jennifer Coates interpreted them as a sign of intelligence that stems from a good understanding of how to create a welcoming environment in conversations (Jule 2017: 21). Hence, I find it noteworthy to highlight that the analysis of the reasons behind language choices and norms are just as important as the investigation of how often certain features are utilized.

Integral to the construction of social norms, language use is an important field of study to understand patterns and behaviors that contribute to actualizing gender identities. Certainly, people are multifaceted and intersecting identities form unique experiences and behaviors for different people, however, major identity components such as gender and ethnicity can impact language use greatly. Coming from a social-constructivist point of view, the aim of conducting gender focused language analysis is not to endorse essentialist perspectives but to analyze the implications of social dynamics and power relations in a context-driven manner (Jule 2017: 23).

As a field traditionally dominated by men, politics is a productive area of research as more and more women politicians are reaching higher official positions. Moreover, since success in a political career is heavily tied to public perception and approval, the ways politicians choose to construct their public persona, which includes their speech styles, is highly important. In twentieth century, it was argued that adopting stereotypically masculine speech patterns would be beneficial for women in politics, for example Margaret Thatcher was advised to “speak more like a man”, namely, more slowly and with a lower pitch (Grebelsky-Lichtman & Bdolach 2017: 277). Nowadays however, it is recommended that women find a balance of masculine and feminine communicative features to be found both likable and competent. To elaborate, research indicates that attributes like competitiveness,

assertiveness and autonomy are often considered masculine, while qualities such as empathy, compassion and supportiveness are considered feminine (Grebelsky-Lichtman & Bdolach 2017: 278). Considering these expectations and implicit biases, women in politics need careful strategies that reflect on the intricate balance of their circumstances to be able to carve out space for themselves in the political sphere and reach significant success.

Considering the relationship between gender and language, this paper aims to analyze not only the differences between speech patterns of women and men in politics, but also if there are significant differences in the selected politicians speech based on their debate partner's gender.

3.3 Debate language

Due to their pre-determined structures, debate language should be regarded differently than spontaneous language. Moreover, debates as speech events are highly goal oriented as the participants aim to persuade the audience and/or their opponents that their opinions should win over those of others through a line of pre-structured arguments (Cano-Basave & He 2016: 1405). Especially considering the audience size and possible consequences of televised political debates such as the ones relevant to this paper, it is clear that the participants not only need to be well-prepared to be able to establish a trustworthy and charismatic persona but also, they have to position themselves carefully against their opponents without appearing too aggressive and unintentionally increasing sympathy for their opponents. To elaborate, research indicates that aggressive behavior is often considered unpleasant and undesirable by voters, however voter judgment is highly dependent on voter types and candidate gender (Bauer et al. 2022: 24). The 2022 study by Bauer et al. indicates that voters' tolerance to aggressive behavior by candidates is dependent on voters' own predisposition for aggressiveness. Nonetheless, those with higher tolerances to aggressiveness and incivility are only more tolerant to aggressive men and not women (Bauer et al. 2022: 24).

Moreover, language intensity in debates appears to be a significant factor in terms of trustworthiness of candidates as well. Language intensity in this context refers to a preference for words such as "fantastic" instead of good or adding "really" in front of "great" and stylistic choices like "crippled by debt" (Clementson et al. 2023: 408). For instance, in his first debate against Clinton, Trump uses a high intensity word, "tremendous", 13 times in the span of one and a half hours. According to Clementson et al. "[v]oters expect a politician to

use modulated, less emotional word choices when answering questions in a debate, which enhances trustworthiness.” (2023: 427). Therefore, Trump’s frequent use of intense language could be a linguistic strategy to differentiate himself from more stereotypical politicians since he emphasizes he is not a career politician several times throughout the debates. However, this strategy could cost him the trust of the audience members who prefer their traditional expectations to be fulfilled.

To conclude, debates in general and political debates in particular, have established norms that dictate audience expectations. These expectations then impact the judgment of the viewers and may affect the popularity or ranking of the candidates. As a result, the participants' linguistic behaviors should be interpreted in the context of political debate norms.

3.4 Pragmatic markers

Pragmatic markers have been a topic of interest in linguistics starting from the late 60s (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2011: 223). With an accumulation of research studies from different languages, the fundamentals of researching and analyzing pragmatic markers have been outlined in various ways, influenced by different schools of linguistic research. Nevertheless, there are still many on-going discussions on definitions, terminology and functions. For instance, even the term *pragmatic marker* is not agreed upon by all and some research uses terms such as *discourse markers* or *particles*, *modal particles* and *connectives* (Beeching 2016: 3). For this paper, pragmatic marker (henceforth PM) will be the preferred term along with the following definition:

Especially frequent in spoken language, pragmatic markers such as *you know*, *well* and *I mean* are expressions that are reflective of mood and circumstances of the speech event rather than the content of the speech (Hölker 1991 cited in Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2011). When used as pragmatic markers, such words and phrases act as clues that “signal the speaker’s potential communicative intentions” (Fraser 1996: 168). PMs can be used for turn taking, self-repair, hedging, face saving strategies and many more other functions and they are often multi-functional (Leuckert & Rüdiger 2021: 1). Additionally, there are some studies that conclude these markers may be more frequently used by certain social groups and minorities, for example women or teenagers. Along with the sense of belonging the use of PMs can allow speakers to feel, some research indicates that frequent use of PMs may be stigmatized (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg 2011: 226). A well-known example of this

stigma is about the use of *like*, especially in the form *be like*, which is often associated with girls and young women, as it has been recorded to be considered impolite or uneducated especially by older generations (Beeching 2016: 147-152). To conclude this definition, Östman characterizes PMs as ““windows” through which one can make deductions about the speaker’s attitudes and opinions” (1995:100).

Due to the research interests of this paper, the following PMs have been chosen to be analyzed based on their functions:

Well
You know

Actually
Of course

To begin with one of the most analyzed PMs, *well* has had many functions attributed to it (Schourup 2001: 1026). When it is used as an opener or a turn taking device, it can mark hesitation, word-search or self-repair (Beeching 2016, Aijmer 2013). In this manner, it can be categorized as a polite interruption. Moreover, it can signal upcoming objection to the previous sentiments or a change in attitude or topic (Beeching 2016, Aijmer 2013, Cuenca 2008). The analysis of the use of *well* is important to this paper especially due to its role in interruptions.

Another multi-functional PM relevant to this paper is *you know*. One of the core functions of this PM, and consequently the most interesting one for this paper, is establishment of common ground (Beeching 2016: 99). As an interpersonal PM, directly referring to the addressee, *you know* aims to appeal to common knowledge (Pettersson-Traba 2018: 69). As a result, the use of *you know* as a PM will be analyzed both as a plea for common ground between the candidates and as an appeal to strengthening the bond between the speaker and the audience. Aside from this function, *you know* is also used to repair previous syntactic mistakes, mark hesitation or to fill gaps during word search. These functions however, are less common and they are not relevant to the research focus, hence they will not be discussed in the results section.

Continuing with *actually*, the third PM of interest often denotes opposition, however it can also have elaborative functions. When used for opposition *actually* can signal a desire to “emphasizing reality, hedging and politeness, novelty and surprise and emphasizing speaker position” (Aijmer 2013: 116). In this manner, *actually* can function as a polite turn taking device in sentence initial position or highlight the point of view of the speaker within a statement. Less frequently, it can be used to clarify, elaborate, self-interrupt or to change topic (Aijmer 2013: 116). For this paper, the use of *actually* is primarily interesting due to the

recurring arguments the speakers have around fact checking and misinformation. The candidates use *actually* often to dispute previous statements by their opponents and as an opener to explain their perspective on the matter at hand.

Lastly, *of course* as a PM, can be used as a persuasive device, either emphasizing shared knowledge or the need for one. When the emphasis is on the desire for common ground, the use of *of course* could act as a naturalization device for the speaker, aiming to transform their arguments into generally accepted truths, sometimes even despite a lack of actuality. Contrastingly, *of course* can also express politeness when it is used to share information with the addressee without highlighting their ignorance and it can aim to establish solidarity between the speaker and the addressee (Aijmer 2004: 1784). The use of *of course* will be analyzed particularly for its role in establishing trust between the candidates and the audience.

While there are certainly many other PMs used by the speakers throughout the debates, these four were chosen for their relevance to persuasive strategies and establishing authority or increasing likeability.

3.5 The use of pronouns

While pronouns can be used as a tool to express the number and gender of people or for referential purposes, they may also be used to signal positionings and construct identities (Igiri et. al. 2021: 137-138). To elaborate, inclusive first person pronoun use such as in the sentence below can indicate unity and aim to make the audience feel a sense of belonging.

*“So **we’re** now on the precipice of having a potentially much better economy, but the last thing **we** need to do is to go back to the policies that failed **us** in the first place.”* (See Appendix: Debate 1)

In the example, Clinton uses the first person plural pronouns in an inclusive manner, even when referring to the governmental action of policy choosing in order to indicate the power and inclusion of the audience. By doing so, she is emphasizing the possible results of the audience’s support of candidates.

Such pronouns may, however, be used in order to exclude people or other them as well.

For example, in the following sentence, Trump uses inclusive first person pronouns in opposition to third person plural pronouns, resulting in a divisive portrayal:

*“You look at what China is doing to **our** country in terms of making **our** product. **They're** devaluing **their** currency, and there's nobody in **our** government to fight **them**.”* (See Appendix: Debate 1)

This paper aims to analyze the pronoun use in the chosen debates to uncover linguistic choices to build a relationship with the audience, affect the portrayal of the opponent or other specific groups.

3.6 The use of names and titles

Throughout the debates, the candidates talk to each other directly many times. They also refer to each other in different ways while they address the audience or the moderator. The significance of these instances is that they create opportunities for the candidates to highlight a part of the opponents identity or the relationship between the candidates. For example, referring or addressing the opponent with their professional title such as “Secretary” can create a sense of formality or emphasize their position in an existing government. On the other hand, using the first name of the other candidate can create a friendlier atmosphere when used in a positive context or signal contempt in a negative one. Clinton’s frequent use of Trump’s first name in their first debate for instance, has been interpreted as a strategy “[...] to seem relaxed and warm, dauntless and gracious” (Blumberg 2017: 94).

In the analysis section, both the ways in which the candidates refer to each other and how often they talk to each other as opposed to how often they talk about their opponent will be discussed.

3.7 Persuasive devices

While the previously discussed elements in this chapter can be used as persuasive devices in general, there are many more that are commonly analyzed in the field of discourse analysis. Based on the data at hand and through research on similar studies’ methodologies, I chose to analyze the use of intertextuality, anecdotes and circumlocution, as well as direct addresses to the audience as persuasive strategies. Lastly, examples of ideological and discursive polarization will be discussed in relation to persuasion as well.

To elaborate shortly on the chosen strategies, intertextuality refers to the insertion of previous texts in order to contextualize the current conversation through the perspective the speaker chooses (Basarati & Razinejad 2016: 108).

While intertextuality may include introducing statistics or facts about a topic, the use of anecdotes can be a discursive strategy as well. A meta-study on persuasion states that when dealing with moral debates, people are more likely to respect personal experiences in comparison to objective facts (Kubin et. al. 2021: 1). With this in mind, the use of anecdotes by the speakers will be discussed in comparison to their use of objective data.

Another chosen persuasive strategy is circumlocution or periphrasis, which can be defined as preferring a lengthy way of saying something over a direct way. This manner of speech is often regarded as “[...] obscure, officious, pompous, authoritarian, and intimidating [...]” (Mc Arthur et. al 2018: 184). For this reason circumlocution, often occurring together with evasion or innuendoes, can be regarded as a face-saving act motivated by personal or political interests (Obeng 1997: 49).

Lastly, instances of the candidates addressing the audience directly will be discussed under persuasive devices. Due to the circumstances of the chosen debates, there are many layers of communication occurring simultaneously. For instance, the candidates may address each other directly or include the moderator in the conversation. Moreover, they can address the audience directly and it should be noted that the audience for these debates are not only the people present but also the viewers who watch the debates live or after the fact.

4 Methodology

4.1 Collection of data

For the analysis of the debates, both the transcripts and the video recordings of each event were used. The transcripts were collected from The American Presidency Project website by the University of California, Santa Barbara on October 15, 2023. As for the video recordings, they were accessed through the CBS Youtube channel, which is freely accessible to the general public. The video recordings were analyzed starting from the introductory statement of the moderators until their closing statements and they were used to both check the accuracy of the transcripts and to get a better understanding of the debates with the help of audience reactions and the body language of the candidates.

4.2 Annotation style

While some of the statistics for the analysis were gathered through automated tools, most of the annotations were done manually due to the need for a contextual understanding of the usage. The coding manual including definitions and examples of the annotations can be found in the appendix.

4.3 Sketch Engine

The online corpus manager and text analysis software Sketch Engine was used to gather statistical data on the debates and the candidates (Killgariff et al. 2014). In order to efficiently gather information, the transcripts of the debates were formatted as files based on individual candidates, which exclude the parts of the opponent and the moderator(s) in the relevant debate (Example: File based on the first presidential debate of 2016 for Hillary Clinton, excludes the parts of Donald Trump and moderator Lester Holt). These files also excluded any annotations or name markings indicating who was speaking. By uploading such files to Sketch Engine two types of folders were created. The first type compiled all the speeches of a singular candidate from every debate they participated in (Example: Folder including speeches of Donald Trump from all of the debates from 2016 and 2020). The second type accumulated all the speeches from a singular debate to assess trends based on the event instead of the candidates (Example: Both Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's speeches from their debate on September 26, 2016, excluding the parts of the moderator and the name tags).

With the help of Sketch Engine, keywords and terms based on frequency could be calculated. Moreover, Sketch Engine allows comparison of word trends across corpora, meaning lists of “expressions which appear more frequently in the focus corpus than in the reference corpus” could be created (Sketch Engine). By comparing keywords for each candidate, their main focuses were analyzed in relation to others running for the same position. In order to compare the word lists meaningfully, the candidates with debates in two election years were divided into sub corpora and their speeches were compared based on the year of the debates.

4.4 Coding

The coding strategies for this paper are based on the research interest detailed in the theoretical framework section above and the full coding manual can be found in the

appendix. Nevertheless, before moving on to the analysis, I would like to shortly discuss some of the coding choices and the reasoning behind them.

4.4.1 Turn taking and cross talking

Three types of turn takeovers were marked to indicate conversation points in which the participants talked at the same time or talked over each other, namely:

- Crosstalk: When the two speakers talk at the same time continuously.
- Interruptions: When a candidate interrupts someone's speech and either takes the turn or causes disruptions in the speech of the other such as repairs or restarts. As a result of this definition, interruptions also include the instances in which the candidates interrupt the moderator(s).
- Interjections: When a candidate talks during someone else's speech but does not take over the turn or cause any changes in their speech. Same as interruptions, interjections also include the instances in which the candidates interject the moderator(s) speech.

It should be noted that interruptions or interjections can be face threatening acts that aim to disrupt the speaker's turn or they may be affirming the original speaker with phrases such as "That's right" or "Okay then". Hence, they should be analyzed within their context.

4.4.2 Pronoun use

Pronoun use in the selected debates was categorized into 4 groups for this analysis:

- First person singular: The pronoun *I* and all of its forms were annotated to better understand how much candidates center themselves and how much they speak about themselves as opposed to the entirety of their team, party or country.
- Second person singular and plural: The pronoun *you* and its different forms were marked to differentiate between how often candidates speak directly to their opponent and how often they talk about them. Hence, these uses were categorized as the pronouns only referring to the opponent and/or a group including them and the pronouns referring to anyone else.
- First person plural: The pronoun *we* was also divided into two groups, namely, the inclusionary and the exclusionary *we* in relation to the debate audience. The comparison of these two uses can be indicative of an attempt to relate to the audience by the speaker. Moreover, how often candidates prefer singular first person pronouns can supplement this analysis.

- Third person singular: The pronouns *he* or *she* and their other forms were only annotated when they referred to the candidates. Through these codes, along with their comparison with the second person singular pronouns referring to the candidates, how often the candidates speak about and speak to their opponent can be analyzed.

4.4.3 Names and titles

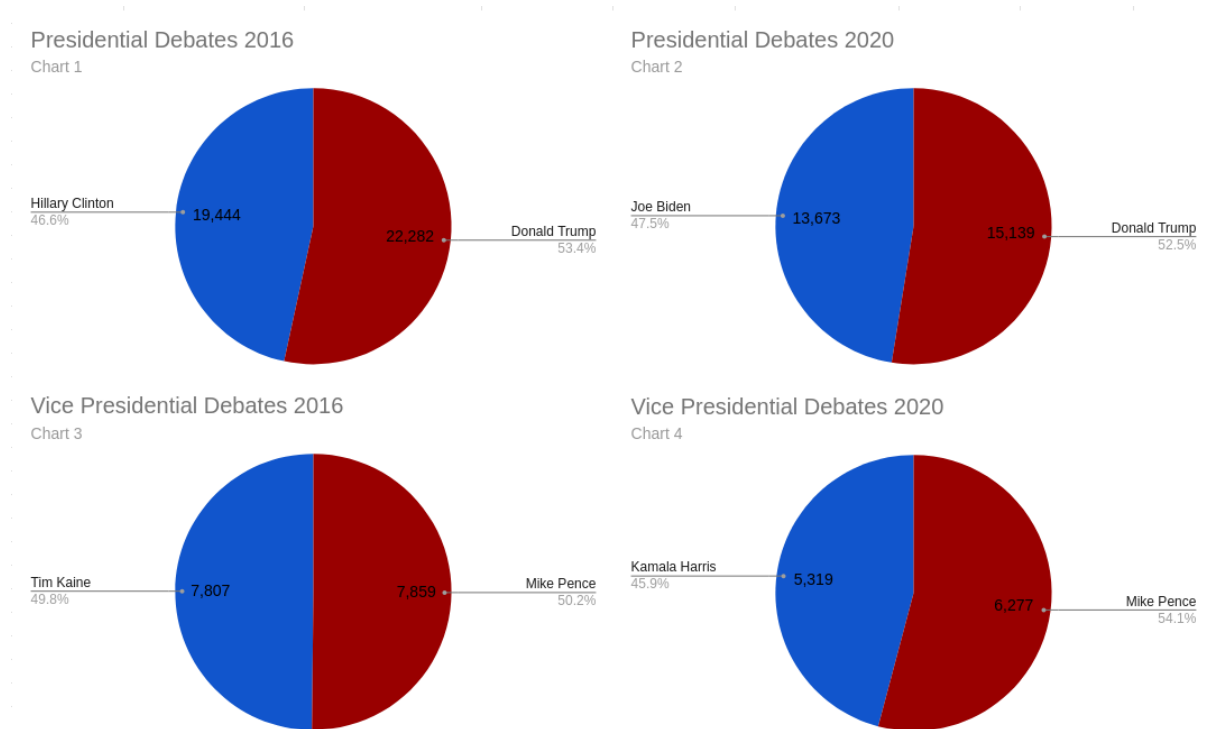
Along with the codes for second person singular pronouns directed at the candidates and third person singular pronouns referring to candidates, instances in which the speakers use the first name, the full name or the official title of their opponent have been annotated. The goal of this annotation category is to further understand how the candidates address each other and how they speak about one another.

5 Results

In the results section, the selected categories from Sketch Engine and the annotated codes will be discussed in relation to candidate's gender, the political party they belong to, the election year and their nomination type. Due to the unequal number of debates each candidate participated in, their speech patterns will be analyzed based on the average of their data set. Since the vice presidential candidates Tim Kaine and Kamala Harris only participated in one debate each, their numbers will represent the true number of instances for each code as opposed to the averages. Moreover, since some candidates had drastically different speech behaviors in different debates, the possible reasons behind these behaviors and their impact will be discussed separately. In addition, while interpreting this data, it should be considered that there were only two women in comparison to four men in the chosen data. Hence, speaker personality and identity markers other than gender may be more impactful in the women's data.

5.1 Word counts

The total word counts for each candidate were calculated based on the transcripts. While the official speaking times will be discussed in the analysis section, the amount of words could also be indicative of how much conversational space each speaker occupies.



As depicted above in the Charts 1-4, the mixed gender debates have a larger disparity in word counts than single gender debates. In terms of the percentages of words uttered by each candidate, the debate between Pence and Harris has the largest gap with 8.2%, whereas Pence's debate with Kaine has the smallest difference with 0.4%. It should be noted that the word counts by candidates could be indicative of an inequality in holding conversational space or the type of words candidates choose to use. To elaborate, a candidate simply preferring shorter words in the time span could result in significant differences in word counts. Considering the common conception that right wing and populist politicians use simpler language to "appear closer to "ordinary people" and differentiate themselves from linguistically convoluted political elites", it could be argued that this strategy could be why indeed the Republican candidates have higher word counts (McDonnell & Ondelli 2022: 828). However, some research indicates that this notion may need to be reevaluated as comparisons of international right wing leaders' speeches with their main opponents reveal only slight differences in linguistic simplicity or only differences in specific features (McDonnell & Ondelli 2022: 837).

Table 1: The Number of Unique Words per Candidate						
	Trump	Clinton	Biden	Pence	Kaine	Harris
2016	2240	2623		1522	1577	
2020	1874		2044	1419		1204

To better understand the linguistic complexity of each candidate's speeches, Table 1 above depicts the number of unique words per candidate, categorized by election year for those running in both years. As listed in the table, there does not appear to be a trend in terms of speaker gender or political party in terms of vocabulary size. While the largest gap is between Clinton and Trump in 2016 with 383 more unique words from Clinton, Pence uses 215 more unique words than Harris. Lastly, there is no significant difference between Pence and Kaine, as was the case with their total word counts.

When the number of unique words for each candidate and their word counts in different debates are considered together, it becomes clear that the candidates with the higher word counts, namely Trump and Pence, can use both narrower and wider vocabulary than their opponents. Combining this insight with speaking times of the candidates indicates that both Trump and Pence actually did occupy more conversational space than their opponents, excluding Pence's debate with Kaine.

5.2 Keywords and wordlists of candidates

In this section, the most frequently used nouns and adjectives for each candidate as well as their lists of relatively more frequent terms will be compared. Both kinds of lists were compiled automatically by Sketch Engine. The twenty most frequent nouns and adjectives for the candidates will be listed below as calculated based on the word class tags by Sketch Engine. Afterwards, the relatively more frequent words and phrases in comparison to the opponent of each candidate will be demonstrated. Sketch Engine defines these multi word items as terms, which will also be used in this paper (Sketch Engine). The amount of times each word was used by the relevant candidate always follows the said word in the table to give a better understanding of the vocabulary of the candidates.

Firstly, Table 2 below lists the wordlists for the presidential candidates in 2016 and 2020. The listed nouns and adjectives may help to further understand the main focus of the candidates and their overall tone. For Donald Trump, the wordlists include his speeches from both elections, hence the significantly higher word counts in comparison to the other candidates.

To begin with the overlapping words, all candidates share nouns such as "people", "job", "tax" and "president". These shared words are certainly not unexpected due to the topics of discussion. In terms of shared words between two candidates, while Trump and

Biden share the words “money”, “deal” and “number”, Clinton and Biden share “plan” and “fact”. Since Trump and Biden debated each other, their overlapping words are more likely to be topic dependent. The words shared by Clinton and Biden on the other hand, demonstrate a more clear focus on “plan” and “fact” on both candidates' parts. In fact, both Clinton and Biden criticizes Trump for lacking in planning and preparation during the debates and Biden even states “He doesn't have a plan.” several times about different topics (See Appendix: Debate 5).

As the only woman in the running, Clinton is also the candidate that mentions the noun “woman” the most with 50 times in total across her debates with Trump. Additionally, she is also the only candidate to have the nouns “family”, “health”, “business” and “economy” in her wordlist. The fact that these nouns were only frequent enough for Clinton is quite interesting as they are key terms for the main topics of the debate. A closer look at these words uncovers striking differences in the ways the candidates handle these topics. For example, each candidate mentions their own family during the debates, however when it comes to the concept of family in general and the modifiers the candidates use for “family”, Trump's focus is on military families and “Gold Star families”, which signifies a family that lost a member in active military duty. Clinton in contrast has a wider range of focus points with mentions of “middle-class families”, “Gold Star families” and “hard-working families”. Lastly Biden only makes remarks about “middle class families” in his debates. Similarly for “health”, Trump and Biden mention “health insurance” and “health care”, while Clinton also touches upon mental health. Hence, it appears that Clinton expands her focus on these topics to a wider range of sub-topics.

Moving on to the adjectives, all candidates share common adjectives such as “good”, “many”, “more”, “first” and “last”. Moreover, Trump and Clinton both have adjectives such as “great”, “important” and “nuclear” in their wordlists. Since the topic of nuclear power was discussed in their debates, these adjectives including “nuclear” are to be expected. While the only shared adjective between Trump and Biden is “wrong”, Clinton and Biden share more such as “clear”, “federal” and “American”. The fact that “wrong” is a shared frequent word for Trump and Biden is telling about the tone of their debates as the two candidates repeatedly interject each other's turns, often by saying “Wrong.” (See Appendix: Debate 5 & 7).

When it comes to the words unique to each candidate, the most frequent adjectives by Trump demonstrate his preference for rather intense language as he is the only candidate to frequently use strong adjectives such as “tremendous” and “horrible”. Relevant to his use of

strong adjectives, Trump’s speech style concerning intensifiers will be discussed later in the section on circumlocution as well. An interesting word unique to Trump’s noun list is the name “Obama”. While it could be expected for the candidates to refer to the president in office (or the former president depending on the year), it is noteworthy that neither Clinton who was the Democratic candidate to follow Obama nor Biden who was the vice president for the Obama regime mention him nearly as often as Trump does. Another difference between Trump and both the other presidential and the vice presidential candidates is that the word “American” is absent from his wordlists both as a noun and an adjective. For every other candidate, “American” appears in the most frequent five adjectives. In terms of speaking about other countries, Trump and Biden mention Russia and China respectively frequently enough for these country names to be included in their wordlists. The two countries are relevant topics for the two election years as Russia’s cyber attacks are mentioned during the 2016 debates as well as possible business relations the candidates have with Russia and China is talked about in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Wordlists for Presidential Candidates					
Trump		Clinton		Biden	
noun	adjective	noun	adjective	noun	adjective
1 people 251	1 good 106	1 people 115	1 good 49	1 people 123	1 sure 40
2 country 190	2 bad 94	2 donald 94	2 more 33	2 fact 73	2 able 33
3 thing 140	3 great 92	3 country 73	3 important 30	3 president 51	3 true 31
4 year 122	4 many 89	4 president 56	4 american 28	4 way 44	4 more 29
5 way 90	5 other 77	5 lot 53	5 first 26	5 plan 36	5 american 23
6 lot 78	6 big 75	6 woman 50	6 great 23	6 number 33	6 good 20
7 job 77	7 more 47	7 job 48	7 many 23	7 job 32	7 many 14
8 money 77	8 first 37	8 tax 48	8 other 22	8 china 27	8 clear 13
9 president 70	9 tremendous 36	9 way 38	9 nuclear 22	9 tax 26	9 first 12
10 tax 66	10 wrong 32	10 year 37	10 big 21	10 time 25	10 same 11
11 time 60	11 last 26	11 kind 36	11 new 20	11 thing 25	11 other 11
12 look 59	12 different 25	12 business 33	12 able 19	12 deal 24	12 single 11
13 hillary 57	13 tough 22	13 time 32	13 clear 19	13 money 24	13 last 10
14 joe 57	14 important 21	14 family 30	14 wealthy 17	14 year 23	14 federal 10
15 russia 56	15 new 21	15 america 28	15 sure 15	15 state 21	15 affordable 9
16 obama 56	16 able 19	16 plan 27	16 fair 13	16 guy 21	16 dangerous 9
17 company 55	17 rid 18	17 thing 25	17 young 13	17 united 20	17 serious 9

18 deal 55	18 nuclear 18	18 fact 24	18 federal 12	18 states 20	18 wrong 8
19 problem 54	19 horrible 18	19 health 24	19 national 12	19 care 19	19 only 8
20 number 51	20 inner 17	20 economy 24	20 last 12	20 ballot 19	20 republican 8

Table 3 below demonstrates the wordlists for the vice presidential candidates in both election years. To begin with the shared nouns for all of the candidates, the words “Trump”, “president”, “people”, “Donald” and “tax” appear in the wordlists of all three. Across vice presidential candidates, Pence is the only one to use words such as “family” and “law” frequently enough for them to show up on the wordlists. Kaine on the other hand is the only candidate with the words “woman”, “Russia”, “Putin”, “weapon” and “nation” in the nouns wordlist. Here the noun “woman” is significant as Kaine is the running mate of Clinton (who was the only presidential candidate to have this noun in her wordlist), whereas Harris as the only woman in the running for the vice presidency does not use the word frequently enough for it to be included in her noun list. For context, it is the thirty sixth most common noun for her with 6 uses during her debate with Pence. This difference between the two women in running is perhaps due to the contexts in which they talk about women. Since Clinton is running against Trump, she mentions his insulting remarks about women and sexual assault allegations that come up during the election process along with statements about her experiences as a woman in politics and refugee women in the US. Harris’s debate with Pence does not have the same historical and political context and she mainly focuses on her personal experiences as a woman and woman of color in politics. Lastly, examples of words unique to Harris’s wordlist are “administration”, “country”, “job”, “tax” and “justice”. Interestingly, “job” and “tax” are nouns that were common for all presidential candidates on Table 2. The noun lists for the vice presidential candidates appear to have less common ground in comparison to the presidential candidates’ lists.

Moving on to the trends about the running mates of the vice presidential candidates, Kaine is the only one to talk more about the opposing ticket’s presidential candidate than his own running partner. Especially considering the fact that Harris uses the word “Joe” 64 times whereas Kaine uses “Trump” 83 times, he is clearly focused on talking about the opposing presidential candidate. As was the case with Trump’s wordlist, the frequency numbers for Pence include his speeches from both election years, thus, the amount of times he uses the words cannot be compared in the same way. When it comes to the ways in which they refer to their presidential candidates, both Kaine and Harris use the first names of the candidates more often than their full names or surnames while Pence prefers Trump’s surname.

Table 2: Wordlists for Vice Presidential Candidates					
Pence		Kaine		Harris	
noun	adjective	noun	adjective	noun	adjective
1 trump 108	1 american 123	1 trump 83	1 nuclear 20	1 joe 64	1 american 31
2 president 106	2 more 39	2 donald 71	2 great 14	2 president 40	2 first 12
3 people 97	3 first 24	3 hillary 44	3 good 13	3 people 40	3 other 9
4 senator 74	4 good 23	4 governor 38	4 first 12	4 biden 37	4 great 7
5 donald 64	5 foreign 19	5 clinton 35	5 american 12	5 trump 32	5 last 6
6 clinton 63	6 strong 18	6 pence 34	6 safe 12	6 donald 27	6 clear 6
7 hillary 54	7 great 18	7 tax 32	7 own 11	7 administration 19	7 rid 6
8 tax 54	8 criminal 15	8 plan 24	8 more 11	8 country 16	8 criminal 5
9 joe 51	9 last 13	9 thing 24	9 important 11	9 united 15	9 next 5
10 biden 51	10 nuclear 13	10 elaine 24	10 other 8	10 states 15	10 good 5
11 states 49	11 public 12	11 president 21	11 dangerous 8	11 america 14	11 responsible 5
12 united 49	12 clear 10	12 people 19	12 strong 7	12 job 12	12 important 4
13 america 38	13 vice 10	13 russia 19	13 last 7	13 vice 11	13 more 4
14 life 36	14 private 10	14 putin 19	14 fundamental 6	14 let 10	14 less 4
15 year 35	15 other 9	15 woman 18	15 public 6	15 year 9	15 big 4
16 time 32	16 little 8	16 vladimir 16	16 high 5	16 court 9	16 public 4
17 family 30	17 proud 8	17 weapon 16	17 smart 5	17 susan 9	17 same 4
18 state 29	18 able 8	18 business 15	18 same 5	18 talk 9	18 young 4
19 law 28	19 small 8	19 life 15	19 different 5	19 tax 9	19 black 3
20 world 28	20 new 7	20 nation 14	20 laden 4	20 justice 9	20 national 3

Lastly, in terms of adjective use, all three candidates share common adjectives such as “American”, “first”, “good” and “public”. As for the adjectives unique to one candidate, the significant ones for Pence include “foreign” and “private” while those for Kaine include “safe” and “dangerous”. Finally, Harris is the only candidate with the adjectives “responsible”, “young”, “black” and “national” in the wordlist. In comparison to the presidential candidates, Clinton was the only candidate to have the adjectives “young” and “national” in her wordlist.

When interpreted as a whole, Table 2 and 3 demonstrate that the six candidates’ speech patterns often reflect their professional background since they mention topics they have worked on previously more often. These patterns would support the candidates to

establish themselves as credible and competent candidates for office. In addition, the shared words and the unique words in the lists indicate that the election agenda the candidates have, as well as their political party, is a deciding factor in their word choices as can be seen the most clearly in similarities in the pairs Clinton-Kaine and Trump-Pence. Lastly, Kaine's frequent mentions of Trump and Trump's frequent references to Obama display a tendency to focus on politicians other than themselves or their opponent.

The following part of this section examines the relatively more frequent terms for the candidates. Comparisons of keywords for each candidate demonstrates differences in terms of the main focus of the candidates. Below Table 4 and 5 demonstrates the ten terms that were more frequent in the speeches of each candidate when compared against their opponent in the relevant election year.

Table 4: Presidential Debates - 2016	
Trump against Clinton	Clinton against Trump
3 inner city	1 care act
4 bad judgment	2 income tax
5 other country	3 criminal justice
6 strong border	4 federal income tax
7 lot of money	5 federal income
8 sean hannity	6 justice system
9 hundred of millions	7 important issue
10 gold standard	8 criminal justice system
11 hundred of millions of dollars	9 clean energy
12 iran deal	10 middle-class family

Table 4 above lists the relatively more frequent third to twelfth terms since the first two terms by Trump were "Secretary Clinton" and "Hillary Clinton", which are certainly not unexpected. The common trend across the terms listed for Trump's corpus is the use of indefinite adjectives. While the terms "other country" and "lot of money" are obvious examples of this, "hundred of millions" and "hundred of millions of dollars" are also similar in their use within their context. The frequent use of such terms is connected to Trump's general speech style, which often makes use of anecdotes, hypothetical situations and

circumlocution. For example, the following quotes from Trump’s speeches across his debates with Clinton demonstrate his linguistic patterns:

- “So many hundreds and hundreds of companies are doing this.” (Appendix: Debate 1)
- “It's hundreds of millions of ads.” (Appendix: Debate 1)
- “[...] hundreds of thousands of people coming in from Syria when we know nothing about them.” (Appendix: Debate 3)
- “I pay hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes.” (Appendix: Debate 3)

As depicted in Table 4, Clinton’s speech is more often related to internal policies of the United States, repeatedly focused on tax related issues and the justice system. Trump on the other hand is more often talking about the monetary side of the discussion topics or immigration.

Table 5: Presidential Debates - 2020	
Trump against Biden	Biden against Trump
1 individual mandate	1 care act
2 other place	2 private insurance
3 period of time	3 fact of the matter
4 black community	4 mail-in ballot
5 socialized medicine	5 last time
6 other country	6 golf course
7 president trump	7 first responder
8 whole country	8 outcome of this election
9 big man	9 violent crime
10 carbon emission	10 good-paying job

Table 5 above lists the relatively more frequent terms for the two candidates in the 2020 election debates. Interestingly, the term “President Trump” was more relevant in speeches of Trump in comparison to that of Biden. Upon a closer look, this is due to Trump directly quoting different people who referred to him as such. Continuing his trend of indefinite adjectives Trump uses terms such as “other place”, “a period of time” and “other country” more often than his opponent. Compared to his list from 2016, Trump has terms

from a wider range of topics, namely health insurance, racial discrimination and climate change.

Similarly to that of Trump, Biden's key terms list includes terms about health insurance, but also those about the economy, the upcoming election and criminal justice. Biden mentions the election, along with voting conditions and the electoral processes more directly than the other presidential candidates. Moreover, the instances in which he talks about the election directly are also when he addresses the audience directly as in the following example: "You will determine the outcome of this election. Vote, vote, vote." (Appendix: Debate 5). Hence, these instances become significant moments of contact between Biden and the audience.

Table 6: Vice Presidential Debates - 2016	
Pence against Kaine	Kaine against Pence
1 american people	2 vladimir putin
3 barack obama	3 nuclear weapon
4 foreign policy	4 tax return
5 criminal alien	5 secretary of state
6 implicit bias	6 running mate
7 syrian refugee	7 business dealings
8 private server	8 social security
9 american soldier	9 nuclear weapons program
10 american strength	10 weapons program
11 world stage	12 last thing

Table 6 above lists the keywords for the vice presidential candidates in 2016. As it was with Table 5, keywords that were the name or the title of the opponent of the candidate were altered with the following term on the list in order to create a meaningful compilation. As depicted through the list, Pence is more often concerned with topics related to the American perspective on topics as represented by the terms "American people", "American soldier", "American strength". Additionally, Pence focuses on topics related to immigration more often than his opponent Kaine as evidenced by his frequent use of terms such as

“criminal alien” and “Syrian refugee”. These focus points are aligned with the election campaign Pence ran with Trump, hence the keywords are not unexpected.

A unique result on Table 6 is that Kaine’s list includes the terms “running mate” and “secretary of state”, referring to Hillary Clinton. It should be noted that Kaine uses the phrase “running mate” to refer to Trump as well. Pence on the other hand, does not refer to his presidential candidate more frequently than Kaine, however, he does mention the previous president “Barack Obama” more often. “Obama” as a noun was also included in the most frequent nouns list for Trump so it seems that the running mates share their focus on the former president.

Table 7: Vice Presidential Debates - 2020	
Pence against Harris	Harris against Pence
1 supreme court	1 let's talk
2 president donald trump	2 other hand
4 green new deal	3 tax bill
6 tax cut	4 renewable energy
7 american energy	5 debate stage
8 swine flu	6 criminal justice system
9 paris climate	7 end of the month
10 trump tax cut	8 manufacturing recession
11 fossil fuel	9 intelligence community
12 trump tax	10 police officer

Lastly, Table 7 depicts the relatively more frequent words between the two vice presidential candidates in 2016. As listed above, Pence mentions both his presidential candidate and Trump’s stance on taxes more frequently than Harris which is exemplified by the use of terms such as “tax cut”, “Trump tax cut” and “Trump tax”. He is also more often focused on discussions about climate change as evidenced by the inclusion of the terms “Green New Deal”, “Paris Climate [Agreement]”, and “fossil fuel” whereas the only relevant term in Harris’s list is “renewable energy”.

The terms more frequently used by Harris indicate that she has stronger patterns of speech as she often uses the same openers such as the use of “let’s talk” as well as connective

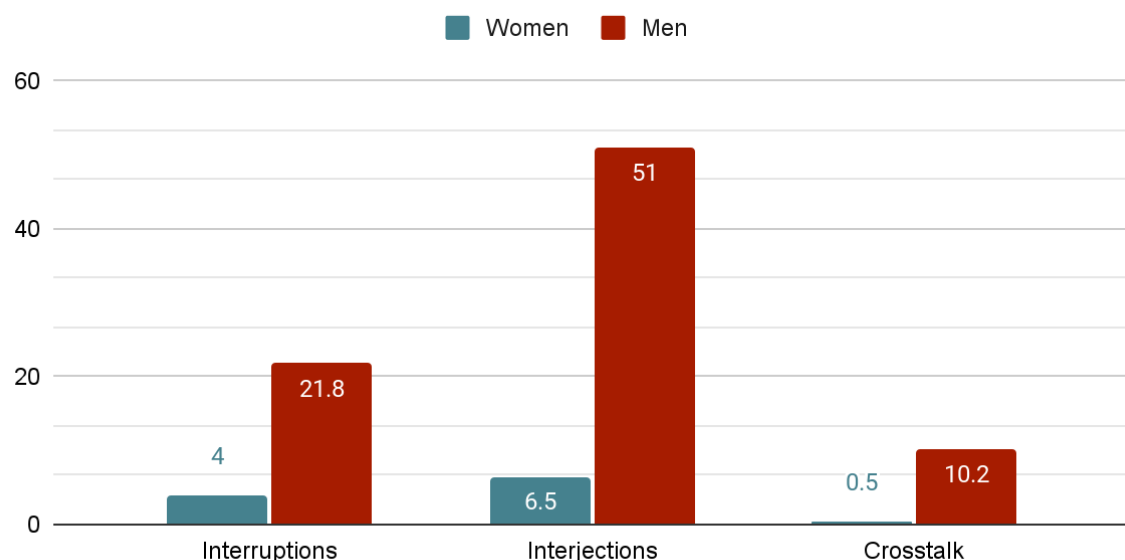
phrases like “on the other hand”. These patterns could indicate that she overall has a more established speech style in terms of her sentence structures or it could mean that she was prepared for the debate deciding on certain predetermined phrases. Similarly, Harris’s running mate Biden had the terms “fact of the matter” and “last time” in his list, thus there appears to be similar speech patterns for the two candidates. The general topics Harris is more involved with than her opponent involves the justice system as evident through the use of the terms “criminal justice system” and “police officer”, which is not unexpected since she used to be the Attorney General of California before she became the vice president.

To conclude this section on keywords and wordlists, there were no significant linguistic tendencies in terms of the vocabulary choices that related to the gender of the candidates. The similarities and disparities of word choices are more connected to the running mates as can be deduced from the parallels between the pairs Trump and Pence, Clinton and Kaine and Biden and Harris. Certainly, the fact that candidates who run for office together have an agenda that was agreed upon and hence, similar talking points is impactful here.

5.3 Interruptions and interjections

Averages of women and men's interruptions and interjections

Chart 5



As can be seen in Chart 5 above, interruptions, interjections and crosstalk were three categories with considerable differences in relation to speaker gender. To begin with

interruptions, men on average interrupted others 5.45 times more than women did. When it comes to interjections, the difference is even more significant with 7.84 times more interjections by men. However, it should be noted that not every interjection accounts for a face threatening act as these can be instances of backchanneling, which supports the original speaker, as well. Lastly, crosstalk was significantly more prominent among men as well, namely, men in the data set had 20.4 times more instances of crosstalk than women did with 102 to 2 instances respectively. It should be noted however, that 49 of the instances by men were by Donald Trump. Nevertheless, even if all of the data from Trump was disregarded, there would be a significant gender gap in this category. It is also important to mention that The Commission on Presidential Debates decided to control the candidates' microphones according to the speaking turns given by the moderator in the second debate between Trump and Biden, which resulted in much lower number of interruptions and interjections in comparison to their first debate.

To visualize differences between the candidates clearly, Chart 6 below demonstrates that the two women Clinton and Harris had differences in speech patterns. Namely, while Clinton averaged 5 interruptions per debate (with a range of 1 to 9 interruptions across three debates), Harris only had 1 interruptions during her only debate with Pence. Despite the discrepancy, since Clinton also had a debate with only 1 interruption, there may not be a substantial difference between the two speakers as there is only one debate available with Harris.

On the other hand, when it comes to interjections, Harris had almost three times more instances with 12, whereas Clinton only had an average of 4.66, with a range of 2 to 7. Moreover, a closer look at examples of interjections by Clinton demonstrate that many of her interjections are unsuccessful attempts at interruptions and not short interjectory commentary, though examples of these are also present. For instance, in the first presidential debate with Trump, 4 out of 7 interjections by Clinton start with the pragmatic marker *well*, signaling a desire to politely interrupt. Thus, these interjections could have been interruptions if the original speaker allowed her to take the turn. In contrast, the interjections by Harris are often short complete sentences rather than attempts of interruption, such as: "Thank you", "That's a great segue" or "That's not what I said" (Appendix: Debate 6).

Lastly on the topic of personal differences, it can be seen in Chart 2 that Donald Trump had the highest average in terms of interruptions and Tim Kaine had the highest number of interjections (during his only debate). In order to discuss the data at hand rightfully, it is important to point out that not only did Trump average the highest for

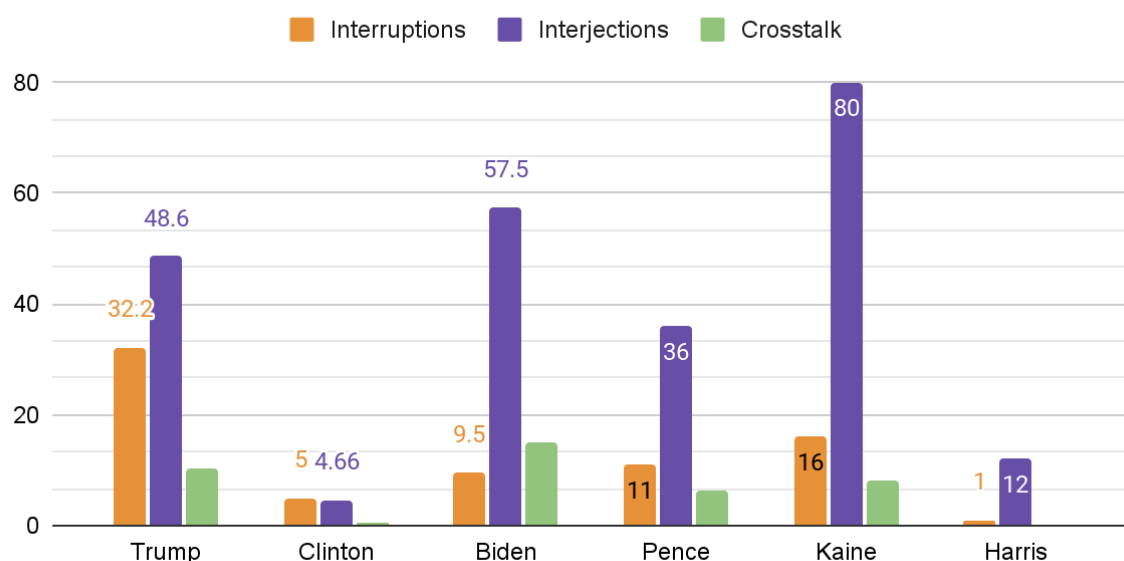
interruptions, he also interrupted more than his opponent in every debate he participated in with a range of 15 to 68 interruptions between five debates. Moreover, while Kaine appears to have the highest number of interjections because his total number is being compared to the averages of the other candidates, both Trump and Biden surpassed this number in singular debates with 111 and 81 interjections respectively.

Considering the patterns that lead to interruptions, interjections and crosstalk, data shows that speakers tend to interrupt and interject more often when their debate partner does so as well. For example, when singular debates between Trump and Clinton are analyzed, it is clear that the more heated debates with higher numbers of interruptions and interjections are due to both candidates having higher numbers. The same trend is apparent for the debates between Trump and Biden as well. Hence, it can be deduced that the amount of interruptions and interjections by a speaker may be fueled by their debate partner's speech patterns as well.

Additionally, calculating the instances by Trump and Pence in singular debates demonstrates that both men interrupt, interject and crosstalk more when their opponent is another man. Considering the results from the previous paragraph, this situation could be stemming from men simply demonstrating these behaviors more often, hence having more interruptions and interjections in debates between men. Or it could be that men's speech behaviors fuel the opponent's behavior and create more turn takeovers. Had there been debates between women, this discussion could have been furthered.

Averages of candidates' interruptions and interjections

Chart 6



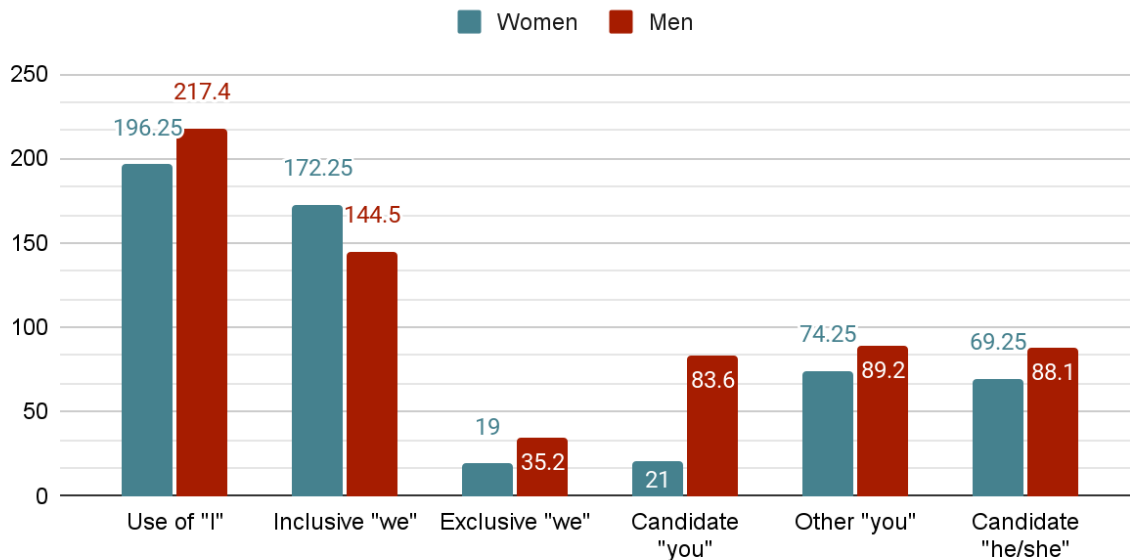
Across mixed gender debates, both in interjections and interruptions, men always had more instances of these codes than women. When it was only men participating in the debate, Trump always had more instances than his opponents except for the last debate in 2020 when Biden interjected 14 times more than him with 34 instances.

In conclusion, interruption, interjection and crosstalk categories are ones where gender differences are seen the most clearly. While personal speech styles especially in the case of Trump affect the data, the gender gap is still significant among the rest of the candidates. Since these turn taking actions greatly affect the amount of conversational space speakers get to occupy, they can have an important impact on both the content of the interrupted participants speech and on the general mood of the conversation. The gender difference among the candidates indicate that women may be at a disadvantage in unmoderated or unsuccessfully moderated debates. Regulations such as The Commission on Presidential Debates's decision to control the candidates' microphones after the first debate of 2020 could be helpful to create more equal conditions for the participants. The data on these turn taking practices, especially in the case of interruptions, also indicate that women partook in face threatening acts much less frequently than men and they respected the rules of discussion set by the debate commission to a higher degree.

5.4 Pronoun use

Averages of women and men's pronoun use

Chart 7



To begin with the first person singular pronoun use, although men used *I* and its variations slightly more often than women did, with a ratio of 1.1 usage, there was no significant difference between genders. However, Trump personally had a substantially higher use than the other candidates. While Trump's use of forms of *I* ranges from 208 to 355 times per debate, the range for the other candidates all together is between 121 to 257. Thus once again, the personal speaking style of Donald Trump is a significant factor when considering the data as a whole. The data on the candidates' use of the first person singular pronoun is significant since it indicates how often a speaker is talking about themselves or in relation to their point of view specifically. As a result, it could be deduced that Trump has the most self centered speech patterns out of the selected candidates and based on a comparison of the first person singular and plural pronoun uses, men in general tend to be slightly more focused on their individual point of view in their speech than women.

Moving on to the first person plural pronoun use, when the the forms of *we* are considered as a whole, women averaged slightly higher than men with 191.25 as opposed to 179.7, which leads to a ratio of 1.06. When considered in combination with the results on the forms of *I*, this difference, though minor, adds another layer to the indication that women tend to speak slightly less often about themselves singularly and more often communally. More

notable differences appear when the forms of *we* were categorized into inclusive and exclusive uses. As can be seen in Chart 7 above, both men and women used forms of inclusive *we* more often than that of exclusive *we*. But while women had a higher average of the inclusive forms, men had a higher average use of the exclusive forms. This indicates that women spoke more often about larger groups including the audience, for example the American public in general. In contrast, men talked more frequently about smaller groups that excluded the audience such as their own political parties or themselves with their running mates. Women's tendency to use more inclusive forms could indicate that they are more focused on connecting with the audience and helping them relate with themselves in this manner, which in return would increase their likeability.

When it comes to the comparison of talking about the opponent or talking to the opponent through the use of pronouns, men had higher averages in both categories. Nevertheless, the gap between the averages for the second person singular pronouns in relation to the opponent were much larger with men using forms of *you* addressing the other candidate 3.98 times more than women did. Once again, the speech patterns of Trump were striking in this category. To specify, Trump talked directly to his opponents between 64 to 200 times during his five debates while the other candidates all together used forms of *you* referring to their opponent between 4 to 77 times, with Clinton having the lowest amount and Pence with the highest. Certainly this is a stark contrast in linguistic behavior, especially considering Trump was the debate partner of Clinton during the debate in which she only used forms of *you* 4 times and he had 80 instances where he spoke to her directly through this pronoun. These patterns demonstrate a key difference in the way the candidates perceived the debates. Namely, the men in general and Trump especially, appear to view the debates as more of a dialogue by addressing their opponent much more frequently than the women. The women's linguistic behavior on the other hand indicates that they considered their talks more in the lines of speeches towards the audience. In terms of the uses of forms of *you* addressing the audience or the moderators, the men had a slight lead in numbers with a ratio of 1.2 instances. Hence it could be inferred that men were marginally more concerned with connecting with the audience this way than women. When interpreted with the previous results about women's preference for the inclusive forms of *we* in mind, this information could signify that the two genders aimed to build connections with the audience through different means.

Lastly, the third person singular pronoun forms referring to the candidates are used more frequently by the men as well. The results show that men used these pronouns 1.27

times more than women did. However, there are drastic differences between the speakers regardless of their gender, hence speakers' individual styles appear to be more influential than gender. For instance, Pence is the candidate to use forms of *he* or *she* about his opponent the least with only 3 instances in his debate with Harris (and 8 instances against Kaine). Harris follows Pence closely with 4 instances in their debate. The candidate with the highest frequency on the other hand is Biden with 206 instances in his first debate against Trump. Moreover, it appears that candidates talk about their opponents in presidential debates far more frequently than they do in vice presidential debates. Certainly, this could be simply due to the speakers' individual styles and the discussion topics of these specific debates, however, a plausible reason is that vice presidential debates often include extensive discussions of the presidential candidates, hence the focus is frequently on the running pair as a whole rather than the vice presidential candidates specifically. In contrast, the presidential debates rarely mention the vice presidential candidates. The data on the candidates referring to each other is significant since it overtly demonstrates the instances in which the candidates speak towards the audience or the moderators, effectively excluding their opponent. In this manner, the candidates temporarily distance their rival from the conversation, making them into a subject of discussion rather than an active participant. Moreover, this strategy could also decrease the possibility of immediate responses and so, interjections and interruptions by the opponent since they would be more likely to attempt to take the turn if they were partaking in a dialogue.

To conclude the analysis on the chosen pronouns use, results indicate that the men participating in the seven debates were slightly more focused on talking about themselves, they used exclusive forms of *we* more of than women did and they were far more likely to address their opponent directly. The participating women in contrast, used inclusive forms of *we* more frequently and they addressed their opponents and referred to them less frequently than men did. Hence, women's speech in general de-centered their opponent and focused on the debate topics as a whole.

5.5 Pragmatic markers

Pragmatic marker use by women and men

Chart 8

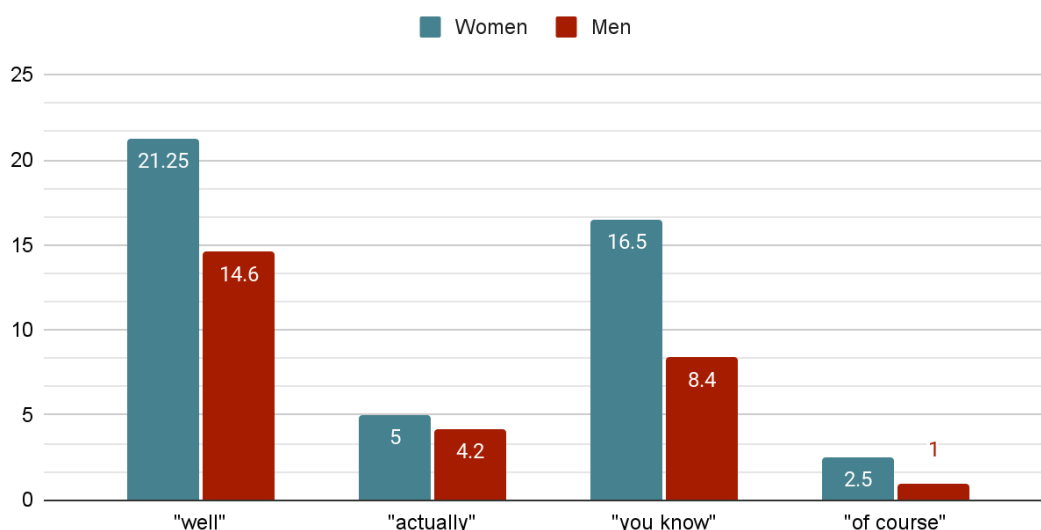


Chart 8 above depicts the pragmatic marker (henceforth PM) usage in the debates based on speaker gender. Data indicates that while the PMs *well* and *you know* are more significantly favored by women, the differences based on gender were rather small for *actually* and *of course*. Nevertheless, every chosen pragmatic marker was used more frequently by women.

To begin with *well*, women used this phrase-initial PM 1.4 times more than men did. When considering the high frequency of interjections and interruptions by men, the use of this PM might be related to women's intention to politely take over the speaking turn. However, it should also be noted that women's high frequency for this PM is mostly a result of Clinton's speech patterns. With an average of 27.3 instances of *well* per debate, she is the candidate that uses the PM the most often. But Clinton is followed by Pence with an average of 22.5 instances per debate, while Harris uses the PM only 3 times during her debate with Pence and only one of these instances is related to turn initiation. It is however important to note that the common functions of *well* for Clinton and Pence are different. Namely, Clinton uses the PM often for polite interruptions, whereas Pence uses it frequently to introduce objections. As for Trump and Biden, they use the PM on average 13.8 and 11 times respectively, whereas Kaine uses it 10 times in his debate with Pence.

Moving on to *actually*, with a ratio of 1.19 of averages, there were only slight differences between genders in terms of the use of this PM. Based on the candidates personal usage, it appears that speakers' personal style was more impactful than their gender. To specify, Clinton and Pence used this PM the most often with an average of 6.3 times and 9 times respectively. Their use of *actually* is rather consistent in comparison to Trump's more fluctuating use as Clinton uses the PM 10, 2 and 7 times in her debates and Pence uses it 7 and 11 times in his. This is followed by Trump who had a range of 1 to 10 instances per debate but only an average of 3.8 uses. Lastly, Biden, Harris and Kaine rarely used the PM with 1 to 2 uses per debate. Across candidates, *actually* is most often used to emphasize facts and clarify arguments as opposed to its hedging and politeness functions. For instance, Clinton states "Manufacturing jobs went up also in the 1990s, if we're actually going to look at the facts." in her first debate while she corrects historical statements by Trump. Similarly, Pence says "Many of the people who were at that event, Susan, actually were tested for coronavirus." when the moderator brings up a large event he attended during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Appendix: Debate 6).

As can be seen on Chart 8, the other PM with a larger gender gap was *you know*. Women used this PM almost twice as much as men did and unlike the case of *well*, the difference between the two women was not that significant. Namely, Clinton averaged at 18.3 uses per debate whereas Harris used it 11 times during her only debate. Across candidates, most of the uses for this PM was directed at the audience such as when Clinton said "You know, Donald was very fortunate in his life [...]" or when Harris stated "And you know, the vice president is the head of the task force and knew, on January 28, how serious this was." (Appendix: Debate 6). Through both examples the candidates appeal to common knowledge between themselves and the audience or remind the audience of information that was widely known by the general public, which increases their credibility. Women's more frequent use of this PM indicates that they are more interested in creating a common ground with the audience in this way. Though less often, candidates also use this PM while addressing their opponent. For example, Kaine interjects Pence to say "You know, I'm just saying facts about your running mate.", in which the PM does not function as an appeal to common knowledge since Pence does not agree with the facts Kaine shares. However, through the use of *you know*, Kaine aims to create the sense that the information he shared is in fact common knowledge, thus increasing its validity. As exemplified by the quotes by Clinton, Harris and Kaine, *you know* has the potential to be used to build a connection when used towards the audience and to increase the credibility of statements when used addressing the opponent.

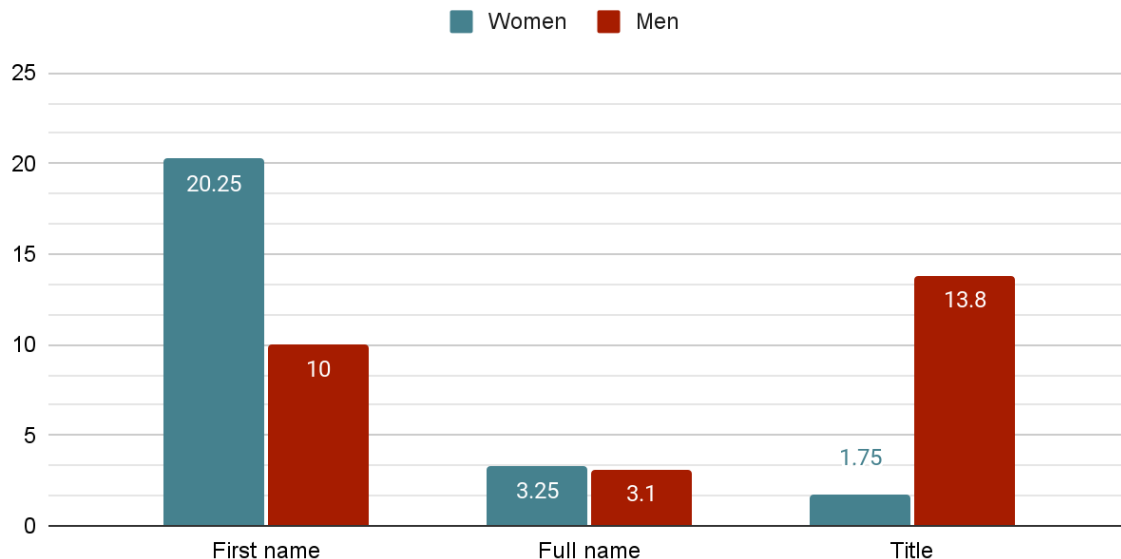
Lastly, the PM that was used the least often in general was *of course*. Even though this PM was not popular among the candidates, women used it more often than men did. In most instances, *of course* was used to emphasize shared knowledge similar to the use of *you know*. To exemplify, Harris even used this PM in combination with *you know* in her debate with Pence: “Because, of course, you know, he only thinks about what's in it for him.” (Appendix: Debate 6). Additionally, *of course* was used to emphasize or clarify opinions of the candidates. For instance, in his first debate against Biden, Trump uses the PM twice when he is confronted about not announcing a comprehensive healthcare plan by saying: “Yes, I have. Of course, I have.” and “Of course, we do.” (Appendix: Debate 5). By doing so, as opposed to only saying “I have” or “We do”, he implies that it would be almost absurd if he did not have a plan, hence increasing his credibility.

Before moving on to the next subsection, differences based on the gender of the opponent are worth discussing as well. Between the two candidates who debated with two different opponents, Trump has more drastic fluctuations in his PM use with sometimes more than doubling the amount of times he used a PM in previous debates (for example as in the case of *you know* with a range of 7 to 16 instances per debate). Pence on the other hand is overall much more consistent with his PM use with very minimal fluctuations except for the use of *well*, with 27 instances against Kaine and 18 instances against Harris. Nevertheless, neither Trump nor Pence had consistent changes across all four PMs based on the gender of their opponent. For example, Trump uses *actually* 3-10 times when debating Clinton but only once per debate against Biden. However, he also uses *you know* 7-10 times per debate against Clinton and 8-16 times in his debates with Biden. A closer look into the fluctuations throughout his five debates demonstrates that the only consistent change in frequency was that Trump used more PMs when his opponent used them more as well. Pence on the other hand, does not show any such reciprocal changes based on his opponents.

5.6 Opponents' names and titles

Use of name and titles by women and men

Chart 9



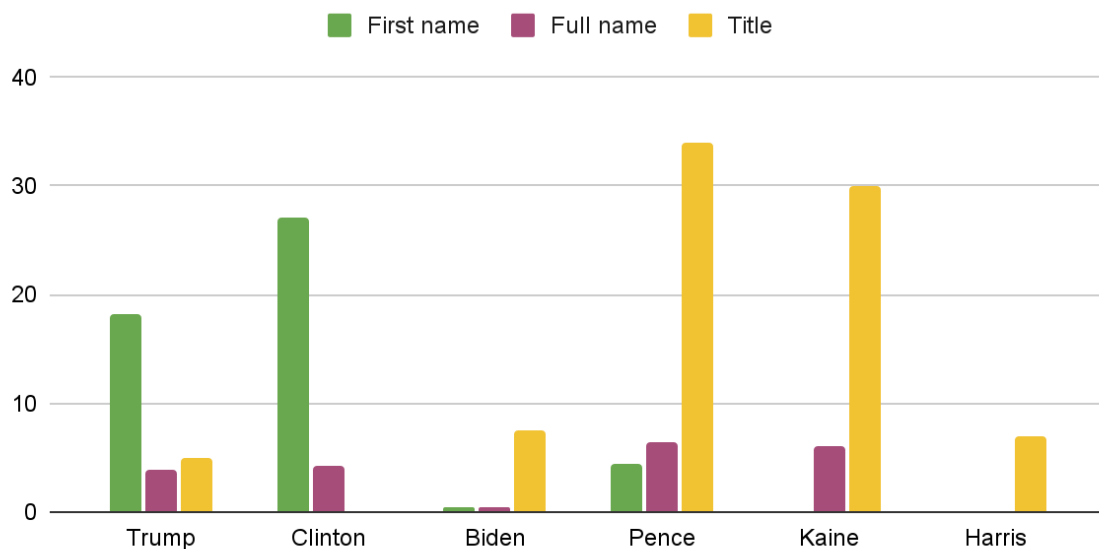
As depicted in Chart 9, first names of the opponents were more than twice as frequently used by women than by men. However, all of the uses by women were in fact by Hillary Clinton. While the use of first names were much rarer during the vice presidential debates with 2 instances on average per debate as opposed to the 14.5 instances in presidential debates, Clinton used her opponent Trump's first name more often than Trump used her name in every debate they had together. As mentioned in the theoretical framework section, this pattern by Clinton may be a result of a strategy to make herself appear more friendly and relaxed. In addition, it could be a way to emphasize the lack of an official title for Trump and thus a lack of political experience in him. On the contrary, Trump uses Clinton's title as the former Secretary of State frequently in their first debate (3 times as much as he uses her first name), perhaps as a way to highlight his accusations of her not fulfilling her prior promises as a long term politician, a claim that he reiterates by saying Clinton has been "fighting ISIS [her] entire adult life" and that she has experience but "bad experience" (Appendix: Debate 1). After their first debate however, Trump never uses Clinton's title again and refers to her mainly by her first name and sometimes by her full name. When it comes to his debates with Biden, Trump abides by his opponent's first name except for one instance, though he raises the fact that Biden used to be the vice president many times. Contrary to

Clinton's strategy, Biden almost never refers to Trump by anything other than his title as the president (except for 1 instance of his first name and 1 instance of his full name), which could be a tactic to emphasize Trump's part in the state of the US economy and international standing as Biden criticizes both on various occasions. During his debates with Biden, Trump occasionally refers to himself as well. For instance, on two occasions he says "Nobody has done more for the Black community than Donald Trump." and "There has been nobody tougher on Russia than Donald Trump." referring to himself with his full name (Appendix: Debate 7). The only other candidate that does this is Joe Biden. In the same debate, he twice says "He's running against Joe Biden." (Appendix: Debate 7).

Lastly, the other comparable trio in terms of name usage is between Pence and his two opponents Kaine and Harris. Although Pence prefers using the other candidates title most of the time in both debates (88% for Kaine and 60% for Harris), he uses Kamala Harris's first name more often with 8 instances as opposed to the only 1 instance in which he uses Tim Kaine's first name. This is perhaps due to the fact that the debate between Pence and Kaine is more polarizing due to the many interruptions and face threatening acts by both candidates in comparison to the relatively calm debate with Harris four years later. On the other side of the debate table, Kaine and Harris never use Pence's first name. While Harris only addresses her opponent with his title, Kaine uses Mike Pence's full name as well, albeit rarely. While this could be due to a certain level of formality both candidates wish to uphold, Harris's choice to only use Pence's official title could be a similar strategy to Biden's against Trump since both of them are debating against candidates who hold the titles of Vice President and President at the time of the debates and both Harris and Biden argue that the way their opponents governed in the last four years is a reason why they should not be elected again. Hence, emphasizing the offices they hold would be a beneficial tactic.

Use of first names, full names and titles

Chart 10



In conclusion, the candidates' preferences around the use of names and titles appears to be dependent on personal speech styles and how they position themselves in relation to their opponent rather than speaker gender or political party. To elaborate, while there are no consistently shared patterns based on speaker gender or party, the candidates use names and titles to support the narratives they aim to highlight about their opponent. For instance, Clinton uses Trump's name to emphasize his lack of a political background while Trump, Biden and Harris use their opponents' title in combination with critiques of their political career. Lastly, the debate atmosphere and desire to appear friendly also seems relevant for this category.

5.7 Humor

Use of humor for the selected debates was determined by the annotation "[laughter]" by the American Presidency Project's transcripts and through significant auditory reactions from the audience. Within these debates, instances of humor use may be categorized into two, based on who they are aimed at. The first category is the most common one, which includes humorous statements mainly addressing the audience. These instances are often at the expense of the other candidate and aim to build comradery between the audience and the speaker. For instance, in their first debate Clinton follows one of Trump's answers with a

smile and “Well, just listen to what you heard.”, to which the audience responds with laughter. Another example is from Pence as he responds to statements from Kaine with “Did you work on that one a long time? Because that had a lot of really creative lines in it.”, aiming to undermine and perhaps belittle his opponent (Appendix: Debate 2).

The second category for humorous statements include those that are not explicitly against the opponent of the speaker. Although only 33% of all instances of humor belong to this category, these occasions are still relevant as they impact the general tone of the debates. The humorous statements in category two are met with laughter not only by the audience but also by the opponent of the speaker and they generally lighten the mood of the conversation. For example, in the first debate of 2016, Trump refers to Clinton as “Secretary Clinton” for the first time along with a questioning intonation and facial expression asking “[Y]es, is that okay?”. When Clinton answers with a surprised smile and nod, he follows with “Good. I want you to be very happy. It's very important to me”, which is met with laughter both from the audience and from Clinton (Appendix: Debate 1). Perhaps the most striking part of this interaction is that Trump's humorous statements are simultaneously juxtaposed by accusations of inaction and defective policy making against Clinton by Trump. However, with the use of humor, Trump does not appear as aggressive as he could have when making these remarks. On a similar note, in their vice presidential debate Kaine jokingly says “Yeah, that's right so now we're even” after Pence is warned by the moderator for interrupting Kaine's turn, as Tim Kaine was warned many times prior to this interaction (Appendix: Debate 2). Through this instance, Kaine is able to ease the tension and also point out the fact that he is not the only one interrupting their opponent.

Use of humor

Chart 11

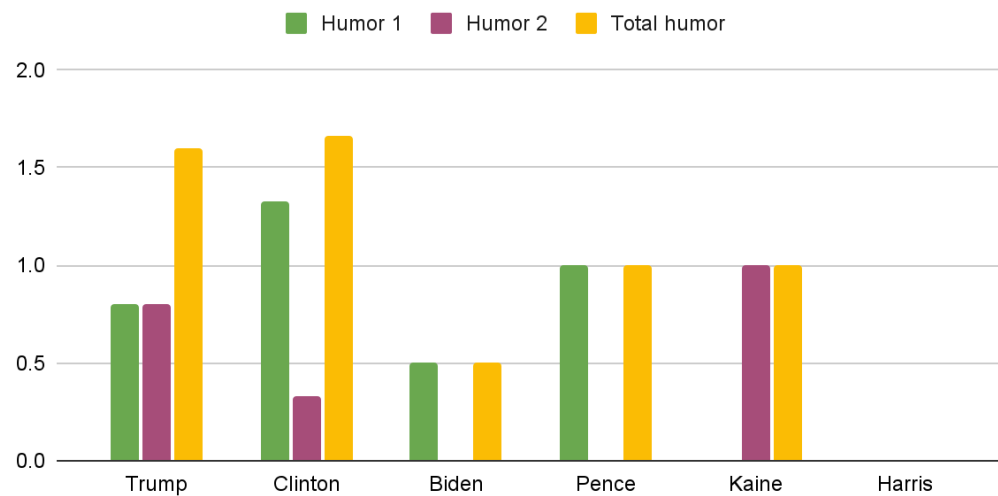


Chart 11 above depicts the distribution of humorous statements among the candidates, along with the categories of humor. Based on the results, the use of humor does not appear to be affected by the gender of the speaker as women average at 1.25 humorous statements per debate while men are at 1.2. However, it should be noted that these results are affected by the fact that Harris did not use any humorous statements in her debate against Pence, whereas Clinton uses them relatively frequently. While gender may not be a determining factor in employing humor, data indicates a difference based on election year. Namely, debates in 2016 include 1.87 instances of humor per debate among all candidates but there were only 0.33 instances recorded in 2020. Though this may be due to different candidates' personalities in these election years, the numbers from Trump and Pence, who participated in both elections, also depict a decrease in humorous statements in 2020. Hence considering the social climate of the 2020 elections with the worldwide issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the political climate in the US may have become more serious as well.

In conclusion, all of the candidates except for Harris use humor during their debates, though it is a rare phenomenon. Overall, Trump and Clinton use humor both at the expense of their opponents and to create a more friendly environment through jokes. Moreover, they are the two candidates that use humor the most often with 1.66 instances per debate. Biden and Pence on the other hand only use humor to ridicule their opponent and Kaine only uses it to relieve the tension during his debate. Lastly, the laughter from the audience that accompanies these humorous occasions indicate that the use of humor creates rare moments of reciprocity from the audience, which the candidates use as feedback to their statements.

5.8 Persuasive devices

5.9.1 Intertextuality

Throughout the debates, all of the candidates refer to external discussions and texts in order to contextualize their arguments. The ways in which the candidates use intertextuality differs greatly in length, context and the type of external text they refer to, hence, this persuasive device will be analyzed through qualitative examinations of examples from each candidate.

To begin with, Clinton is the candidate with some very concrete examples of this strategy. In the first debate of 2016, Trump claims that Clinton changed her opinion on the Trans-Pacific Partnership after she had learned about his stance on it, which Clinton argues “is just not accurate” (Appendix: Debate 1). Hence, to support her argument she brings up her book, co-written with her running mate Kaine, *Stronger Together*. By doing so, she is able to prove her perspective through a written and dated source against Trump’s claims.

Moving on to the debates in 2020, the democratic candidate Harris mentions the book *Rage* by journalist Bob Woodward in reference to the then president Trump’s decisions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this source, Harris refers to Woodward’s testimony that Trump was informed of the severity of the emerging pandemic much earlier than he shared with the public and he decided to “play it down” so as to not cause panic among the general public (Gangel, Herb & Stuart 2020: 1). Similar to the example about Clinton above, Harris uses journalistic material by Woodward to increase her credibility and strengthen her line of argumentation. During her debate with Pence, Harris refers back to this piece of information several times and uses it as a foundation to argue that the Trump-Pence administration has been and hence will be incompetent.

In the same debate, Pence challenges his opponent Harris’s arguments by encouraging the audience to examine previous political reports to refute Harris’s claims about not wanting to ban fracking. Following this, he also refers to the campaign website of Harris and Biden along with statements from the broadcasting agency USA Today on the Green New Deal (Appendix: Debate 6). Through these sources he increases his reliability and argues that not only Harris but also her running mate Biden is being deceitful about their plans. Additionally, Pence states that “[...] once again, Senator Harris is denying the fact that they're gonna raise taxes on every American" right before he brings up the topic of fracking and the Green New

Deal. Hence, the context Pence creates through mentioning their website and USA Today also reinforces his previous statements and argues for Harris's dishonesty.

Due to the spoken nature of the speech event at hand, this paper also deems non-textual references as a form of intertextuality. For instance, when questioned about possibly changing his stance on the invasion of Iraq, Trump brings up his interviews he gave and his personal conversations with Fox News host Sean Hannity to prove that he did not support the war (Appendix: Debate 1). In this manner, he aims to connect a source to the information he shares and to reinforce his argument, as well as to disprove the moderator Lester Holt. A difference between Clinton's previously discussed reference and Trump's reference however, is that Clinton's source is readily accessible for the general public as a book as she encourages them to "pick it up at a bookstore" (Appendix: Debate 1). Trump on the other hand, requests the press to "call up Sean Hannity" (Appendix: Debate 1). Moreover, while Clinton's source is a published material, Trump's is referring to another person.

Lastly, Biden often uses intertextuality in relation to facts about the COVID-19 pandemic and regulations. For instance, in his second debate with Trump he refers to the *New England Medical Journal* as a source about daily death tolls in the US and in Europe. Moreover, he follows these statements with the nationwide mask regulations that should be set in his opinion as he adds "[...] the President's own advisors told them [...]" (Appendix: Debate 7). By doing so, he not only increases the credibility of his statements since even his opponent's advisors agree with him, he also emphasizes that President Trump did not follow the advice of his team in this matter. Trump also employs a similar tactic later on in the same debate as he references Biden's former chief of staff Ron Klain's statements about the swine flu with the following words: "[...] his chief of staff, said 'It was catastrophic, it was horrible, we didn't know what we were doing.' Now he comes up and he tells us how to do this." (Appendix: Debate 7). In this manner, Trump uses the testimony by Biden's aide to undermine the confidence Biden aims to build in his capabilities as a leader in difficult times.

As exemplified by the instances discussed in this section, the candidates refer to external resources and third parties to establish or increase their credibility and to gain the trust of the audience. These examples were chosen to portray the overall tone of the intertextual elements the candidates make use of throughout the debates. For this category of persuasive devices, no significant shared tendencies between the candidates were found and gender does not appear to affect linguistic choices in an explicit way. Evidently, the personal linguistic styles of the candidates is the determining factor.

5.9.2 Use of anecdotes

Similarly to intertextuality, the candidates utilize anecdotes to strengthen their arguments and to provide context. Representative examples from the anecdotes shared by the candidates will be discussed in this section to illustrate their linguistic tendencies and preferences.

Throughout the debates, all candidates make use of anecdotes to establish their public persona in the eyes of the audience. However, some of them clearly favor anecdotes and use this strategy rather often. For example, Donald Trump traditionally includes anecdotes in his arguments such as the following from the first debate in 2016 against Clinton:

- “So we’re losing our good jobs, so many of them. When you look at what’s happening in Mexico, a friend of mine who builds plants said it’s the eighth wonder of the world. They’re building some of the biggest plants anywhere in the world, some of the most sophisticated, some of the best plants. With the United States, as he said, not so much.”
- “So we have to get very, very tough on cyber and cyber warfare. It is—it is a huge problem. I have a son. He’s 10 years old. He has computers. He is so good with these computers, it’s unbelievable. The security aspect of cyber is very, very tough. And maybe it’s hardly doable.”

In the first example, Trump brings up a friend of his, who supports his line of argumentation. However, he does not include any details about this person or reference them again. Hence, this anecdote simply serves to make him appear a part of a consensus on the topic, aiming to increase his credibility and possibly, his authority as perceived by the audience. On the other hand, the anecdote in the second example does not serve an explicit purpose other than adding additional information about Trump’s personal life. Therefore, it can be interpreted simply as a filler. Trump’s use of this anecdote could be due to him needing more time to think about his answer all the while wanting to keep the speaking turn.

On the contrary, Clinton only employs anecdotes when it is useful to her arguments or when it supports her character. For instance, in the same debate she states:

“My father was a small-businessman. He worked really hard. He printed drapery fabrics on long tables, where he pulled out those fabrics and he went down with a silkscreen and dumped the paint in and took the squeegee and kept going.”

She then uses this anecdote to introduce her plan about investing in the middle class and her portrayal of her father and thus, her upbringing, as a middle class American upbringing helps her to gather trust about her promises.

Similar to his running mate, Kaine also uses anecdotes to preface his arguments. For example, in his debate with Pence in Farmville, Virginia he shares an anecdote about the town's history and Barbara Johns who led a walkout to protest segregation. He then follows the anecdote by saying "I am so proud to be running with another strong, history-making woman, Hillary Clinton, to be president of the United States." (Appendix: Debate 2). Differently from the anecdote examples from Trump and Clinton, Kaine's anecdote is a historical one as opposed to a personal story. Hence, it may appear rehearsed to the audiences while personal anecdotes may be deemed more genuine and spontaneous.

In the same debate, Pence shares an anecdote about his uncle as an introduction to his opinions about policing in the US. His statements follow Kaine's plea for stricter gun laws on a federal level and more regulations and training for the police:

"You know, my uncle was a cop, a career cop, on the beat in downtown Chicago. He was my hero when I was growing up. And we'd go up to visit my dad's family in Chicago. My three brothers and I would marvel at my uncle when he would come out in his uniform, sidearm at his side." (Appendix: Debate 2)

Through this anecdote, Pence both personalizes the issue at hand and humanizes police officers. As a result, the topic of discussion changes from regulations and training for police forces to the character of individual police officers. By sharing a personal story, Pence also signals his pro-police sentiments to the audience.

Moving on to an example from Harris, the following quote from her debate with Pence is the beginning section of her answer to a question about if she and her running mate are preparing themselves in case they win the office and Biden becomes unfit due to health reasons during their term.

"So let me tell you first of all, on the day I got the call from Joe Biden, it was actually a Zoom call, asking me to serve with him on this ticket was probably one of the most memorable, memorable days in my life. I, you know, I thought about my mother, who came to the United States at the age of 19, gave birth to me at the age of 25 at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, California. And the thought that I'd be sitting here right now I know would make her proud and she must be looking down on this." (Appendix: Debate 6)

In the entirety of her answer, Harris listed many of her accomplishments in order to establish herself as a competent vice presidential candidate. The quoted part above, on the other hand, focuses on her feelings when Biden reached out to her about the candidacy and her background as the child of an immigrant mother. By including this anecdote in her

answer, she displays a more personal side of herself, appealing to the emotions of the audience and emphasizes her second generation immigrant background.

Lastly, Biden rarely uses anecdotes but he does sometimes bring up personal anecdotes such as the following:

“You know, my daughter is a social worker. And she's written a lot about this. She's got a graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania in social work. So, one of the reasons why I ended up working on the East side of Wilmington, Delaware, which is 90 percent African American, was to learn more about what was going on.” (Appendix: Debate 7)

Answering a question about racial inequality and its consequences on parenting of people of color, Biden shares details about his daughter and follows it with how different it was for him to raise a child in a white family. By answering the question through telling about his daughter's upbringing as opposed to statistics about the topic, Biden demonstrates his personal connection to the topic, indicating a deep understanding for the experiences of people of color.

Overall, the candidates use anecdotes to draw connections between real life events or people and the discussion topics. Throughout the five debates he participates in, Trump uses anecdotes often and he aims to establish and reinforce his competency and likeability as a candidate and president. Clinton, Pence and Harris in general use anecdotes to reinforce a certain aspect of their public persona such as being pro-police or having a middle class background and to appear relatable and likable. Finally, Biden uses anecdotes to display his connections to matters of discussion even though he might not be personally affected by the topic of discussion. This way, he can highlight his professional experience without alienating people who are personally concerned with the subject, which would increase his likeability in contrast to Trump's attempts to portray him as a “typical politician” (Appendix: Debate 7).

5.9.3 Addressing the audience

Across the debates, all of the candidates address the audience in different ways. The most common way is certainly through the frequent use of second person plural pronouns that are not directed at the other candidate or the first person plural pronouns that are inclusive of the audience. However, these two options may also include the moderator(s). Occasionally, the candidates also directly talk to the audience, which can help them build a stronger connection with the viewers and potentially exclude their opponent by temporarily

transforming a debate between the two candidates to a monologue between themselves and the audience.

In her first debate, for example, Hillary Clinton humorously starts her turn by addressing the audience with “Well, just listen to what you heard.” (Appendix: Debate 1). In the same debate, Trump talks to the audience by saying “But I will tell you that Hillary will tell you to go to her website and read all about how to defeat ISIS, which she could have defeated by never having it [...]” (Appendix: Debate 1). In the quoted statement Trump not only talks to the audience directly but also talks about Clinton, effectively excluding her from the conversation. On a similar note, Biden shifts the topic and starts talking to the audience when he is asked about his plans for the Supreme Court by saying “Whatever position I take on that, that'll become the issue. The issue is the American people should speak. You should go out and vote. You're in voting now. Vote and let your Senators know strongly how you feel.” (Appendix: Debate 5). Evidently, Biden initially talks about the voters by saying “the American people” and then he decides to talk to the audience directly, presumably to increase the impact of his words. Additionally, Biden supports his linguistic choices with his gestures and looking directly into the camera during these sentences as well. Likewise, Tim Kaine addresses the audience during his debate with Pence by asking them “Do you want a "you're hired" president in Hillary Clinton or do you want a "you're fired" president in Donald Trump?” (Appendix: Debate 2). Through the use of direct questions, Kaine increases his chances of attracting the audience's attention even more.

Another candidate that uses direct addresses towards the audience in a very impactful way is Harris. For example, she asks direct questions to the audience several times in her debate with Pence.

“So I want to ask the American people, how calm were you when you were panicked about where you're going to get your next roll of toilet paper? How calm were you when your kids were sent home from school and you didn't know when they could go back? [...] How calm were you when your children couldn't see your parents because you were afraid they could kill them?” (Appendix: Debate 6)

As quoted above, Harris not only uses a number of questions directed towards the audience, but also combines them with rather intense language such as children “kill[ing] their grandparents by infecting them with COVID-19”. Harris's choice to use the verb *kill* instead of phrasing it as, for example, *causing the grandparent to get sick or die* demonstrates her intention to highlight the severity of the situation and appeal to the audience emotionally.

Lastly, Pence is a candidate that does not often address the audience but occasionally he does so explicitly as in the following example from his debate with Harris:

“To the many people across this country: If you cherish our Supreme Court, if you cherish the separation of powers, you need to reject the Biden-Harris ticket come November the third and reelect President Donald Trump.

Similar to Biden’s plea for the American people to vote, Pence aims to encourage the audience to vote for him and Trump, which he does by overtly talking to the voters of the US. In this manner, he draws attention to this part of his speech and momentarily creates a direct line of communication aimed at the viewers.

Overall, this persuasive strategy is highly dependent on the personal speech styles of the candidate rather than their gender, political party or the election year. Perhaps with a larger sample size, trends based on these factors could emerge in future research.

5.9.4 Circumlocution and repetition

Throughout the seven debates, there are many examples of candidates giving detailed and elaborate answers to the moderators’ questions, however, the only candidate whose answers can clearly be categorized as examples of circumlocution is Donald Trump.

As briefly mentioned in the section on keywords and terms for the candidates, Trump has a tendency to use indefinite quantifiers frequently. Moreover, he uses such words and phrases often within anecdotal statements, which sometimes results in ambiguity. To exemplify, the following quotes are from Trump’s first debate against Clinton. Within his answer to the first question of the debate, Trump includes several examples of this habit:

- “Our jobs are fleeing the country. They're going to Mexico. They're going to *many other countries*.”
- “Because they're using our country as a piggy bank to rebuild China, and *many other countries* are doing the same thing.”
- “So we’re losing our good jobs, *so many of them*.”
- “They're going to Mexico. *So many hundreds and hundreds of companies* are doing this.”

As demonstrated above, Trump often mentions one concrete example and then uses the indefinite quantifier *many* to expand his previous statement to a larger degree and increase its impact. By doing so, he allows the audience to decide what *many* might entail. As a result, the impact of his words is stronger than if he were to give two or three concrete

examples. Moreover, this way it is harder to disprove his arguments since he is not stating any hard facts or specific numbers.

Another way in which Trump creates ambiguity is the use of forms of the third person plural pronoun *they* without clarifying who it refers to. In this manner, Trump cites unspecified people and sources as supportive arguments for his statements and he makes it harder to refute his assertions. For instance, in his third debate with Clinton he states: “She totally lied. She did call it the gold standard. And they actually fact checked, and they said I was right. I was so honored.” (Appendix: Debate 4). Trump does not elaborate on the identity of the fact checkers he mentions or include any information about how the audience could find more details about the facts surrounding the matter. Nevertheless, he creates the impression that there are people who researched the topic and came to the conclusion that he was correct about Clinton lying. In contrast, Clinton states that the homepage of her website was turned into a fact-checker and encourages the audience to visit the website starting from the first debate.

The following example is from the first debate in 2016 and it is a part of Trump’s answer to a question about his opinion on cyber attacks.

“I don’t think anybody knows it was Russia that broke into the DNC. She’s saying Russia, Russia, Russia, but I don’t—maybe it was. I mean, it could be Russia, but it could also be China. It could also be lots of other people. It also could be somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds, OK?” (Appendix: Debate 1)

While this answer could also be interpreted as evasion, Trump also uses repetition and circumlocution to create uncertainty around the issue. Prior to this statement, Clinton mentions cyber attacks by Russian state services. Thus, Trump’s answer undermines Clinton’s remarks all the while allowing the possibility that she might be right. Moreover, through the use of “lots of other people” Trump again creates space for the audience to project their own opinions.

Lastly, in the following example Trump uses the intensifiers “very” and “many” as well as the word “tremendous” to increase the effects of his words. By doing so, he also obscures the exact number of people he is referring to or details of the “inappropriate statements” he mentions. The use of multiple intensifiers in a row is a rather recognizable trait of Trump’s speech.

“Something happened recently where Justice Ginsburg made some very, very inappropriate statements toward me and toward a tremendous number of people, many, many millions of people that I represent.” (Appendix: Debate 4)

Along with examples such as the one above, Trump's frequent use of "very" in general is drastically different from the other candidates. To elaborate, he uses the adverb 147 times against Clinton, who uses it 60 times and 76 times against Biden, who uses it 11 times. Trump is also the only candidate to use "very" with modifiers such as in the case of "actually very happy", "really very recently", "really very interesting" "just very simple" and "not very much" (Appendix: Debate 1, 3 & 5). Based on the frequencies, it is evident that he has a pattern of using intensifiers to increase the impact of his statements.

Aside from circumlocution, there are also instances in which Trump uses repetition to strengthen his arguments. In some cases, he repeats certain words, phrases or full sentences to increase their impact and in others, he reintroduces topics he would like to discuss again and uses the same phrases or sentences to return to these subjects. For example, in his first debate with Clinton, he brings up the topic of the ads run by the Clinton campaign about him twice during different parts of the debate through the same sentences:

- "[...] she spent hundreds of millions of dollars on an advertising [...]"
- "[...] she spent hundreds of millions of dollars on negative ads on me [...]"
- "It's hundreds of millions of ads."

(Appendix: Debate 1)

In the example below for instance, Trump uses the phrase "take a look at" four times in a row to start his sentences: "And frankly, when you look at her real record, take a look at Syria. Take a look at the migration. Take a look at Libya. Take a look at Iraq." (Appendix: Debate 4). In this manner, he is able to occupy more time to talk through his argument in comparison to if he were to simply list "Syria", "migration", "Libya" and "Iraq", which allows him to emphasize these words as well as the amount of negative incidents on Clinton's record from his point of view.

Trump demonstrates similar patterns in his debates with Biden four years later as well. For instance, when discussing political candidates receiving financial support from foreign entities, Trump says the following to Biden:

"You made three and a half million dollars, Joe, and your son gave you. They even have a statement that we have to give 10% to the big man. You're the big man, I think. I don't know, maybe you're not. But you're the big man, I think. Your son said that we have to give 10% to the big man." (Appendix: Debate 7)

Similarly to the previous quote, Trump makes a claim only to partially retract it immediately by stating he in fact does not have information on the topic. Again with repetitions, he states his opinion through a much longer and evasive delivery than necessary.

Lastly, when he is asked about what he believes in terms of climate change and science, Trump answers:

“I believe that we have to do everything we can to have immaculate air, immaculate water, and do whatever else we can that's good. You know, we're planting a billion trees--the Billion Tree Project--and it's very exciting for a lot of people.” (Appendix: Debate 5)

In this example, Trump uses rather intense adjectives such as “immaculate” as well as “very exciting” and “a lot of people”, all of which help create the sense that he is stating a strong opinion even though he does not specify details about what immaculate air or water may entail or who supports the project he mentions. Moreover, by saying he thinks they have to do “whatever else [they] can that's good” he appeals to the audiences' perception of what they deem to be “good” without committing to any specific steps against climate change.

In conclusion, circumlocution and by extension, repetition, is the most relevant for Trump among the candidates. Though the other candidates also use repetition in their speeches, it is much rarer in comparison and there appears to be no connection between its use and speaker gender or political party.

The results section as a whole included interpretations of the key findings of this thesis through graphs and tables based on the collected data. The results for each category and code have been discussed in their relevant subsection according to the structure of the study. It is the following discussion and conclusion sections' goal to bring together these results and present a synthesis.

6 Discussion

The following section aims to discuss some excerpts and findings from the analysis in combination with secondary research to better understand the data and expand the results of this study. Particularly, speech times throughout the debates and certain word choices in relation to identity and narrative creation will be reviewed.

6.1 Speech time and speaking turns

Concerning the presidential debates in 2016, the two candidates had roughly equal speaking time when all three debates are considered together (7,430 seconds by Trump and 7,423 seconds by Clinton) (Eubanks et al. 2018: 212-213). However they had vastly different speaking styles in terms of turn taking. In 2020, Trump had slightly more speech time than Biden with 4687 seconds and 4498 seconds respectively (CNN 2020 & USA Today 2020). Thus based on the two sets of presidential election debates, there appears to be no significant difference in speech times between mixed gender and single gender debates. Though there is no available data on speech times for Pence's debate against Kaine in 2016, the data for the vice presidential debate in 2020 shows that with 2187 seconds and 2184 seconds respectively, Pence and Harris had equal speaking times (Statista 2020). Hence, it appears that the moderators successfully provide equal time for the candidates to speak. Nevertheless, the quality of the speech times may be varying due to interruptions and interjections.

Moving on to the crosstalk code, the frequency of instances of crosstalk is an indicator of speaker behavior as well since it is concerned with a speaker's ambition not to give up their turn or insistence on taking over a turn. To elaborate, when a speaker is interrupted, they may decide to give up the turn and let the other person speak, they may restart or reformulate their statements due to the interruption or they may ignore the interruption and continue speaking. In my opinion, a speaker's insistence on keeping the turn may be as indicative of their speaker persona as their inclination to interrupt others. For example, one's unwillingness to give up their turn may be a sign of their aim to dominate the conversation, especially if they have been interrupted by the moderator during a debate. On the other hand, it may be a sign of the speaker's desire to articulate their arguments despite being interrupted insistently. Additionally, it may be the case that two speakers simply started talking at the same time and neither of them wanted to allow the other to go first.

The following example depicts a particularly disruptive example of crosstalk from a presidential debate in 2020:

TRUMP: <int.rupt> No, I want to give them better healthcare at a much lower price, because Obamacare is no good.

BIDEN: <cross> He doesn't know how. He doesn't know how to do that.

TRUMP: <cross> I've already fixed it.

BIDEN: <cross> He has never offered a plan. He has never done a single thing.

TRUMP: <cross> We've already fixed it to an extent. Obamacare, as you might know but probably don't, Obamacare is no good.

WALLACE: Gentlemen, you realize if you're both speaking at the same time. Let the President. Go ahead, sir.

(Appendix: Debate 5)

The fact that Trump and Pence are present in debates in both elections creates the opportunity to compare their speech patterns against opponents with different genders and different speech styles. For instance, based on the data at hand both Biden and Kaine interrupt and interject their opponents more often than Clinton and Harris. When Trump and Pence's amounts of crosstalk with different opponents is compared, it is visible that both of them had more instances of crosstalk with opponents that interrupted and interjected them more often. Hence this finding may indicate that those who are more prone to interrupt and interject also crosstalk more often since they prioritize their speaking over their opponent's turn or over the harmony of the conversation. As a result of this, when two speakers who often interrupt and interject are present, crosstalk becomes more prevalent.

On the topic of turn taking, defending one's turn is certainly important. Due to the structure of the debates, it is sometimes entirely unacceptable to interject or interrupt a turn as candidates have a right to two minutes of uninterrupted speech time. During the open discussion sections however, taking over a turn might be considered more tolerable. Considering these regulations, there were different strategies employed both by moderators and candidates throughout the debates to ensure the intelligibility of the conversation and to protect an ongoing turn. For example, in the first debate of 2016, Clinton asked the moderator to "start the clock again" after Trump cut her off multiple times and the moderator needed to intervene. In 2020 on the other hand, Harris used the phrase "Mr. Vice President, I'm speaking" three times when she was interrupted by Pence, which later became a well-known phrase used by feminist circles online that exemplifies how to defend one's ground in conversations (Sairam 2020: 1). The moderators also intervened on many occasions to warn participants when there were many interjections, especially after the infamous 2020 debate between Biden and Trump which has been criticized greatly for its "uncivil" and "antagonistic" tone (Carlisle 2020: 1). As a result, in the following debate, the commission decided to turn off the microphone of the other candidate during the *uninterrupted* part of each candidate's speech only to turn both microphones on for the open discussion parts.

6.2 Titles and identities

Adding to the discussion of why certain candidates may choose to address their opponents with their first names while others may prefer official titles, the connotations of titles and previous careers in the political sphere should be addressed as well. On a number of occasions, the candidates refer to being a politician or having experience in politics but they do so with drastically different perspectives. For instance, throughout his five debates, Trump makes several remarks about the inaction of politicians to improve certain aspects of the citizens lives in the US and at the same time he explicitly labels his opponents as politicians with remarks such as “[...] politicians such as Secretary Clinton that have caused this problem” (Appendix: Debate 1). He also emphasizes the experience his opponents have as career politicians by explicitly mentioning the “30 years” and “47 years” Clinton and Biden spent in public service respectively, though these statements are always accompanied by inquiries about why they have not fulfilled their campaign promises prior to the current elections (Appendix: Debate 1, 3, 4, 5 & 7).

In fact, he calls both Clinton and Biden a “typical politician”, following it with “[a]ll talk, no action” in 2016 against Clinton (Appendix: Debate 1 & 7). Considering he is a major party candidate running for president in the first set of debates and then the president of the United States in the second set, he needs to combine his remarks about what being a politician entails with a sort of protective argument to justify his aspirations and title. He aims to do so by statements such as the following:

- “I’ve gotten to know the people of the country over the last year-and-a-half that I’ve been doing this as a politician. I cannot believe I’m saying that about myself, but I guess I have been a politician.” (Appendix: Debate 3)
- I’m not a typical politician, that’s why I got elected. (Appendix: Debate 7)

As evident in the examples above, Trump adds an air of capriciousness when referring to the fact that he has become a politician and then tries to distance himself from the typical politicians he often criticizes.

On a similar tone, Trump’s running mate Pence also refers to Trump’s inexperience as not being a “polished politician” and furthermore, he uses this as a way to justify the negative rhetoric Trumps had used about abortion rights by saying “[...] things don’t always come out exactly the way he means them” (Appendix: Debate 2). From some perspectives, not having clear communication skills may be an undesirable feature but Pence is not hesitant to declare this fact about his presidential candidate when it is in the context of separating Trump from

typical politicians and enabling him to evade accountability for what he said. This perspective is a common one among populist politicians who aim to appeal to the common citizen (Hunston 2016: 1).

On the other hand, both Clinton and Biden prefer defending themselves against Trump's accusations by listing their achievements during the time they were in office. Moreover, Clinton also emphasizes Trump's track record as a business person and comments that:

“Well, sometimes there's not a direct transfer of skills from business to government, but sometimes what happened in business would be really bad for government.” (Appendix: Debate 1)

Another example of identity building through language is Biden's first utterance at his first debate with Trump. As he enters the debate stage, Biden says “How you doing, man?” addressing Trump (Appendix: Debate 5). Biden's use of the word “man” to refer to Trump along with his omission of the verb “are” are aimed to help him appear more casual and friendly. His strategy here seems similar to Clinton's tendency to use Trump's first name instead of his surname or full name. In the same debate, Biden also says “I'm here standing facing you, old buddy.”, again addressing Trump (Appendix: Debate 5). In contrast to the previous example, however, Biden's use of the term “old buddy” here does not have the same friendly quality. This is partly due to the fact that prior to this sentence Trump repeatedly says Biden won the Democratic Primary Elections by a slight difference, indicating that he does not have the support of his party. As a result, the context of this dialogue is not particularly amiable. Moreover, in the said sentence Biden refers to Trump as “old” and throughout the election campaign Trump uses Biden's age to question his fitness as a presidential candidate.

Lastly, it is important to talk about examples of derogatory language as well. While there are a number of examples of negatively connotated descriptions throughout the debates, such as Trump talking about trade deals Clinton handled and then stating “political hacks” have been in charge of trade deals for a long time, there are also examples of more explicit derogatory language. For instance, in the first debate of 2020, Biden infamously says “Well, it's hard to get any word in with this clown. Excuse me, this person.” (Appendix: Debate 5) while referring to Trump. In the same debate, Trump states that “[t]here's nothing smart about [Biden]” (Appendix: Debate 5). Four years prior, Kaine indicates that he thinks Trump is a “fool” or “maniac” while debating Pence (Appendix: Debate 2). Though such examples of explicit insults are uncommon, they are important indicators of how the candidates view each

other and moreover, how they would like to characterize each other in front of the audience. Research indicates that audiences usually favor politeness, nevertheless, incivility is not always punished by audiences (especially by the voter base of the speaker) (Skytte 2019: 29). Hence, name calling and other derogatory language may not be critically unfavorable.

As described in the examples above, there is a trend by politicians with long careers to pride themselves on their experience and try to undermine others with little to no experience in politics, all the while newcomers to the political scene criticize them as being “typical” and inactive politicians. Titles, as the official labels for such identities can be a significant tool for emphasizing these differences in background.

7 Conclusion

It was this thesis’s aim to analyze a selection of linguistic strategies employed by the candidates to increase their credibility and likeability and persuade the audience with a focus on gender differences in the context of the presidential and vice presidential debates in the United States. While multi-gender debates are rare in US history, the inclusion of Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris provides the intriguing opportunity to observe the possible impact of candidates with different gender identities.

As was discussed a number of times in the results section, the available sample size limits the scope of some of the results as with only six speakers to be analyzed, speakers’ personal speech styles affect the results heavily. Hence, while it is hard to generalize some of the results, this analysis provides some insights into linguistic choices and trends in political debates.

Considering the word counts and speaking times for the candidates, in mixed gender debates men do not occupy more conversational space than women though they use more words per second. Specifically, Donald Trump uses more words than his opponents in both election years regardless of opponent gender, while Mike Pence does so only against Kamala Harris but not against Tim Kaine.

When it comes to the keywords and wordlists, the candidates favor using words that are relevant to their professional background and election agenda. As a result, most overlaps between the candidates happen between running mates and candidates from the same party rather than the same gender identity. Considering the preparation and media training that is to

be expected for televised political debates, it is expected that the candidates' vocabulary choices would reflect their political agenda rather than their personal vocabulary.

In contrast, interruptions, interjections and crosstalk are categories with a large gender disparity. Across the two election years, men consistently have a significantly higher number of instances than women. Moreover, the participating men interrupt, interject and crosstalk more often against opponents who also do so, hence there are higher numbers of instances in debates with only men. This behavior even resulted in regulation changes to limit the interjections as they disrupt the flow of the debates.

The results on selected pronoun uses indicate some differences between genders as well. To elaborate, based on the data about candidates addressing their opponents, men tend to view the debates as more conversational while women view them more as speeches directed at the audience. Supporting this, women use first person plural pronouns that include the audience more often than men do, which increases their relatability and likeability. Additionally, men address their opponents via the second person singular pronoun forms more frequently, creating dialogues, but they also refer to their opponents in third person more frequently than women do, resulting in the alienation of their rival.

The use of pragmatic markers is another category with interesting insights, even though there were not any consistent gender based differences across all four PMs that were selected. Overall, women had higher frequency of all PMs but these results were mainly due to Clinton's speech style. *Well* as a PM for example, was used significantly more frequently by Clinton as a polite interruption strategy to signal her desire to take over the turn but Harris used this PM rarely. *You know*, on the other hand, was a PM that was favored by both Clinton and Harris and it was used less frequently by men on average, demonstrating a more consistent gender difference. Since this PM was most often used when the candidates were addressing the audience, it appears that women preferred to appeal to common knowledge between themselves and the audience more often in this manner, increasing their credibility and connection.

Across the debates, the data on the use of official titles, first names and full names indicate that these instances are often dependent on the opponent rather than the speaker. For instance, in 2016, Clinton prefers using Trump's first name to emphasize his lack of a title while in 2020, Biden uses Trump's title as the president to highlight his part in the government he criticizes. Similarly, Trump favors Clinton's title as the former secretary of state while blaming her for the actions of previous governments but he almost exclusively uses the first name of Biden, potentially to undermine his authority. The vice presidential

debates on the other hand are far more formal in this sense with a higher frequency of title use for all candidates as opposed to first or full names.

Moving on to humor, since there are no consistent trends based on gender or political party, the speech style of the candidates and the election year appears to be the determining factors for humor use. Especially the use of humor to connect with the audience rather than to ridicule the opponent could be a useful strategy for the candidates which is employed by Trump, Clinton and Kaine to varying degrees. Data suggests that historic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic affect the use of humor to a large degree as the already rare humorous statements in 2016 become almost non-existent in the 2020 debates.

For determining the use of the analyzed persuasive devices, personal speech styles are the most important factor. The analysis on these devices is also supported by the candidates' speech patterns that were displayed through their keywords. For instance, Trump who frequently uses indefinite quantifiers, also often uses personal anecdotes, circumlocution and repetition to obscure the meaning of his answers or to evade questions. Additionally, all candidates utilize intertextuality and anecdotes to elaborate on their statements and strengthen their arguments. Moreover, the candidates address the audience directly at times to increase the impact of their connection. Trump, Biden and Harris are the candidates that employ this strategy the most often, which is also supported by their frequent use of the second person plural pronoun addressing the audience.

When all of the analysis categories are considered together, interruption, interjection and cross talking, as well as pronoun use are the ones with the most distinct gender differences. The fact that turn taking situations are spontaneous occurrences and pronoun use is a core part of speech could indicate that these aspects of speech styles are some of the most earnest parts in comparison to presumably trained vocabulary choices or pre-selected anecdotes. But regardless, the results indicate that implementing stricter regulations around interruptions in general would help create a better debate environment for both the candidates to fairly express themselves and for the audience to understand the discussions.

7.1 Future research

It would be interesting to have more gender diversity at political debates to understand implications of speaker gender on the discussions. Moreover, having debates between two women or women who had debates with more than one opponent, such as the

case of Trump and Pence, would allow further comparisons to be made through these additional data points.

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9 Appendix

Debate 1: September 26, 2016 Hillary Clinton - Donald Trump

Debate 2: October 4, 2016 Tim Kaine - Mike Pence

Debate 3: October 9, 2016 Hillary Clinton - Donald Trump

Debate 4: October 19, 2016 Hillary Clinton - Donald Trump

Debate 5: September 29, 2020 Joe Biden - Donald Trump

Debate 6: October 7, 2020 Kamala Harris - Mike Pence

Debate 7: October 22, 2020 Joe Biden - Donald Trump

The transcriptions of all seven debates, the coding manual for this study and the data collected through the annotations and from Sketch Engine can be found publicly available under the DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.11182110](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11182110)

Abstract

Diese Arbeit führt eine linguistische Analyse der US-Präsidentschafts- und Vizepräsidentschaftsdebatten 2016 und 2020 durch und konzentriert sich dabei auf die Geschlechterdynamik. Mit der Teilnahme von Hillary Clinton und Kamala Harris bieten die sieben Debatten aus diesen Wahljahren Einblicke in gemischtgeschlechtliche politische Interaktionen.

Zu den wichtigsten linguistischen Merkmalen, die in dieser Arbeit analysiert werden, gehören Pronomen, pragmatische Marker, Praktiken der Gesprächsführung wie Unterbrechungen und Persuasionsstrategien wie Humor und Intertextualität. Mit Hilfe des Annotationsprogramms Sketch Engine wurden außerdem Wortzahlen, Schlüsselwörter und häufig verwendete Phrasen berechnet. Die annotierten Daten und die Berechnungen von Sketch Engine wurden dann auf der Grundlage von Methoden der kritischen Diskursanalyse (CDA) analysiert.

Während viele der sich abzeichnenden Muster mit den politischen Parteien, den Kandidaten, dem Wahljahr und der Art der Debatte zusammenhingen, gab es in einigen Kategorien geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede, z. B. in der Art der Wortwahl und der Verwendung von Pronomen. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass Männer in beiden Wahljahren häufiger unterbrachen, Zwischenrufe machten und quer redeten als Frauen. Was die Verwendung von Pronomen anbelangt, so verwendeten Frauen häufiger als Männer Pronomen in der ersten Person Plural, die das Publikum mit einschließen und so die Relativität erhöhen. Männer benutzten häufiger Pronomen in der zweiten Person, die sich an den Gegner richten, wodurch Dialoge entstehen, und sie benutzten auch häufiger Pronomen in der dritten Person, die sich auf den Gegner beziehen, wodurch der Gegner aus dem Gespräch ausgeschlossen wird. Schließlich verwendeten Frauen die ausgewählten pragmatischen Marker häufiger, was jedoch häufig auf Clintons Redestil zurückzuführen war. Mehr geschlechterdifferenzierte Debatten könnten diese Muster weiter klären.