Discourse connectives in presidential debates: do politicians use them differently when arguing for or against an issue?

A research on the differences in the number and types of discourse connectives used by politicians when arguing for versus against a matter during presidential debates.

Radboud Universiteit

Puk Jansen
S1004928

Bachelor thesis
BA International Business Communication
Radboud University

Supervisor: dr. Jet Hoek
Second assessor: dr. Julija Baranova

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Abstract

Discourse connectives are used to establish coherence in texts. They are used in various genres, including persuasive communication. The use of connectives is subject to contextual matters. This research deals with connective use in persuasive communication, namely presidential debates. It is investigated to what extent the contextual variable of whether the politician is arguing for or against an issue affects the use of connectives. By analyzing the speech in six U.S. presidential debates, based on the Penn Discourse Treebank Annotation of Prasad et al. (2007), this research aims to measure the differences in number and types of connectives used. The results show that politicians use significantly more discourse connectives when they are arguing for an issue, compared to when they argue against an issue. Furthermore, the difference in types of connectives used is mostly driven by the class level *temporal,* which politicians used more when arguing for compared to arguing against an issue. The same is true for *expanding* and *conjunction* connectives. However, the *synchronous* and *comparing* connectives are used more when arguing against an issue than when arguing for an issue. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the use of connectives is subject to the politician's perspective on an issue. These results may suggest that politicians find it more necessary to explicitly formulate their statements when arguing for an issue, compared to arguing against a matter.

Key words

Discourse connectives**,** text coherence**,** persuasive communication, political discourse

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction

Discourse connectives are of great importance in our daily communication, both in written and spoken. Connectives can be defined as signalling words, which create a relationship between two linguistic segments (Fraser, 1999). The relationships they create play a fundamental role in ensuring text coherence. By establishing logical bridges between words, sentences and paragraphs, connectives help speakers, listeners, writers and readers to transmit and understand the correct and intended message. Not only are connectives used by all language users, they are also present in all genres of communication. An important genre of communication is persuasive communication, in which the sender of the message aims to convince the public. This is also the case for political discourse. Politicians want to convey their message, what they stand for, their political goals and their achievements and by doing so, they seek as much support as possible from their population. To achieve support, politicians often talk in public, where they give speeches or participate in debates. In these debates, political candidates argue with their opponents and hope to eventually persuade their public. Debates constitute an interesting category of political discourse. On the one hand, it is spontaneous spoken communication, but on the other hand the content of the debates is often well considered and strategically prepared. To get across the right message, clear and understandable expression is crucial (Shu'e & Yanqing, 2018). But what role exactly do connectives play in the communicative expressions from politicians? How do politicians use them and do they use them the same in different situations? More specifically, does their usage change when they are not arguing for something, but against an issue?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Connectives

Connectives, as the word already suggests, connect linguistic elements. Connectives may connect two clauses together which are followed right after each other, but they can also relate segments such as paragraphs and chapters. Examples of discourse connectives are *because*, *however*, *and*, *consequently* and *thus*. Each of these signals a different relationship between segments and has a different function, such as expanding, temporal, contrasting or causal (Prasad et al., 2007).

Because of this ability to establish relationships, connectives are helpful to the

speaker. Besides structuring the message in a logical way, they also assist in managing the flow of communication. However, they are not only beneficial to the speaker, the use of connectives has also been shown to facilitate the communication process for the listener. The relation that specific connectives express between various discourse segments, establish coherence in the reader's mind (Sanders, Spooren, & Noordman, 1992), leading to better text comprehension (Millis & Just, 1994). In other words, connectives lead to clarity and logicality for language receivers, making them better able to represent what is said in their mind.

Because of the use of connectives, language users are able to generate inferences. This was shown for causal connectives by Millis, Golding and Barker (1995). Their research showed that by using the connective *because*, participants were capable of relating two sentences together. This was not the case for clauses without causal connective, leading participants to not relating clauses to each other. The capability of relating clauses, according to Millis et al., contributes to the overall discourse comprehension. More specifically, it contributes to the appropriate understanding of discourses, since the use of connectives between sentences lead to a more homogeneous interpretation of participants (Segal, Duchan, & Scott, 1991). Put differently, using connectives leads to a better chance that readers arrive at the same interpretation of the text. If a speaker uses the wrong connectives or no connectives at all, the overall structure of the text is not right. The public might not understand the intended meaning. So, even though connectives are a tiny part of communication, they have a great impact on how the listener interprets the texts.

Furthermore, texts with connectives are easier and more effortless to read, process and understand (Ben-Anath, 2005). Sentences which contain connectives demand less capacity from the brain, because they are read faster opposed to sentences without connectives (Haberlandt, 1982). In addition, Sanders and Noordman (2000) showed that also the type of connective influences processing. Their experimental study showed that a connective indicating a problem-solution structure, such as *therefore*, will cause faster text processing than enumeration connectives, such as *in addition*.

However, it may be important to note that not all studies have found positive effects, or any results at all, of the use of connectives on text processing, see Koda (2008) for a discussion to point this out.

2.2 Connective use in persuasive communication

The use of connectives is thus related to many advantages in text processing, which might be

why they are used in all different kinds of discourse genres. Most of the existing research focuses on connective use in informative texts (Kamalski, Lentz, Sanders, & Zwaan, 2008). However, this present paper focuses on a different type of text, namely persuasive texts.

The role of language in persuasion processes is widely acknowledged by academics and various studies report on the function and effects of language in persuasive communication, such as that specific framing of issues by politicians but also by news media can influence the politic attitudes and opinions of the public (Nelson & Oxley, 1999). By framing, communicators indicate how the public should think about an issue, which influences their beliefs. For example, naming the Patient Protection and Affordable Care act ''Obamacare'' suggests a certain point of view that is called a frame. Rhetorical questions are another aspect of language that is found to have an effect on persuasion, which is that it causes listeners to process the message more thorough and it leads to greater counter argumentation (Blankenship & Craig, 2006). Moreover, the use of so-called extreme language, which intensifies statements (e.g. *extremely*, *very*, and *wonderful*) also increases message processing and therefore may indirectly be responsible for attitude changes (Craig & Blankenship, 2011).

There is also research that combines the described concepts and focuses both on persuasive communication and the use of connectives. Kamalski et al. (2008) investigate whether connectives cause a so-called forewarning effect. In other words, does the use of connectives set off an alarm, causing the public to be aware of the persuasive nature of the text or speech? If this is the case, the forewarning effect might lead to resistance and the public is less likely to be persuaded. The researchers differentiated between subjective and objective connectives. Connectives are labelled as objective when they are prototypically used to report facts, whereas they are labelled as subjective when they are prototypically used in relations that involves a speaker's own view and opinions. Results showed that readers experience the forewarning effect when subjective connectives are used, but not in the case of objective connectives. As a result, texts containing objective connectives appeared to be more persuasive than the ones with subjective connectives. Also, the use of objective connectives was shown to be more persuasive than the use of no connectives. Thus, this paper clearly shows an effect of language use on persuasion and indicates that careful word choice, specifically connective use, *"*can influence the power of a text*"* (p. 571).

2.3 Connective use in political discourse

The power of a text is exactly what counts in persuasive communication. The present study focuses on a specific sub-genre of persuasive communication, which is political discourse. Political discourse is concerned with "formal/informal political contexts and political actors . . . , [such as] politicians, political institutions, governments, political media and political supporters operating in political environments to achieve political goals" (Wilson, 2003, p. 398).

Successful communication can be seen as a prerequisite for persuasion. By the use of discourse connectives, political actors produce messages in a more structured and clear way, improving their communication strategy. This strategy is aimed at persuading the public. To increase persuasion, politicians often use connectives (Shu'e & Yanqing, 2018).

One important feature of political discourse, if not of all types of discourses, is noted by Van Dijk (1997). He takes an interactional point of view on discourse analysis, stating that not only the "actors" (p. 12) take place in discourse, but also the recipients. In the case of political discourse, the actors are the politicians and the recipients are citizens who listen as a public to the politician.

Another feature of political discourse is that it often includes complicated topics. When addressing difficult topics, explicitness and use of connectives have a positive impact on comprehension. This was shown by the study of Marshall and Glock (1978), who compared the recall of a text in which connectives where explicitly stated and a text in which connectives where implicit and had to be inferred by the reader. Explicit connectives lead to better recall, which "contributes to the comprehension process" (p. 50). Because politics include difficult topics of which the public may have little prior knowledge (Popkin, 1994), such as taxes, connectives seem important in political communication. Furthermore, politicians draw the listener's attention to the main points when using connectives. To summarize, connectives have a positive impact on comprehension, recall and attention, which are prerequisites for persuasion and thus are very important for a political debate. It means that the audience will better be able to follow, to keep up and to remember the debate.

While political speech has gained a lot of academic attention (Bayram, 2010; Wang, 2010; Bathia, 2006; Persada & Syahrudin, 2018; Furko, 2017), the use of connectives in specific is not widely covered in the literature (Shu'e & Yanqing, 2018). One of the few researchers that investigated the use of connectives by politicians is Ismail (2012). According to Ismail, politicians use connectives as a tactic tool to get across their intended message. By

analyzing the markers used in two of Barack Obama's speeches, he concludes that discourse markers are used to influence the nation. One important category of these discourse markers are the so-called logical markers. The main function of logical markers is to ensure coherence. It is a different word for the discourse connectives that this present study analyses. Logical markers contribute to the persuasiveness of the discourse. They do so by presenting the ideas of the politician in a structured and coherent way.

Studies show that the use of discourse connectives in political discourse can be influenced by various variables. First, the use of connectives by political actors may differ because of their different cultural backgrounds (Zand-Moghadam & Bikineh, 2014), which may be attributed to the fact that members of specific cultures have their specific collective knowledge and use of a system of language use. The language user may have learned some connectives through the socialization process in their culture and may only be familiar with these specific connectives. Secondly, the situation in which the discourse is performed influences the use of connectives. There is found a difference in use between spontaneous discourse and mediatised genres (Furkó & Abuczki, 2014). Concretely, in televised political interviews connectives related to question and answer speech acts are more often used than in spontaneous talk, whereas the latter contains more connectives related to explaining, specifying and expanding the arguments. The use of connectives can thus be influenced, for instance by cultural background and situation.

Taking these results into account, it can be argued that the use of connectives by political actors depends on contextual matters, such as culture and situational differences. If this is correct, it would be interesting to see what other variables may also have an impact. For instance, what happens to the use of connectives by politicians if the nature of their message is different? More specifically, an interesting question could be what happens to the use of discourse connectives when politicians are not arguing for something, but instead are arguing against a phenomenon? This present study aims to further investigate the utilization of connectives by politicians and to answer the above stated question. The results are a contribution to the knowledge on connectives in general and on the role they play in persuasion and political discourse.

2.4 Research questions

Following from this, the research question that is proposed is:

RQ: To what extent do politicians change their use of connectives when arguing for versus arguing against an issue?

This research question consists of two sub questions:

SQ1: to what extent do politicians use more connectives when they are arguing for versus arguing against an issue?
SQ2: to what extent do politicians use different types of connectives when arguing for or against an issue?

The possibly different number of connectives used may be relevant to understanding when politicians feel the need to be more explicit in their reasoning and structure their communication more profoundly, either when arguing for or against an issue. In addition, the possible variation in use of different types of connectives gives insight into which semantic structures politicians use more often when arguing for versus against an issue, for instance explanations, contrasts or comparisons.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus

To answer the research question, a corpus analysis was conducted. Transcripts of presidential and vice-presidential debates from the U.S., between democratic and republican politicians, were analyzed. The corpus consists of six debates and was selected from the database as selected by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD, n.d.). This organisation gathers election debates between leading candidates for the offices of president and vice-president of the United States. The debates in the corpus belong to presidential and vice-presidential debates from the 2004 (in September and October), 2012 (in October) and 2016 (in September and October) general elections in the USA. Since Barack Obama and Joe Biden participated in both the presidential debate of 2008 and 2012, the choice was made to not include the debates of 2008. This way, the language use of Obama and Biden was not analyzed twice. Considering that rhetoric style, syntax and word choice are to some extent dependent on who is speaking, more variation in speakers and not coding one speaker multiple times makes sure that possible differences are not biased by speakers. This is also why debates of several election years were analyzed instead of more presidential debates from one year, since debates from one year all include the same speakers.

The corpus contains six debates in total, two from 2004, two from 2012 and two from 2016. There is one vice-presidential debate and one presidential debate for each year. Researchers coded the entire debate, but differentiated between the politicians' contributions and the mediator's statements. Since this research focuses on the speech of politicians and not on the mediator's speech, utterances from the host were coded as zero and were not included in the analysis. In addition, small-talk, which mostly occurred in the beginning and end of the debate, was not seen as part of the debate and was coded as neutral. Therefore, this was not analyzed. However, stories and anecdotes, which might appear as small-talk, but that were actually used to clarify the politician's opinion in the debate, were labelled as part of the argumentation and were therefore coded. The corpus was analyzed per speech act. A speech act is an utterance which independently has a function in a conversation, for instance an answer to a question (University of Minnesota, n.d). All debates were divided per speech act, following the division of speech act as made by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD, n.d). As Table 1 shows, the amount of words per debate ranged from 14.934 to 18.054 words.

Table 1. Descriptives corpus

Year of the debate	Type of debate	Speaker 1 (Republican candidate)	Speaker 2 (Democrat candidate)	Total number of words
2004	Vice-presential debate	Bush	Kerry	17.638
2004	Presidential debate	Cheney	Edwards	14.934
2012	Vice-presential debate	Romney	Obama	16.938
2012	Presidential debate	Ryan	Biden	16.812
2016	Vice-presential debate	Trump	Clinton	18.054
2016	Presidential debate	Pence	Kaine	17.194

Note. The counting of words started when the mediator started talking and do not include the practical information with which the transcripts begin, for example the location of the debate

3.2 Procedure

The corpus was coded for various variables. First, there was coded general information about the politicians and the debate, including the name of the politician who was talking and the year in which the debate was held. Also, the politician's political view was coded. More specifically, it was coded whether the politician is a Democrat or a Republican.

Secondly, the independent variable of this research was coded, which is the perspective of the politician formulated in each speech act. The variable perspective was assigned one of three codes (arguing for, arguing against or neutral). Since the research question focuses on the difference in connective usage when arguing in favour or against an issue, the neutral category is not relevant. Therefore, this category has been left out in the analysis. To clarify when a speech act was either coded as arguing for or against, the following examples are provided. Example A was coded as arguing for, whereas Example B was coded as arguing against.

> *Example A   TRUMP: First of all, I agree, and a lot of people even within my own party want to give certain rights to people on watch lists and no-fly lists.*

> *Example B   KAINE: That is absolutely false and you know that.*

Finally, the connectives used in the speech acts were coded and were assigned to

different categories of types of connectives. The connectives were assigned to categories based on the Penn Discourse Treebank 2.0 Annotation Manual (Prasad et al., 2007, Appendix A). The PDTB 2.0 is a guideline to annotate connectives based on a research on the Wall Street Journal. In this research, connectives have been assigned to senses. These senses are organized hierarchically, as shown in Figure 1 (Prasad et al., 2007, p. 27). The PDTB works with different sense levels, which are the class level (temporal, contingency, comparison and expansion), types and subtypes.

For the coding of this present study, Table 9 was created (see Appendix A), which is based on the PDTB. The sense chosen for each connective is the sense which most occurred in the PDTB database for that specific connective. Coding only included sense levels one and two, which are the class level and types. The class levels are to some extent still general, which is why coders chose to specify (if possible) sense of the connective by coding the adequate type instead of class level. In cases where multiple types occurred (almost) equally often in the PDTB, the connective was coded to the class level because that covers all types. As a result of this method, coders only had to specify further the sense when they were confident to do so (Prasad et al., 2007). In addition, there are some connectives (indicated in **bold** writing in Table 9, Appendix B) which could have been assigned to multiple different senses. In case of ambiguity in the list, at least one other coder looked at it and coders came to agreement.

Since this study investigates connectives, words were only coded when they in fact served as a connective. For instance, if a politician said *men and women* or *that took so long*, the words *and* and *so* do not function as connective and therefore were not coded in these instances.
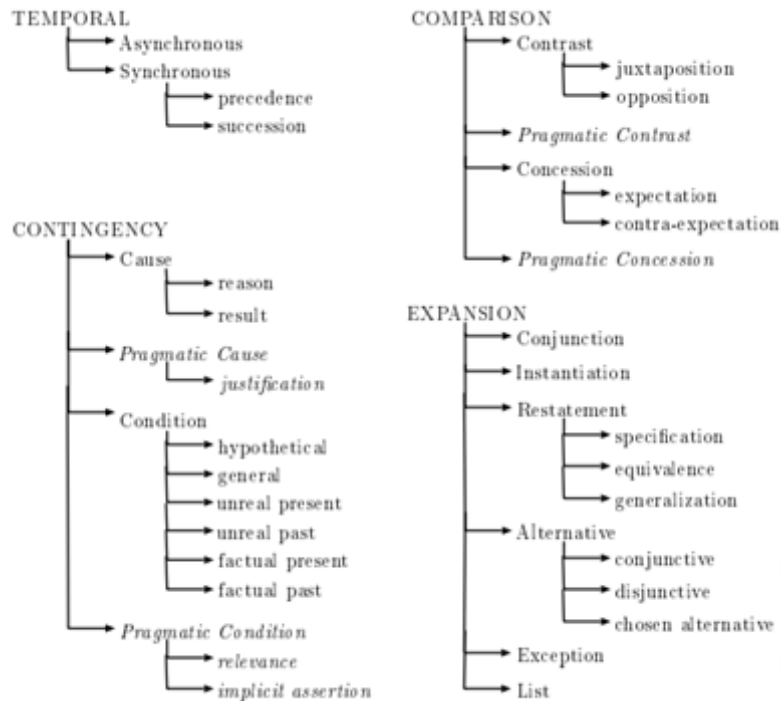
TEMPORAL
→ Asynchronous
→ Synchronous
→ precedence
→ succession

CONTINGENCY
→ Cause
→ reason
→ result
→ *Pragmatic Cause*
→ *justification*
→ Condition
→ hypothetical
→ general
→ unreal present
→ unreal past
→ factual present
→ factual past
→ *Pragmatic Condition*
→ *relevance*
→ *implicit assertion*

COMPARISON
→ Contrast
→ juxtaposition
→ opposition
→ *Pragmatic Contrast*
→ Concession
→ expectation
→ contra-expectation
→ *Pragmatic Concession*

EXPANSION
→ Conjunction
→ Instantiation
→ Restatement
→ specification
→ equivalence
→ generalization
→ Alternative
→ conjunctive
→ disjunctive
→ chosen alternative
→ Exception
→ List

Figure 1. **Hierarchy of senses (Prasad et al., 2007)**

The corpus was coded by a team of five coders, who are all students of the bachelor International Business Communication at Radboud University, Nijmegen.

Since the variable *perspective*, with categories in favour, against or neutral, involves a certain degree of subjectivity, a part of each debate was coded by a first and a second annotator for this variable. The first coder annotated the entire debate. A second annotator coded the first part (70 speech acts), after which coding was compared. This resulted in five pairs of coders whose coding was compared. This was done to ensure intercoder reliability. The degree of reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa. The intercoder reliability was considered as acceptable when Cohen's Kappa is .70 or more and it was considered good when it is .80 or more. Table 2 shows all Cohen's Kappa scores between all the coders. All coders agreed with each other to a sufficient degree. After establishing agreement, the coders continued coding individually.

Table 2. Interrater reliability between coders

Coders	Degree of agreement	K	p
One and two	Acceptable	.71	< .001
Two and three	Good	.83	< .001
Three and four	Acceptable	.77	< .001
Four and five	Acceptable	.75	< .001
Five and one	Good	.81	< .001

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the variables in this research.
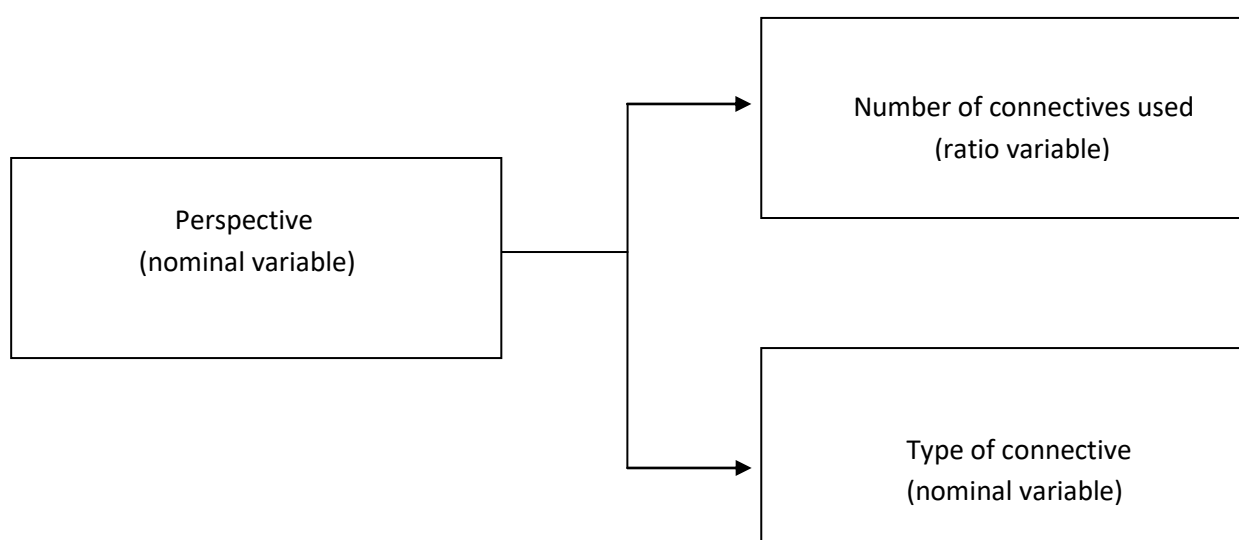
Figure **2. Analytical model variables**

3.3 Final data set

Table 3 shows the descriptives of all connectives in the speech acts of all debates. In total, 2.246 (37.7%) connectives were not included in the analysis because they were coded as mediator, neutral/unclear or contained coding errors. This means that the final data set consisted of 3.713 (62.3%) connectives, of which 1.707 (46%) were coded as arguing for and 2.006 (54%) were coded as arguing against.

Table 3. Descriptives connectives in speech acts

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Arguing for	1.707	28.6	46.0	46.0
	Arguing against	2.006	33.7	54.0	100.0
	Total	3.713	62.3	100.0	
Missing	Mediator	620	10.4		
	Neutral/unclear	1.424	23.9		
	Coding error	202	3.4		
	Total	2.246	37.7		
Total		5.959	100.0		

3.4 Statistical treatment

To analyse whether politicians use significantly more or less connectives when arguing for instead of against, the number of connectives was first standardized per number of words. More specifically, the number of connectives in a speech act was divided by the number of words of a speech act and was multiplied by hundred. The percentages that resulted from this were compared in an independent samples t-test, with the variables perspective (levels: for and against) and number of connectives. Next, to analyse the types of connectives used, two Chi-square tests were used. For the first Chi-square test only the class level of connectives was used. The second Chi-square test analysed the difference in use of connectives using the level of types. The types *contingency*, *pragmatic cause* and *concession* were left out of analysis because of the fact that they occurred less than five times in all for and against speech acts. These infrequent types are disregarded because possible differences could be based on coincidence.

4. Results

4.1 Number of connectives used

The independent samples t-test showed a significant difference in the number of connectives used between perspectives (arguing for vs. arguing against)(t (1674.75) = 2.76, p = .006). When arguing for an issue, politicians used more connectives (M = 4.90, SD = 4.32) than when they were arguing against an issue (M = 4.33, SD = 4.41).

4.2 Types of connectives used

4.2.1 Class levels

First, it was analysed whether there was a difference in types of connectives used, analysing only the class levels.

A Chi-square test (see table 4) showed a significant relation between perspective and types of connective used (χ^2 (3) = 22.17, p < .001). Politicians used significantly more connectives which belong to the category *expansion* when arguing for an issue (50.8%), compared to when they were arguing against an issue (44.3%). On the contrary, politicians used significantly more connectives which belong to the category *temporal* when arguing against an issue (18.4%), than when they were arguing for an issue (14.0%). The same is true for the class level *comparison*. More connectives which belong to this category were used when arguing against an issue (14.2%), compared to when arguing for an issue (11.4%).

Based on the Standardised Residuals, the association between perspective and types of connective used is mainly driven by the class level *temporal* (value outside of +/- 1.96).

Table 4. **Chi-square Class level * For or Against**

| | | | For or Against | | |
			For	Against	Total
Class level	Temporal	N (% within For or Against)	**216** (14.0%)	**311** (18.4%)	527 (16.3%)
		Standardised Residual	-2.3	2.2	
	Contingency	N (% within For or Against)	368 (23.8%)	389 (23.0%)	757 (23.4%)
		Standardised Residual	.0	-.3	
	Comparison	N (% within For or Against)	**176** (11.4%)	**240** (14.2%)	416 (12.9%)
		Standardised Residual	-1.6	1.5	
	Expansion	N (% within For or Against)	**786** (50.8%)	**749** (44.3%)	1,535 (47.4%)
		Standardised Residual	1.9	-1.9	

Note. The counts indicated in **bold writing** differ significantly from each other at the .05 level within For or Against categories.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the percentages which belong to the four class levels temporal, contingency, comparison and expansion for either arguing for or arguing against.
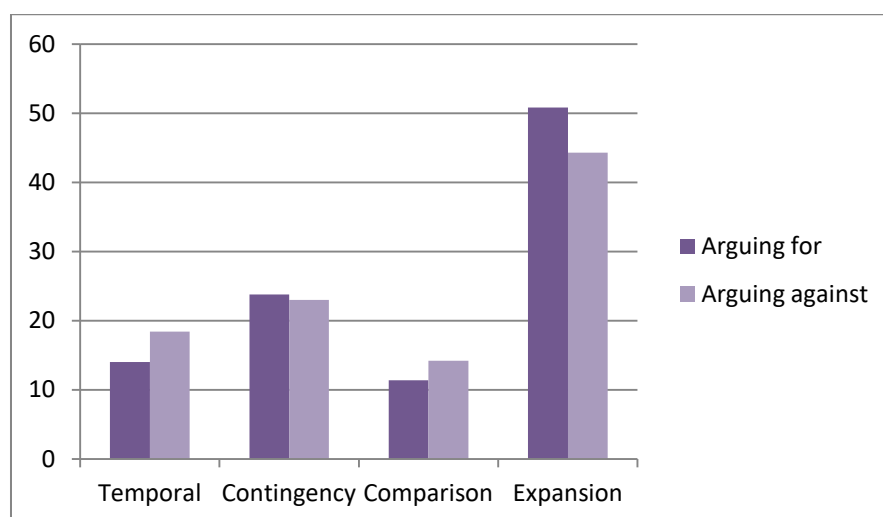

Figure 4. Proportion of connectives per class level used when arguing for versus arguing against an issue

4.2.2 Types

Secondly, an analysis was done to further specify the differences in types of connectives used, using the level of types. As mentioned before, the infrequent types *contingency*, *pragmatic cause* and *concession* are left out of analysis.

A Chi-square test (see table 5) showed a significant relation between perspective and types of connective used (χ^2 (11) = 66.15, *p* < .001). In arguing for speech acts there were used significantly more connectives which belonged to the type *conjunction* (42.4%) than there were in arguing against speech acts (34.3%). Contrasting, politicians used more *synchronous* connectives when arguing against an issue (14.3%), compared to arguing for an issue (12.1%).

　　　　Based on the Standardised Residuals, the association between perspective and types of connective used is mainly driven by the type level *conjunction* (value outside of +/- 1.96).

Table 5. **Chi-square Type of connective * For or Against**

			For or Against		
			For	Against	Total
Type of connective	No connective	N (% within For or Against)	157 (9.2%)	315 (15.8%)	472 (12.7%)
		Standardized Residual	-4.1	3.8	
	Temporal	N (% within For or Against)	10 (0.6%)	24 (1.2%)	34 (0.9%)
		Standardized Residual	-1.4	1.3	
	Comparison	N (% within For or Against)	15 (0.9%)	10 (0.5%)	25 (0.7%)
		Standardized Residual	1.0	-1.0	
	Synchronous	N (% within For or Against)	**206** (12.1%)	**287** (14.3%)	493 (13.3%)
		Standardized Residual	-1.4	1.2	
	Cause	N (% within For or Against)	280 (16.5%)	284 (14.2%)	564 (15.2%)

	Standardized Residual	1.3	-1.2	
Condition	N (% within For or Against)	87 (5.1%)	104 (5.2%)	191 (5.2%)
	Standardized Residual	-.1	-.1	
Contrast	N (% within For or Against)	161 (9.5%)	227 (11.3%)	388 (10.5%)
	Standardized Residual	-1.3	1.2	
Conjunction	N (% within For or Against)	**722** (42.4%)	**685** (34.3%)	1,407 (38.0%)
	Standardized Residual	3.0	-2.7	
Instantiation	N (% within For or Against)	5 (0.3%)	3 (0.1%)	8 (0.2%)
	Standardized Residual	.7	-.6	
Restatement	N (% within For or Against)	12 (0.7%)	10 (0.5%)	22 (0.6%)
	Standardized Residual	.6	-.5	
Alternative	N (% within For or Against)	43 (2.5%)	50 (2.5%)	93 (2.5%)
	Standardized Residual	.0	.0	
Exception	N (% within For or Against)	4 (0.2%)	1 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)
	Standardized Residual	1.1	-1.0	

Note. The counts indicated in **bold writing** differ significantly from each other at the .05 level within For or Against categories.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the percentages which belong to the type levels for either arguing for speech acts or arguing against speech acts.
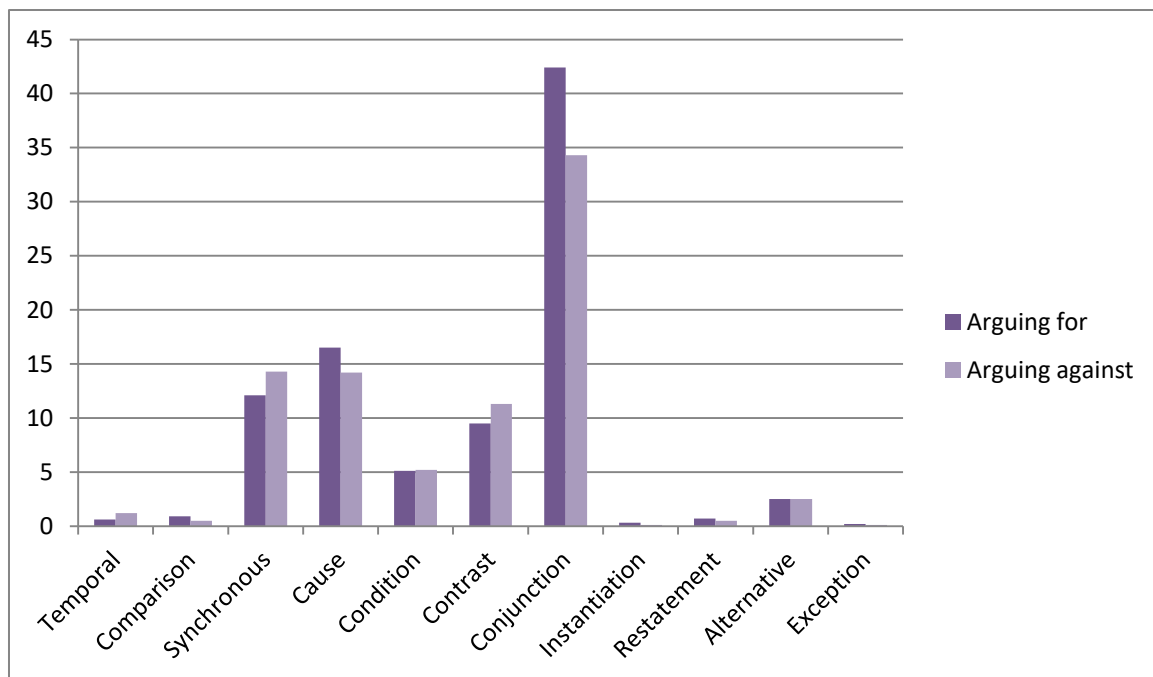
Figure **5. Proportion of connectives per type level used when arguing for versus arguing against an issue**

5. Conclusion and discussion

Based on the statistical analyses presented above, it can be concluded that politicians use discourse connectives differently when arguing for an issue, compared to when arguing against an issue. More specifically, they use relatively more connectives when they are arguing for an issue than when they are arguing against an issue.

In addition, there are also some differences in which type of connectives politicians when either arguing for or arguing against an issue. The difference in types of connectives used is mostly driven by the class level *temporal,* of which the connectives were more used when politicians were arguing against a matter than when arguing for a matter. Also, the *synchronous* and *comparing* connectives are used more when arguing against an issue than arguing for an issue. On the contrary, when arguing for an issue, politicians use more *expanding* and *conjunction* connectives, compared to when arguing against an issue.

These results are in line with and add to the studies of Furkó and Abuczki (2014) and Zand-Moghadam and Bikineh (2014), who found that the use of connectives is subject to contextual variables. Not only is it now subject to cultural backgrounds and genre, it is also affected by the perspective of a politician on the issue discussed. The difference in number of connectives used between arguing for and arguing against speech acts may suggest that politicians find it more necessary to explicitly formulate, help the receiver understand better and guide the listener more trough their statements (Ben-Anath, 2005; Segal, Duchan, & Scott, 1991; Marshall & Glock, 1978) when arguing for an issue than when they are arguing against an issue. It might suggest that it is easier to argue against an issue than it is to argue for an issue. This could also be why politicians use more *expanding* and *conjunction* connectives when arguing for an issue, which they use to elaborate or expand on their main argumentation point.

There are some limitations to this study. First of all, coding was subjective and subject to mistakes. The subjectivity was controlled and limited by double coding the important variable perspective. Furthermore, there were some ambiguities in coding for the variable type of connective. These ambiguous connectives were discussed by at least two coders, who then agreed on the coding. However, unfortunately coding was not without mistakes, since 3.4% of the data was missing. This may have affected the results.

In addition, something can be said about the materials that have been analysed, which are presidential debates. With respect to the classification to written or spoken communication, debates constitute a strange genre. Obviously, debates include spoken

communication. However, in most of the cases the text is prepared. In the case of presidential debates, it is not unusual that a professional copywriter prepares the debate and writes the speeches for the politicians (Einhorn, 1982). Thus, the materials analysed in this study are not as spontaneous as most spoken communication. As a consequence, it might be difficult to generalize the findings to either spoken or written communication.

This research clearly illustrates a difference in the use of connectives between arguing for and against an issue and it raises the question, as Shu'e and Yanqing (2018) argue, whether the use of connectives indeed increases persuasion? Further research is needed to determine if this is the case and might look into whether the speech acts with more connectives (the arguing for speech acts) were indeed more persuasive.

Finally, this study only used the first two levels of the Penn Discourse Treebank 2.0 Annotation Manual, because the corpus was too small to specify in such detail. For future research, it could be interesting to specify the differences found this research more, using a larger corpus.

To summarize, this study provides insight into the connective use by politicians and shows that this use changes when their perspective on a topic changes. The results of this study contribute to the linguistic knowledge of connective use, especially in persuasive genres. As the persuasiveness of communication is of great value to political actors, this knowledge should be taken into account by politicians and copywriters. Furthermore, these insights may also be interesting for the listening public of politicians. The next time listening to a politician trying to win over their audience, it might be worth it to listen closely to the words they say and gain insight into their communication strategy.

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Appendix A – Connectives coded to their sense

Table 6 shows the sense that coders annotated the connectives for.

Table 6. Connectives annotated to their sense

Connective:	Coded as:
Accordingly	Cause
Additionally	Conjunction
After	Synchronous
Afterward	Synchronous
Also	Conjunction
Alternatively	Alternative
Although	COMPARISON
And	Conjunction
As	Synchronous
As a result	Cause
As an alternative	Alternative
As if	EXPANSION
As long as	- Condition - Synchronous
As soon as	Synchronous
As though	- Comparison - Restatement
As well	Conjunction
Because	Cause
Before	Synchronous
Before and after	Asynchronous
Besides	Conjunction
But	Contrast
By comparison	Contrast
By contrast	Contrast
By then	Synchronous
Consequently	Cause
Conversely	Contrast

Earlier	Synchronous
Either..or	Alternative
Else	Alternative
Except	Exception
Finally	- Conjunction
	- Synchronous
For	Cause
For example	Instantiation
For instance	Instantiation
Further	Conjunction
Furthermore	Conjunction
Hence	Cause
However	Contrast
If	Condition
If and when	Condition
In addition	Conjunction
In contrast	Contrast
In fact	- Conjunction
	- Restatement
In other words	Restatement
In particular	- Instantiation
	- Restatement
In short	Restatement
In sum	Restatement
In the end	EXPANSION
In turn	Synchronous
Indeed	- Conjunction
	- Restatement
Insofar as	Cause
Instead	Alternative
Later	Synchronous
Lest	- Alternative
	- Condition

Likewise	Conjunction
Meantime	Synchronous
Meanwhile	- Conjunction
	- Synchronous
Moreover	Conjunction
Much as	COMPARISON
Neither..nor	EXPANSION
Nevertheless	COMPARISON
Next	Synchronous
Nonetheless	COMPARISON
Nor	Conjunction
Now that	Cause
On the contrary	Contrast
On the one hand...on the other hand	Contrast
On the other hand	Contrast
Once	Synchronous
Or	Alternative
Otherwise	Alternative
Overall	Restatement
Plus	Conjunction
Previously	Synchronous
Rather	- EXPANSION
	- Contrast
Regardless	Concession
Separately	Conjunction
Similarly	Conjunction
Simultaneous	Synchronous
Since	- Cause
	- Synchronous
So	Cause
So that	Cause
Specifically	Restatement
Still	- COMPARISON

	- TEMPORAL
Then	Synchronous
Thereafter	Synchronous
Thereby	Cause
Therefore	Cause
Though	COMPARISON
Thus	Cause
Till	Synchronous
Ultimately	Synchronous
Unless	Alternative
Until	Synchronous
When	Synchronous
When and if	- Synchronous
	- Condition
Whereas	Contrast
While	- Contrast
	- Synchronous
Yet	- COMPARISON
	- TEMPORAL

Appendix B – statement of own work

Print and sign this *Statement of own work* form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as a hard copy to the first supervisor.

Student name: *Puk Jansen*

Student number: *51004928*

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

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