

# Languages of Politics



# Languages of Politics

Edited by

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## BOOK REVIEW

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This book contains a collection of articles that are topical and current. But that is not the only reason to read it. The contents, being crisply formulated around academically-validated models, applied with rigour, as one would expect of a high-quality peer-reviewed publication, are not only interesting to read but also shining examples of how qualitative interpretation techniques can be effectively applied. This well-timed publication helps the reader make sense of how persuasive language is being used and how it is itself adaptive to the changes occurring in the world around us. The reader of this work will be equipped with contemporary ways to reasonably assess whether the world we knew has been changing for the better or worse in consequence of the narrative forms adopted by influential commentators, thus further stimulating us to challenge our thinking and that of others.

In reviewing the contents – six articles that explore the communication issues pertaining to politics, gender, and religion - I was pleased to find that the common theme across them all is one in which the authors genuinely seek to understand not just the actual words and phrases used by the media, but that they delve far deeper into the psychological underpinnings in a genuine attempt to discover the idiosyncratic essence, that is to say the *how* and the *why* thereof. Plainly speaking, these articles collectively analyse *how* events were reported, which can help the reader understand *why* that is. To do so the authors have respectively employed several modern techniques of analysis, including the use of metaphor, cognitive theory, linguistic enquiry and word count, pronoun usage, corpus linguistic and discourse analysis. The use of these allows the language to speak for itself, which in turn allows sensitive issues to be addressed without obvious bias, even when the matters under discussion, such as gender neutrality, may inherently evoke bias or polarity of thought.

A research pursuit of this nature holds highly relevant implications for society, as new paradigms of socio-political consciousness emerge. Every scholar and student of life cannot help but take an interest in the way language is being used in different socio-political settings across cultures and territories. It is amiable that the authors are able to present their valid points of view without compromising objectivity, being careful to neither point fingers at what has been reported nor advocate in favour of the way these matters are addressed in public. Instead, in these well-written and academically-sound articles, they present the reader with the opportunity to decide for ourselves the extent to which we wish to embrace the emotive discourse that inherently, and unavoidably, infiltrates the media upon which we have become dependent to feed our collective curiosity.

This is no mean feat, given that societies are ostensibly more polarised on socio-political matters affecting them than at any time before in history. For that, of course, we have the media, and in particular the advent of wide-scale social media, to thank or blame. It would almost certainly have been far simpler for the authors to have taken a dogmatic or judgemental position on recent historical milestone events or the prevailing issues, but to their credit they have skilfully, and with diligent academic rigour, taken care to limit their commentaries to objective analysis of the respective discourses.

There is an evident dilemma in any work of this nature, i.e. on one hand the researcher is motivated by a need to obtain factual truths, as foundational data upon which to postulate any thesis, while on the other by a genuine desire to add to the body of knowledge, which is to the benefit of the scholarly community and society as a whole. The conflict presented by these two forces creates the energy field by which academic endeavour holds potential to propel human understanding toward new paradigms.

This work does not shy away from the question of whether or not, and to what degree, we (the people) will be willing to continue to have trust to the media, the politicians, and indeed all wielders of influence in the present day and on into the future. The significance of this book is thus not merely that its contents report what is, or what has been, but that in it the authors offer the opportunity for us to consider what is yet to come, given the increasing use of qualitative analysis techniques that potentially evoke transparency, accountability, and ultimately those most prized human qualities of authenticity and integrity.



# INTRODUCTION

Guided by thoughts, people's linguistic choices may be paralleled to their perception of things from the real world making language one of the most important means of people's expression of thoughts. Two people may be speaking about the same thing choosing completely different linguistic utterances, which can be a diagnostic of their (c)overt perception of the real world.

In western societies, the idea of gender formation prevails over the idea of sex predetermination. However, the society still behaves towards and perceives men and women in their stereotypical roles. If a woman tries to occupy a powerful role, she is perceived as a shrew (to be the most polite) because of her "inappropriate" power hungry behavior while there is no equivalent for a man because he is expected to exhibit such behavior. On the other hand, a non-dominant man is henpecked whereas there is no linguistic equivalent for such a woman because her submissive role is presupposed. The same applies to their linguistic behavior. Men are expected to be direct and dominant while women are supposed to be indirect and submissive. If the latter group is indirect, they are fuzzy-minded; if they are direct, they are manipulative and too masculine for their own good – a typical double-blindness scenario.

Described as the struggle for power and prevalence, politics is the field naturally occupied by men whose personality traits (strength, knowledgeability, assertiveness, directness) are prototypical for it. Even though the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an epoch of equality with no formal barriers for women's participation in politics and public life in the majority of contemporary societies, women are still under-represented. When holding offices, women get offices in the fields associated with solidarity issues (education, children, the elderly, social affairs, healthcare and the environment), i.e. not the ones rigorously associated with masculinity traits (business, economy, military and agriculture) because they would otherwise be depoliticized, womanized and maternalized by voters and media. Nevertheless, when entering the (men's) world of politics, women need to acquire some of men's personality traits, which might initiate other changes including the linguistic ones and rejecting their usual speech style characterized by cooperativeness, consensus seeking and conflict

avoidance. Despite being at odds with the prevailing norm, women's preferred speech style has been hypothesized to be a valuable contribution to democratic political discourse and a better choice for modern political leadership.

The ancient platitude is that men are more comfortable with seeking, holding and exhibiting power than women. There are two types of power. On the one hand, there is instrumental or authoritative power whose exhibition does not require convincing anyone of it. On the other, there is influential power used by individuals and organizations trying to influence people's thought, actions and behaviors. Politics can be both but it is usually the latter. Linguistic peculiarities of communicative behavior of public figures have always attracted scholars' attention focusing on socially determined gender communicative behavior. Despite being polarized in many aspects, politicians cannot use canonical language without admixture from other social groups of discourses. They (re)develop their linguistic style to be in line with their political goals and current situation engaging themselves in conversational dyads, tributes, memorials, petitions, amendments and parliamentary debates that the papers in this edited collection will focus on.

# AUSTRALIAN POLITICIANS’ USE OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS

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## Abstract

*A person’s use of non-content words such as pronouns offers insights into the person’s personality. Such words are the key to understanding relationships and attention focus thus making those subtleties revealing to study. This paper aims to study pronoun use in the corpus of 175 Australian politicians. The parliament representatives’ and senators’ speeches were downloaded from the official congressional speech repository Hansard. The corpus was composed of all speeches made in 2018 because it is the last completed calendar year at the time the research was conducted. The corpus will be analysed with the text analysis software Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) calculating the degree to which the politicians use pronouns. The computational analysis results will further be analysed with the software for statistical analysis SPSS, which will be used to study potential sociodemographic differences, especially political party affiliation, in terms of party affiliation differences and pronoun usage. The analyses will be completed with a discourse analysis studying the contextual pronominal use.*

**Keywords:** *Australian politicians, pronouns, contextual usage, LIWC, Hansard repository*

## 1. Introduction

The Bible states Matthew 12:34 asserted “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” This archaic truism or obvious platitude states what is spoken from the mouth represents the beliefs of the speaker.

Modern studies verified the accuracy between speech, written text and disposition. A plethora of studies substantiate that spoken and written words reflect the inner thoughts or mental intricacies and sophisticated text software ascertains insights by analysing prose. Specifically, the pronouns or articles in the rhetoric elicit meaning and connotations. Recently, the analysis of such linguistics were deployed in a political setting (Pennebaker, Slatcher and Chung, 2005; Slatcher et al., 2007).

There is a clear dearth of literature examining Australian political corpus. The current research landscape is devoid of LIWC deployment in the Australian setting. Additionally, scant studies examine Australian Hansard corpus (Crabb, 2009) but such studies scrutinise religiosity, specifically finding a proliferation in Christian terminology post-September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks (Crabb, 2009). There is a clear need for research in this area. Firstly, to address the dearth of literature regarding Australia. Secondly, to garner unique insights from the corpus which is an original research endeavour. Thirdly, to provide the first utilisation of LIWC software within an Australian environment as well as Australian political environment. Specifically, and uniquely, linguistic implications of the party affiliation examined and analysed in this research.

Accordingly, this study addresses the dearth of literature for both Hansard Corpus and Australian politics by using LIWC software. The research gauges the rhetorical nuances of different demographics and party affiliations for 2018. Specifically, the use of pronouns for political party members is illuminated.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Discourse study - progenitor to political studies**

Initially, discourse methods analyse political environments (Kangas, 2014). For instance, studies utilised a content analysis of press conferences and news articles to examine political discourse (Ekstrom, 2009; Washburn, 1995). Similarly, research ascertained the metaphorical discourses utilised by prominent US political interlocutors, which imparted subtle connotations (Cienki, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2011). Nevertheless, Kangas (2014, 79) laments the deficiencies of such studies asserting:

*“Although these discourse studies provide fascinating insights into the language and personalities of contemporary American politicians,*

*criticisms of discourse studies methods – the relatively small number of discourse samples that are analysed and the potential interpretative biases that may emerge during data analysis – have led some scholars to consider alternative paradigms for exploring political discourse and personality”.*

An alternative paradigm is analytic textual software. A burgeoning and pervasive alternative construct to examine political discourse is *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count*. This computerised text analysis method provides quantitative linguistic metrics for transcribed corpus. Thus, this new methodical approach creates a measuring mechanism to study psychological correlations pertaining to personality via language (Pennebaker et al., 2007). Numerous studies utilise LIWC to quantitatively scrutinise political discourse (Pennebaker and Lay 2002; Pennebaker et al. 2005; Slatcher et al., 2007, Božić Lenard, 2017).

## **2.2. The advent of text analysis and LIWC**

Analysing text is far from a new phenomenon. The onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conceived Freudian slips, refer to the meaning of gaffes as signifying the communicator’s true thoughts (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010). More recently, in the 1980s, Walter Weintraub established the inaugural text analysis method to elicit the meaning of first-person singular words. Professor Weintraub determined first person singular words such as *I* and *my* indicated depression by the communicator. The pronoun postulations were corroborated by LIWC software (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010). Generally, first-person pronouns signify negativity or subordination.

## **2.3. Attentional focus (pronouns and verb tense)**

Pronouns revealed attentional focus and reflected the emotional pain of interlocutors, specifically the use of *I*, *my* and *me* correlated with increased melancholic states (Rude, Gortner, and Pennebaker, 2004). Nouns also apply to political discourse. Gunsch et al. (2000) illuminated self-reference (e.g., *I*, *we*) preponderance in favourable political commercials. Contrastingly, (e.g., *he*, *she*, *they*) third person were frequent in pejorative ads. Additionally, this study examined tense and revealed present and future tense verbs were common for positive commercials whilst past tense verbs characterised negatives advertisements. Additionally, and logically, tense, specifically past tense rather than present tense, illuminate disclosed events (Pasupathi, 2007). Conversely, victims of teasing uttered singular pronoun

more than third person; however, male discourse focuses on the perpetrator and thus utter more third person than female's statements.

## 2.4. Emotionality

LIWC accurately determines the emotions of interlocutors. For instance, Kahn et al. (2007) state LIWC "*appears to be a valid method for measuring verbal expression of emotion*". Emotional word preponderance convey the intensification of physical and emotional pain (Holmes et al. 2007). Interestingly, LIWC software programmes accurately diagnose depression and foresees suicide. Rude et al. (2004) revealed depressed patients use more first personal singular and negative emotional words. In addition, Stirman and Pennebaker (2001) research found suicidal poets scribed more first-person singular nouns and death related words than non-suicidal counterparts. Similarly, research on Twitter identified tentativeness and non-fluencies were related to depression, however not suicide (O'Dea et al., 2021). Furthermore, student anxiety research discovered linguistic features such as pronouns were able to highlight and differentiate affective changes in first-year students (Roberston et al., 2021). Recently, novel research utilising LIWC identified the affective experiences of gamers including amusement evoked by ridiculous shots, enthusiasm coined as clutching or abysmal teammates incites anger and the disheartening affect engendered from deranking (Behnke, Chwiłkowska and Kaczmarek, 2021, 4). In conclusion, LIWC software is a legitimate predictor of emotionality.

## 2.5. Veracity

LIWC software features the capacity to discern deceptive conduct. Five experiments illuminated statements of mendacity consisting of fewer positive emotion words and self-references (Newman et al 2003). This is rationalised since deceptive dialogue lacks complexity as information needs to be created. Consequently, falsehoods need to be fabricated and thus devoid of indelible minutia. In addition, exclusion words such as but, without, and exclude were articulated less by individuals imparting lies (Newman et al., 2003). In summary, the veracity of conversationalists is extracted by LIWC software textual analysis of linguistics.

## 2.6. Implications of LIWC

Quantitative textual analysis data deduce information pertaining to sociality, psychology and financial consequences. For example, a word count reveals the dominance and engagement of communicators (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010). Additionally, pronouns, particularly the use of first person plural indicate a greater rank for pilots' transcripts of flights simulation dialogue (Sexton and Helmreich, 2000). Moreover, fewer questions were posed by lower-ranked crewmembers (Sexton and Helmreich, 2000). Furthermore, multiple studies indicate the propensity of lower-status individuals to verbalise first-person singular (Kacewicz et al., 2014). Conversely, the frequent use of first-person plural as well as question marks enhances team competence (Sexton and Helmreich, 2000). Additionally, first-person plural also indicates enhanced group cohesion (Gonzales, Hancock, and Pennebaker, 2010). LIWC demonstrated the first-person singular signified great romantic partner satisfaction (Slatcher, Vazire, and Pennebaker, 2008). Further studies relating to romantic dyadic dissolution revealed increased cognitive mechanisms such as casual words (e.g. *because*, *effect*, *hence*) when referring to present and post-dissolution compared to pre-disbanding (Boals and Klein, 2005). A meta-analysis reveals a distinction of dialect for gender specifically males' use of large words, articles, and prepositions. Conversely, the higher use of social words, first-person singular and third-person pronouns distinguished female discourse (Newman et al., 2003). Personality types and the consequences were also investigated using LIWC (Buyl, Boone and Wade, 2019). Contrastingly, high chief-executive officer (CEO) narcissism was determined by a textual analysis increased risk-taking and delayed economic recovery post-global financial crisis (Buyl, Boone and Wade, 2019). Holtzman et al. (2019) distinguish the linguistic correlation in narcissistic discourse entitled the articulation of words related to sports, second-person pronouns, and swear words whilst the strongest negatives correlation was discourse encompassing anxiety/fear words, tentative words, and words related to sensory/perceptual processes.

Additionally, CEO research predicted the impacts of leadership styles and leaders' experiences on financial performance. Publicly traded hotel companies' vision statements were analysed for motives and leadership styles by LIWC (Xuan, 2017). Transformational leadership and longer-tenured CEOs with high power and affiliation motives were found to attain a superior return on equity (ROE). Conversely, transactional leadership and older CEOs with high achievement motives were associated with return on assets (ROA) (Xuan, 2017).

Contrastingly, LIWC was able to determine the social, psychosocial, and financial ramifications of failed entrepreneurs. An analysis of Twitter messages from 760 languishing entrepreneurs before, during and after failure determined an alteration in linguistics. A LIWC analysis elicited a reduction in socialisation and affective or emotional tone but an augmentation of work and money words following entrepreneurial failure (Fisch and Block, 2021). Evidently, LIWC elicits insights relating to various dynamics.

## 2.7. Political research

Existing political research is prevalent. Recent research scrutinises the dichotomy of political liberalism and conservatism. Hasson et al. (2018) found liberals generally evoke more empathy than conservatives. Rheault, Rayment and Musulan (2019) implemented machine-learning models to predict the incivility of approximately 2.2 million Twitter messages addressed to Canadian politicians and US Senators. Their estimates exposed the 15% of public messages sent to Senators can be categorised as uncivil with a 4-point diminishment in Canada. Interestingly, although the baseline rate of incivility directed towards men are higher, this is mediated by visibility since higher-status women were afflicted with greater incivility (Rheault et al., 2019). Novel research canvassing the linguistic characteristics of Donald Trump's speech preceding the January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 capitol riots noted his final oration prior the Washington incursions consisted of a marked proliferation (statistically significant) first person plural pronouns namely *we* (Taylor, 2021). Furthermore, LIWC gleaned leadership speech and discovered political aggression consisted of fewer first-person singular words and more first-person plural words whilst a decreased cognitive and integrative complexity and utilise fewer words related to social connection (Matsumoto and Hwang, 2013).

Despite the paucity of Australian Hansard research, which utilize LIWC, there is a plethora of recent research examining political speeches, particularly deploying LIWC. Research by Quinn et al. (2010) noted previous methods of analysing political speeches were prohibitively costly or lamentably committed several restrictive assumptions. Accordingly, their research harnessed a topic model to scrutinize the agenda in the US Senate between 1997 to 2004. The research examined 118,000 speeches (70,000,000 words) from the Congressional Record, which reveals, similar to the current research, categories. The researchers failed to use LIWC and



noted “While our method is useful, it will not (and should not) replace other methods” (Quinn et al., 2010, 225).

Pertinently, contemporary research addressed political discourse with LIWC. Novel research produced topics distilled from Donald Trump’s tweets, namely determining political tweets were grammatically more formal and concentrated on achievement, money and power. These insights were gained from a newly compiled 1.5-million-word corpus of ‘tweets’ posted by US political leaders between 2009 to 2018 which found that Trumps tweets were peculiar since tweets were “both more positive and negative” on account of the greater utterances of adjectives and formal language (Schneider, 2021). Contrastingly, further research utilizing LIWC asserted “Closer analyses of linguistic trends of presidential language indicate that Trump’s language is consistent with long-term linear trends, demonstrating that he is not as much an outlier as he initially seems” (Jordan et al., 2018, 3476). In summary, the analysis of diverse corpora substantiated: “*Across multiple large corpora of American and other English speaking elected leaders, we found strong, consistent evidence for decreases in formal (analytic) language and increases in confident (clout) language over time. The strongest trends were found within the American presidency; however, politicians across multiple political contexts have been increasingly communicating to audiences with informal and confident language*” (Jordan, 2019, 3480).

More recently, a LIWC analysis elicited discourse differences between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump pertaining to the 2016 election with the former espousing Nurturant Parent Model and the latter Strict Father Model with the researches concluding “*According to LIWC program, Clinton uses the frames of ‘homes’, ‘family’, religion, and ‘work’. As for Trump, he focuses more on ‘number’, frames of ‘money’, ‘business’ and contrasts like ‘wrong and right’, ‘lose-win’*” (Kasimova, 2022, 453). This research applied Lakoff’s cognitive theory, which is similar to LIWC research conducted by Rodriguez (2020). Campaign memoirs between 2000 to 2016 were analysed by both Republicans and Democratic candidates. Similarly, the analysis determined Republicans’ memoirs display a significant stricter father model whilst their Democratic counterpart demonstrates a greater propensity for the nurturant parent model. Evidently, LIWC is a useful and frequently harnessed tool to examine, frame and categorise various political discourses.

Furthermore, research utilized discourse to identify the political ideology of interlocutors. For example, Sterling, Jost and Bonneau (2020) analysed

a corpus consisting of Twitter (n = 88,874 tweets), Facebook (n = 15,636 posts), and the floor of Congress (n = 6,159 speeches) over the same four-month period (February 9-May 28, 2014) to scrutinize the language used by 279-388 members of the U.S. Congress. The analysis of social media and speech corpus revealed “...*conservative legislators used more language pertaining to religion, power, threat, inhibition, risk and – on the floor of Congress – tradition and resistance to change. Conversely, liberal legislators used more language pertaining to affiliation, achievement, benevolence, emotion in general, ‘social’ concerns and – on the floor of Congress – universalism, stimulation, and hedonism*” (Sterling, Jost and Bonneau, 2020, 80). Additionally, Okdie and Rempala (2019) used LIWC with student responses to their ideological foundations (Study 1), brief snippets of unanimous Supreme Court verdicts (Study 2), and celebrity tweets (Study 3) and found results suggesting that concise text, despite the lack of overt political rhetoric or narrative, reflects the interlocutors’ political ideology. Similarly, Robinson et al., (2017) conducted three studies, which analysed the texts posted to prominent liberal versus conservative news websites, State of the Union addresses and finally garnered undergraduate participants from the United States to write about two topics. The triad corpus examined word usage as a function of party affiliation utilising LIWC. The empirical research discovered liberals were higher in openness, cognition and complexity, which contrasted with conservatives higher in death, anxiety, moral foundations concerning bodily purity and disgust sensitively (Robinson et al., 2017, 452). Robinson et al. (2017) concluded liberal ideologies scored positively in mind-body terms, which displayed a greater relative mental, focus whilst, conversely, conservative ideologies scored negatively in mind-body terms that convey a greater bodily focus.

Contrasting, but similar research examined State of the Union orations. Hoffman et al. (2021) deployed LIWC to determine the political genres of speeches. The textual analysis included a corpus of 132 speeches articulated US presidents and NYC mayors between the years of 1953 and 2014, which incorporated 16 presidential inaugurations, 62 SOTU addresses, 16 inaugurations of NYC mayors, and 38 state of the city addresses of NYC mayors and entailed every presidential inauguration (n = 16) and every mayoral inauguration (n = 16) delivered since 1953. This research determined “*Inaugural addresses are consistently more inspirational and unifying than state speeches. State speeches are consistently more past and policy oriented, having significantly higher levels of concrete language than inaugurations, and more tangible and material language about numbers,*

*tasks, functions, and programs, which are all relevant to policy-making*” (Hoffman et al. 2021, 10).

Finally, Jenkins’s (2019) book chapter *Text Mining with Hansard*, similar to the current research, analysed Hansard consisting of approximately 1.6 billion words. This psycholinguistic text mining of the British Hansard from 1830 to 2004 found “*emotional climate of a state’s leadership and national legislature shifts in response to exogenous influences such as world events and is not necessarily congruent with the emotional climate of that state’s general population*” (Jenkins, 2019, 53). Seemingly, there is a dearth of literature utilising Hansard (Australian political speech) and LIWC. Crabb’s (2009) study analysed 2422 speeches orated by prominent Australian federal politicians between 2000 and 2006 and observed a quantitative increase in religious rhetoric. Crabb (2009, 260) outlines the reasons for speeches:

*“Speeches were chosen as the focus of this analysis for a number of reasons; primarily because they are one of the few unmediated formats of communication available to politicians. They enable politicians to decide the tone, structure and content of their message. Through publication on the Internet and in newspapers, speeches often reach a broader audience than those in attendance when they are presented. Speeches are also the mechanism by which political debate is advanced and decisions are formulated. They are the medium through which electors learn about politicians’ policy positions and once elected become their mandate for action. In this idealised model, the MP is held accountable for the policies they articulate in their speeches. Thus, speeches retain an important role in democratic accountability”.*

Consequently, this research garners Australian political speeches, labelled as Hansard, and uniquely employs LIWC to analyse recent political rhetoric.

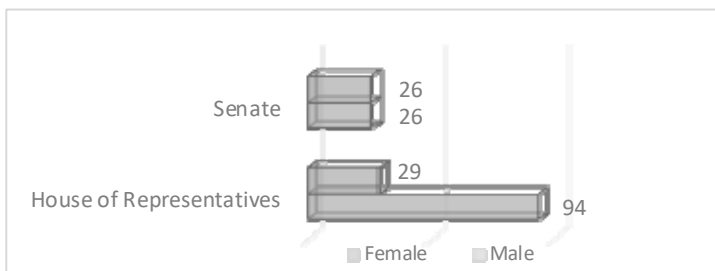
### 3. Methodology

This paper aimed to analyse differences in the use of pronouns by Australian politicians. The speech transcripts were downloaded from the official repository of the Parliament of Australia.<sup>1</sup> The search was refined to look for all the speeches made in 2018 because it is the most recent completed calendar year at the time the research was conducted. As a bicameral legislature, the Parliament of Australia consists of two

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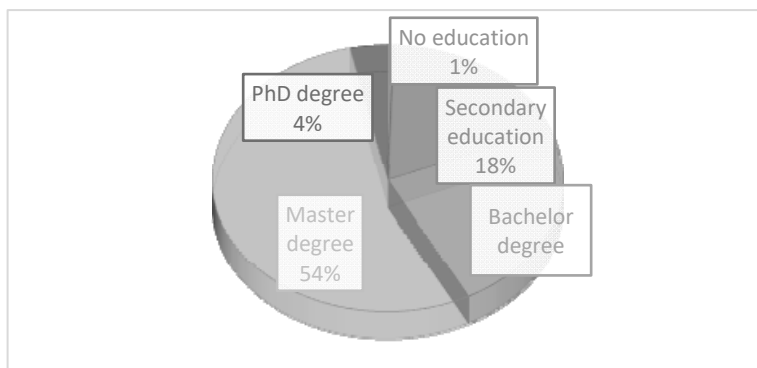
<sup>1</sup> <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/guide/speech.w3p>.

chambers, namely the Senate, which represents the states and territories, and the House of Representatives representing electoral divisions based on population. The former consists of 76 members (twelve for each state) and the latter of 151 members. However, not all members delivered speeches in the selected period, i.e. 123 politicians sitting in the House of Representatives and 52 Senators were included in our research as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Distribution of politicians based on chamber seats and gender

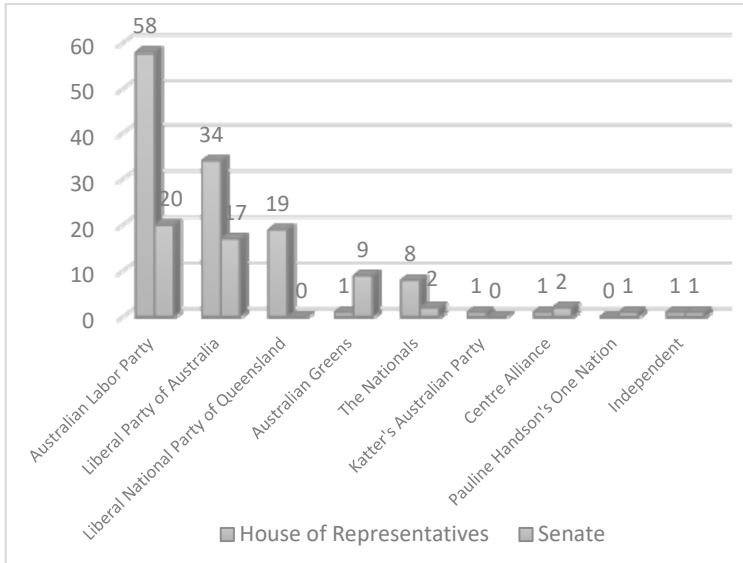
The sample is diverse regarding the education level. 1 person has no education, 32 people have secondary education, 41 Bachelor degree, 95 Master degree and 6 PhD degree.



**Figure 2:** Education levels

The politicians' occupations range from lawyers (26.3%) and economists (12.1%) to different-level teachers (7.5%), army officers (2.9%) and

others. In the researched period, the politicians who delivered their speeches were affiliated with nine political parties as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Distribution of politicians based on chamber seats and party affiliation

Those 175 politicians made 12,700 speeches; 7,039 by the Representatives and 5,661 by the Senators in the researched period. The speech transcripts were analysed using a well-established software for computational linguistics LIWC, which conducts a word basis analysis and categorises words in 70 categories ranging from word count and different parts of speech to words related to specific topic categories (such as religion, money, success) and punctuation categories. For the purpose of this paper, the four most used pronouns, namely *I*, *we*, *you* and *they*, were statistically analysed concerning gender, educational level, chamber seats and party affiliation. SPSS results showed no statistically significant differences on the use of the four pronoun categories and gender ( $p = .516$ ), educational level ( $p = .743$ ), chamber seats ( $p = .627$ ) and party affiliation ( $p = .518$ ). Upon computational and statistical analysis, we conducted a qualitative analysis and studied the contextual pronoun usages and categories the politicians used the pronouns in their speeches.

## 4. Analysis and discussion

In the respective subchapters, each pronoun category will be elaborated on and compared to possible similar analytical research because we find this way of structuring our paper more efficient for the reader.

### 4.1. Pronoun *I*

Research into the use of pronouns by politicians has a long history and the pronoun *I* and the related forms (*me, my, mine, myself*) inspired numerous researchers to study such linguistics. Early research determined several functions of the pronouns *I*. Sacks (1992, 32) believes that *I* indexes the speaker to here and now, Malone (1997) adds the subjectivity and speaker's position and Wilson (1990) proves that *I* is deployed to establish rapport and create a "personal voice".

#### 4.1.1. Being a good and responsible politician: describing personal qualities

Pronoun *I* is central to the representation of an individual politician and showing oneself in a positive light accomplished by recounting one's actions for the benefit of the electorate. When presenting as responsible politicians, they talk about the power in their personal actions and their personal desirable qualities. In example 1, the speaker highlights his long political experience during which he called for actions, thus pointing to being the most valuable contributor in the political arena.

(1) *I* rise to speak to the original bill, the Government Procurement (Judicial Review) Bill 2017, but, obviously, that has gone sideways. *I* have risen again and again on this issue. *I* have a unique position in this place, because *I* have been a member of parliament for longer than anyone else in Australian history, with the exception of Billy Hughes—not good company to be in, Mr Deputy Speaker, *I* can tell you. *I* have seen the complete destruction of manufacturing in *my* country, and, if you go back to *my* speeches from 35 years ago, *I* was probably advocating a movement towards free trade, but you have to judge policy upon its outcomes.  
Katter, Bob BILLS - Government Procurement (Judicial Review) Bill 2017  
- Second Reading - House of Reps Hansard - 19 September 2018

However, unlike President Obama who explicitly represented himself as the main authority in the US, as reported in Alemi et al.'s (2018) paper, the speaker in example 1 shows a lack of political power taking the duration of him calling for actions in vain. While pointing to their repeated

calls for actions, politicians actually imply the opposite effect – demonstrate that they are not assertive or loud enough to be heard.

#### 4.1.2. Being a person of principles

Politicians frequently claim that they act responsibly and consistently and accordingly demonstrate this by using pronoun *I* gives the cohort a chance to distance themselves from their fellow politicians like in example 2.

(2) *I* won't detain the House any longer, other than to say that *I* think this bill is bad public policy. *I* don't think it's supported. *I* won't support it, and *I* am very disappointed that *I* will not be joined at least by *my* colleagues from the Labor Party. It's one thing to voice your concerns, but it's another thing to act. *I* think our performance in this place should be measured by what we do, not by what we say. *I* am going to be very disappointed to see the ALP support the Liberal and National parties in supporting what *I* think is bad policy—policy that might not jeopardise Tasmania in the short term but jeopardises us greatly in the medium term and especially the long term. Wilkie, Andrew BILLS - Treasury Laws Amendment (Making Sure Every State and Territory Gets Their Fair Share of GST) Bill 2018 - Second Reading - House of Reps Hansard - 23 October 2018

The speaker is disappointed that other politicians will not join him in acting; not just speaking. Pronoun *I* is used to convey that the politician is a person of principle in comparison to other politicians, which is a very strong distancing from others. A similar pronoun usage was found by Bramley (2001) in Australian political interviews and Hakansson (2012) in two American presidents' speeches and by Williams and Wright (2022) in the UK daily OCIVD-19 briefings.

#### 4.1.3. Expressing one's political views

Even though party members usually have the same views on fundamental issues, sometimes politicians express their opinion distinctly from the party's.

(3) So, yes, *I* support legalising voluntary assisted dying for the terminally ill, and *I* emphasise the word 'voluntary'.  
Stirling, Griff BILLS - Restoring Territory Rights (Assisted Suicide Legislation) Bill 2015 - Second Reading - Senate Hansard - 14 August 2018

Example 3 leads the reader to believe that the speaker expresses only his own view on legalizing voluntary assisted dying for the terminally ill, not

his party's. He creates his identity and separates himself from a collective party identity. A possible reason for this utterance is to appeal to a diverse audience and voters who usually fail to support his party (Allen, 2007). Furthermore, the phenomenon might be related to culture. Nur et al. (2021) discovered a difference between Trump's and Mahathir's use of pronoun *I* with the former using it to highlight his individual accomplishments and express opinions and the latter by merely expressing his views. The underlying reason for the difference might be in the individualistic American and collectivistic Malaysian cultures.

#### 4.1.4. Talking about problematic personal issues

Politicians occasionally share their problematic personal issues to foster a rapport or private intimacy with their colleagues and the electorate. Božić Lenard (2017) discovered gender differences in politicians' usage of pronoun *I* when sharing personal issues. She discovered that both men and women share their personal issues; however, women focus on the event or reasons leading to their involvement while men emphasize their role or importance in the event. Also, women share their job-related personal experiences compared to men who are trying to build rapport by describing their private issues.

(4) *I* went to high school; *I* was in the class of '54. There was no problem with education. *I* actually topped the class. After *I* saw that *I* wasn't near the top—*I* was coming about fifth or sixth—*I* realised *I* needed to work harder to get top of the class. So we need to bring back placing in the classrooms.

Hanson, Pauline MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE - Education - Senate Hansard - 3 December 2018

(5) When *I* was younger, like many of us on this side probably, *I* worked some of these jobs to get by as well. *I* worked as a cleaner. *I* worked night shifts in a service station. *I* worked in retail and hospitality and washed dishes in restaurants. And, yes, *I* also went to university, because those aspirational Labor policies gave me access to a university education. *I*'ve spoken before in this House about how *I* grew up in a housing commission. Khalil, Peter MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE - Child Care, Workplace Relations - House of Repts Hansard - 26 June 2018

Examples 4 and 5 list the politicians' schooling and financial problems, which they were not embarrassed to share. The reason for the politicians sharing these problems is that in spite of issues, the elected officials managed to succeed in life, which is a message for everyone – if you try hard enough, you can succeed too. The politicians give a mini-narrative on



their humble upbringing and move from private to institutional personas to imprint their ordinariness into the audience and ask for further actions – a technique also recorded by Bello (2013) in Dr. Goodluck’s Abuja speech and confirmed by Gerber et al. (2011) as one of the five personality traits in the political arena. Unlike Božić Lenard (2017), we were unable to find gender differences, i.e. in comparison to American politicians, Australian male and female politicians share their personal experiences to encourage the electorate to “try hard” in life, thus building rapport, or propose a bill.

#### 4.1.5. Sharing personal information to show competence

In addition to building rapport with the electorate, politicians might decide to share their personal experience to show their competence in an area like in examples 6 and 7.

(6) *I* rise to make a statement on remote Indigenous education in response to the member for Warringah's statement. *I* acknowledge the member for Warringah's statement, the special envoy for First Nations people. *I* come to this statement with a wealth of experience in this area. *I* was a schoolteacher and one of the very early Aboriginal schoolteachers in New South Wales. *I* began teaching in 1979. *I* have spent a long time as an education bureaucrat and was responsible for bringing in, along with my colleagues, the first national Aboriginal education policy. *My* educational background gave me appointment to the reconciliation council. *I* have been an advocate in Aboriginal education. *I* have also been the director general of the Aboriginal affairs department in New South Wales. *I* know what *I*'m talking about.

Burney, Linda Federation Chamber - MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS - Closing the Gap - House of Reps Hansard - 19 February 2019

(7) Throughout *my* time as the member and even while *I* was the candidate, *I*'ve asked *my* community how *I* could help them and have listened to them, and then *I*'ve helped them. Because of this, *I* helped community organisations reduce their power bills by securing funding to install solar panels at their facilities, their buildings and their club rooms. *I* worked with community leaders such as Andrew Chandler at the Seacliff Surf Life Saving Club, Chris Parsons at Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club and Mark 'Curly' Williams at Somerton Surf Life Saving Club to purchase solar panels. *I* worked with the Sturt CFS Group Officer, Dale Thompson, to see solar panels installed at the Blackwood, Belair and Eden Hills CFS stations. *I* did this because *I* listened to what *my* volunteers said they needed and because *I* want my local volunteers to focus on what they should be doing, which is keeping our community safe, rather than worrying about their power bills.

Flint, Nicolle Federation Chamber - STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE - Australian Bushfires - House of Reps Hansard - 28 November 2019

The politicians elaborate on acquiring their professional experience, to gain eligibility or legitimacy/relevance to express their opinion about the topic or engage in actions requiring specific experience. In examples 4-7 politicians present their different facets to convey sincerity, show their difficult upbringing and competence in merging private and public domains thus supporting Allen's (2007) and Romadlani's (2021) findings.

#### 4.1.6. Being a successful politician

Another facet politicians employ is talking about their professional accomplishments very frequently in a way to create the impression that they single-handedly accomplished everything like in examples 8 and 9.

(8) *I* managed to put \$9 million on the table for a state road; *I* sat it on the table. It's been on the table for years. The state infrastructure minister, Mulligan, when our community heralded the arrival of this \$9 million contribution, said, 'That's great, but, nah, we don't want it.' They didn't want to complete a road that's half-complete. They didn't want to finish it. When *I* asked why, they said there would be GST implications—'We'd have to give up GST.'  
Pasin, Tony - Federation Chamber - PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS - South Australia: Commonwealth Funding - House of Reps Hansard - 12 February 2018

(9) For my part, *I* will put on record that *I* was successful in getting an extra \$40 million out of then-Prime Minister Rudd for this hospital, which has enabled it to become the first-class hospital that it is today.  
Gosling, Luke, STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS - Palmerston Regional Hospital - House of Reps Hansard - 20 August 2018

The speakers emphasize their involvement and personal accomplishment, which was not easily achieved, thus painting the picture of proactive politicians and persons of power, which is in line with Nur et al.'s (2021), Alemi et al.'s (2018) and Liu's (2021) research.

(10) That's why *I*'m proud that today *I* introduced a bill that would stop Adani, and it would stop the eight other mega coalmines that are proposed for the Galilee Basin.  
Waters, Larissa - MATTERS OF URGENCY - Mining Industry - Senate Hansard - 5 December 2018

(11) Australia has a very, very proud history of a world-class vocational education and training system. *I* want to take a little time to tell the story of

a delegation that *I* attended in 2011. *I* had an opportunity to join an Australian delegation to the Gulf states. *I* wasn't just proud to represent Australia; *I* was particularly proud of *my* own history working in the vocational education and training sector as a TAFE teacher, because during that trip there were so many expressions of admiration for how Australia had structured its vocational education and training sector—its VET system—and, particularly, its TAFEs.

Ally, Anne - Bill 2018 - SECOND READING - House of Reps Hansard - 28 November 2018

Examples 10 and 11 are uttered by the female politicians who are proud of their personal achievements but fail to express pomposity as strongly as their male counterparts. Regardless of being successful or not, female politicians are too self-critical to overemphasize their achievements like men.

#### 4.1.7. Being in touch with the electorate

A good politician is always in touch with one's electorate. According to Bramley (2001, 50), politicians talk to the members of the public, listen to their views and cascade to the Parliament thus constructing an image of a good politician.

(12) In July last year Berwick resident Julie Anderson—*I've* met with Julie so many times over the years—wrote to *me* and pointed out a very concerning fact: 'Only five more veterans have to end their lives this year and that will be equal to those killed fighting the enemy in Afghanistan in over 10 years.'

Wood, Jason - Federation Chamber - BILLS - Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Veteran-centric Reforms No. 1) Bill 2018 - Second Reading - House of Reps Hansard - 28 February 2018

(13) One of the most endearing memories *I* have of working in talkback radio was an elderly lady who phoned *me* one day and said: 'Meryl, *I* feel like you're my daughter. You're in my kitchen every morning when I put the kettle on. I often tell you what I think, and some weeks you're the only person who I actually speak to.' Radio is an incredibly personal medium, and community radio is perhaps the most personal of this very personal medium.

Swanson, Meryl - BILLS - Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Foreign Media Ownership and Community Radio) Bill 2017 - Second Reading - House of Reps Hansard - 20 August 2018

The speakers in examples 12 and 13 brag about being contacted by the members of their electorate who were chosen or elected to resolve some

issues. By being chosen and needed, those politicians portray a picture of undoubtedly good politicians who are simultaneously “down to Earth” and available to ordinary people.

#### 4.1.8. Fighting for people

Since elected officials represent their electorate, politicians tend to emphasize their fight for people in the form of initiating or supporting bills and amendments like in example 14.

(14) What *I* would like to say is that *I* am particularly keen to support the amendment that deals with the removal of the loan fees from students of the table B providers. In particular, that affects one of the universities in *my* electorate of McPherson on the Gold Coast—that is, Bond University. For some time *I* have worked with Bond University, with the Vice Chancellor, Professor Tim Brailsford, and with students at the university for the removal of the loan fees. It has been a contentious issue. *I* have fought long and hard to have those fees removed, so *I*'m absolutely delighted to support that amendment today.

Andrews, Karen - Federation Chamber - BILLS - Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2019-2020 - Consideration in Detail - House of Reps Hansard - 19 September 2019

Similar to presidential candidates Trump (Nur et al., 2021; Germandik, 2021) and Grabar-Kitarović (Germandik, 2021) who used pronoun *I* to highlight their personal involvement in past accomplishments for their electorate, the speaker in example 14 uses the pronoun to manifest her individual voice against collective identity.

#### 4.1.9. Lack of knowledge

Politicians are frequently asked to express their opinion about different current issues, which requires certain background knowledge. If not wanting to be held accountable for absolute knowledge or incorrect interpretations, politicians decide to claim the lack of knowledge as in examples 15 and 16.

(15) *It seems to me* that if you live in the city you get looked after by the Queensland Labor government, but if you live in the regions you wait months for your ACAT assessment. *I* find that unacceptable. *I*'ve called for it before and *I*'ll call for it again. They need to provide sufficient resources into the regions.

Pitt, Keith - MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE - Aged Care - House of Reps Hansard - 18 September 2018

(16) *It seems to me* now that we would probably settle for our kids having the same standard of living as ours. We have lost that expectation that they should have a better standard of living. That is a real change in psyche for Australia.

Templeman, Susan - MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE - Cost of Living - House of Reps Hansard - 6 February 2018

The aforementioned examples show the manipulative potential when passivating pronoun *I*. The speakers opt for claiming the lack of knowledge because they can construct a personally and politically skewed reality and not distort their political image if proven wrong – a technique very frequent in the political arena (Furko, 2017; Kamil and Al-Hindawi, 2017; Sorlin, 2017; Jasim and Mustafa, 2020).

## 4.2. Pronoun *we*

The primary meaning of the pronoun *we* used in political settings is collective identity; however, there is a diversity of ways politicians use the aforementioned pronoun to create group membership, *we* vs *they* dichotomy and invoke a collective response on an issue.

### 4.2.1. We as institutional identity

Institutional identity is created when a politician speaks on behalf of a group of people, usually his/her political party, which is always portrayed as a positive moral prototype. When using the pronoun *we*, politicians can include the addressee, which is a case of inclusive pronoun usage, or not, which is the exclusive pronoun use, like in the following two examples.

(17) The Turnbull government have met the promise *we* made to the Australian people to create over a million jobs, and *we* have done it earlier than *we* predicted.

Zimmerman, Trent - BILLS - Treasury Laws Amendment (Personal Income Tax Plan) Bill 2018 - Second Reading - House of Reps Hansard - 23 May 2018

(18) But, if people on the other side want to talk about conviction, I'd point you to the Labor shadow Treasurer and I'd point you to the shadow economics team, because *we* on this side of the chamber—and in the other place—have consistently brought forward bold ideas, well prior to an election, so that people understood what it was that *we* would take to them, and so that people understood how it was *we* would fund our promises.

McAllister, Jenny - BILLS - Treasury Laws Amendment (Enterprise Tax Plan No. 2) Bill 2017 - Second Reading - Senate Hansard - 20 August 2018

Examples 17 and 18 are expressed in the Australian parliament where all of those addressees who are not affiliated to the same party as a speaker or are not their political partners, are their political opponents, which makes using the exclusive *we* logical. The speaker in example 18 even pointed out to a physical difference between the opposing politicians thus deepening the feeling of separation.

#### 4.2.2. We vs they dichotomy

Any construction of *we* assume the existence of *they*, i.e. another entity that exists elsewhere. Druszak (2010) coined the term *othering* and considered it a discursive strategy to manage interpersonal group relationships. Contrasting us and the other, we point out the difference between two groups one of which (*they*) is inferior to the other and has negative attributes, which is of crucial importance when underscored in political settings.

(19) *We're* committed to handing a better deal onto the next generation. *We* want them to be able to secure an apprenticeship. *We* want them to be able to afford their first home. *We* want a cleaner environment for their future. A federal Labor government will bring universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds. *We'll* uncap university places and give every young Australian the opportunity to reach their full potential. *We* believe that a good education shouldn't be reliant on mum and dad's credit card. All Australians deserve a fair go. *We* on this side of the House are committed to focusing on the Australian people and strengthening our schools and hospitals. As a united team, Labor consistently delivers policies, cohesion, infrastructure and sound social values—building together, not tearing apart. That is the difference between *us* and the conservatives opposite.  
Mitchell, Rob - ADJOURNMENT - Victorian State Election - House of Reps Hansard - 26 November 2018

(20) The Labor Party does have some nerve. *We* still don't know what their climate policies are but *we* know *they've* got a track record. It's right up there with *their* track record on the economy - *we* know that that's a mess, and once again *we're* left to clean up the mess. *Their* legacy on climate change was failed policy after failed policy. *They* have no substance when it comes to policy - plenty of noise but no substance, and *we're* hearing that across the chamber now.