

**Delia Pop-Flanja**

**Communication  
for International Careers  
1**

**Presă Universitară Clujeană**

**Delia Pop-Flanja**

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for International Careers 1**

**Presa Universitară Clujeană**

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## INTRODUCTION

“We are stronger when we listen,  
and smarter when we share.”

Rania Al-Abdullah

The general objective of the course *Communication for International Careers 1* is to acquaint students with professional elements pertaining to written and oral communication in English, for the purpose of offering them the skills necessary to develop international careers. Some of the most important specific objectives are to develop the range of vocabulary utilized by students in the process of communicating, to increase students' adaptability to a wide range of communication situations and to develop practical abilities which are needed to participate in complex communication situations.

Are soft skills in general and communication skills in particular needed on the labour market? To address this question, we analysed several studies conducted by companies, European institutions and other relevant organizations, and we concluded that these skills are not only useful, but also insufficiently developed, particularly in the case of young graduates. A LinkedIn Talent Solutions report on the global talent trends for 2019 showed that 91% of the talent professionals surveyed considered that these skills are important trends to the future of recruitment and HR, scoring higher than work flexibility and pay transparency. Five skills listed as being in high demand are creativity, persuasion, collaboration,

adaptability and time management.<sup>1</sup> Another example is a study conducted by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), which showed that younger employees are less skilled in communication, teamwork, customer handling and problem solving than the older ones.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, it is important for higher education institutions to increase the employability of their graduates through the improvement of their communication skills, and we consider this practical and interactive course to be useful in this respect.

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<sup>1</sup> LinkedIn Talent Solutions, *2019 Global Talent Trends*, 2019, [https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/talent-solutions/resources/pdfs/global\\_talent\\_trends\\_2019\\_emea.pdf](https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/talent-solutions/resources/pdfs/global_talent_trends_2019_emea.pdf), accessed 20.04.2020, pp. 3-8.

<sup>2</sup> European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), *Skills, qualifications and jobs in the EU: the making of a perfect match? Evidence from Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey*. Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2015, [http://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/d0b7da52-9988-11e5-b3b7-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1](http://publications.europa.eu/resource/ellar/d0b7da52-9988-11e5-b3b7-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1), accessed 20.06.2020, p. 60.

# 1. AMBIGUITY AND POLYSEMY IN DISCOURSE

Clarity is generally considered as being an important aspect in delivering a speech and conveying a message. Nevertheless, there are situations when ambiguity is used as it better serves the purposes of the speaker or writer. This section focuses on the concepts of strategic ambiguity, multiple choice communication and doublespeak, and the usage of these communication strategies in professional, political, or institutional discourse. Taking into account the fact that transmitting information properly can be a challenge even for individuals acting on their own behalf, this process becomes even more difficult for supranational institutions.

## 1.1. KEY CONCEPTS

**Strategic ambiguity** is a notion that was introduced by Eric M. Eisenberg, an internationally recognized leader in the theory and practice of organizational communication and Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California, in an article published in 1984, *Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication*<sup>3</sup>. According to Eisenberg, the concept of an idyllic message is clearly deceiving, as clarity is not a characteristic of messages, but it is a relational variable, influenced by a series of factors such as the source, the message and the recipient of the message. In certain contexts, it is more convenient to omit certain contextual aspects and to make room for multiple interpretations by the recipients.<sup>4</sup>

According to Eisenberg, strategic ambiguity can contribute to the development of interpersonal relations within organizations, creating

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<sup>3</sup> Eisenberg, Eric M. "Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication", in Eric Eisenberg, *Strategic Ambiguities, Essays on Communication, Organization, and Identity*, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2007, pp. 3-24.

<sup>4</sup> Delia Pop-Flanjan, Roxana Maria Gâz, "Ambiguity in Intercultural Communication", in *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context*, vol. 4, nr. 1, Braşov: Henri Coandă Air Force Academy Publishing House. 2015: 145-149.

certain personal bonds between people that perceive messages in a similar way. To support this statement, Eisenberg gives the example of using jargon and nicknames. For those outside the organization, a speech that uses these elements may seem ambiguous and bizarre, but for those within, who understand the real meaning of the message, it is a reaffirmation of their belonging to that particular group.<sup>5</sup>

**Doublespeak** refers to “terms that are euphemisms (mild expressions designed to hide harsher or more direct ones), deliberately ambiguous (expressions designed to hide the truth), or actual inversions (outright lies which state the opposite of the truth).”<sup>6</sup> The term *doublespeak* is presented as having a more negative connotation than *strategic ambiguity*. According to Collins English Dictionary online, “if you refer to what someone says as doublespeak, you are criticizing them for presenting things in a way that is intended to hide the truth or give people the wrong idea.”<sup>7</sup>

**Political correctness (PC)** is a term used to refer to “language that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation.” The term dates back to the period after the Russian Revolution of 1917 and it had the connotation of “adherence to the policies and principles of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”. In the 70s and 80s it was used to refer to “the extremism of some left-wing issues” and in the 90s it was used to oppose “the rise of liberal left-wing curriculum and teaching methods on university and college campuses in the United States”. Political correctness critics consider it as a form of censorship or that it sometimes perceives offensive language where none exists.<sup>8</sup>

**Equivocation** is another alternative term used for the concepts above, with a focus on more interactive means of communication, such as political

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Eisenberg, 2007: 12 *apud* Delia Pop-Flanja, Roxana Maria Gâz, *Ambiguity in Intercultural Communication*, RCIC, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Makia Freeman, “Top 20 Modern Doublespeak Terms to Be Aware of”, published in *The Freedom Articles* on 31 March 2016, <https://thefreedomarticles.com/top-20-modern-doublespeak-terms/>, accessed 01.03.2018.

<sup>7</sup> Collins Dictionary, online version, definition of the term *doublespeak*, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/doublespeak>, accessed 03.09.2020.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Roper, for *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-correctness>, accessed 05.07.2020.

interviews. "Equivocation is a mode of speech adopted when the speaker wishes to avoid a direct answer to a question but is unwilling to resort to telling a lie. The result is a mode of speech at least partly designed to obscure communication rather than achieve clarity. However, determining what is equivocation is complex, not least as it can show attributes close to that expected when making a nuanced argument that takes account of lack of information or current controversies about the issue. This suggests the equivocation is much a product of how a given speech is interpreted by the observer."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mohammed Alhuthali, "Equivocation in Political Discourse: How Do We Know When It Is Happening?", in *International Journal of English Linguistics*; Vol. 8, No. 6; Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2018, <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/75873>, accessed on 23.09.2020.

## 1.2. AMBIGUITY IN THE EU INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE<sup>10</sup>

The EU institutional discourse is challenging due to the complexity and diversity of the recipients and to the wide impact that it has in the public sphere. We are going to present three categories of discursive ambiguity, in terms of the three main purposes that we have identified:

- ambiguity to avoid assigning blame or responsibility;
- ambiguity to draw cautious conclusions and make cautious predictions;
- ambiguity for inclusion and to encourage participation.

### **Ambiguity to avoid assigning blame or responsibility**

For the purpose of exemplifying this role of subtle accountability, we are going to use a press release of the European Commission on Giving Citizens a Say: Commission Report on European Citizens' Initiatives:

“The fact that two Citizens' Initiatives have gone through the full process shows that the Regulation establishing the ECI has been fully implemented. However, the report acknowledges that there is still room to improve the process and identifies a number of possible issues for further discussion with stakeholders and institutions. [...] Statements of support have been received from citizens in all 28 EU Member States. However, there are situations where some citizens have not been able to support Initiatives due to diverging Member States' requirements. The Commission is involved in constructive discussions with the Member States concerned to address these issues and has adopted measures today to facilitate a resolution.”<sup>11</sup> (European Commission, 31 March 2015)

The speech seems to be more precise when it expresses positive outcomes, but more ambiguous when tackling less positive ones. The fact that there is still room to improve the process has the aim of highlighting

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<sup>10</sup> This section is adapted from Delia Pop-Flanjan, Roxana Maria Gâz, *op.cit.*

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, Press release: *Giving Citizens a Say: Commission Report on European Citizens' Initiatives*, Brussels, 31 March 2015, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-4729\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4729_en.htm), accessed 21.04.2015.

what has been accomplished, instead of what was not implemented. The purpose of the speech is not only of transmitting information, but also of generating action. The aim could be to make the people or institutions that are in charge of these aspects to solve some of the problems that occurred, without clearly assigning responsibilities. Therefore, ambiguity is not only strategic, but we can consider it to be inevitable, as the purpose is not to particularize but to generalize, in order to present a report on a situation. The measures to facilitate resolution, although not clearly stated at this point, are presented as potential generators of win-win situations, where all member states are responsible and where all can benefit from the outcomes.

### **Ambiguity to draw cautious conclusions and make cautious predictions**

Let us examine part of a report provided by Policy Department A for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, which summarizes the results of the project Wage Dispersion in the European Union:

“Although this share has been rather stable in the years before 2010, it may have increased due to the adverse economic developments caused by the Euro area debt crisis, as fiscal consolidation programmes launched in several countries are likely to have limited employment opportunities in the short and medium run [...] Finally, the gender dimension may be among the driving forces of inequality. [...] Gender-based inequalities are further enforced by the fact that women are more often engaged in part-time work than men. In this regard, the creation of more full-time work opportunities for females might act as an instrument to reduce the difference between certain percentiles of monthly earnings. [...] Wage setting institutions may affect wage inequality, but probably not instantaneously”.<sup>12</sup>

In the text above, we can notice the use of modifiers such as *rather*, *likely*, *probably*, or of modal verbs of possibility, such as *may*, that express

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<sup>12</sup> Christian Dreger; Enrique López-Bazo; Raul Ramos; Vicente Royuela; Jordi Suriñach, *Wage and Income Inequality in the European Union*, published by the European Parliament, Policy Department A for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, January 2015, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536294/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)536294\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/536294/IPOL_STU(2015)536294_EN.pdf) accessed 25.04.2015.

cautiousness when making predictions or when making affirmations about the factors that might have led to complex social, political or economic consequences. As the report tackles sensitive topics such as inequality, incomes and gender, it is not advisable to make clear cause-effect affirmations, and a slight ambiguity is not only a strategy, but also advisable and realistic.

### **Ambiguity for inclusion and to encourage participation**

In order to illustrate the inclusive usage of ambiguity, we can analyse a section of a speech given by Neven Mimica, the commissioner in charge of International Cooperation and Development, at the Conference *European Responsibility in a Global World*:

“We stand before a unique opportunity to shape the development agenda for generations to come and to re-define the way the global community works together. The European Union - both the European institutions and the EU Member States - have a great responsibility in making this opportunity a success. [...] I consider it essential that politicians and citizens use this momentum to hold informed discussions on what more Europe can do to make the world a fairer place, ensure social justice and eradicate poverty.”<sup>13</sup>(European Commission, 26 March 2015)

The notion of *fairness* can be considered ambiguous, as it is perceived differently, and how a group or an individual perceives fairness will justify their actions, regardless of how they may impact others. Let us take the example of similar wages for similar positions. For some employees, this could seem like a fair treatment, but to others, that feel they put more effort and they contribute more to the welfare of the institution or of the company that they work for, the same algorithm can be perceived as unfair. Nevertheless, concepts such as *fairness* or *social justice* are often included in speeches, as they have a positive connotation, even if they are interpreted differently.

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Speech of Neven Mimica, Commissioner in charge of International cooperation and Development, Conference “European Responsibility in a Global World”, Deutscher Bundestag (Berlin, 26 March 2015), [http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/mimica/announcements/conference-european-responsibility-global-world-deutscher-bundestag-berlin-26-march-2015\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/mimica/announcements/conference-european-responsibility-global-world-deutscher-bundestag-berlin-26-march-2015_en) , accessed 30.04.2015.

The commissioner adds that:

“We stand at a critical point in the process, with the post-2015 negotiations intensifying. The EU will play an invaluable bridge-building role.”<sup>14</sup> (European Commission, 26 March 2015)

This role of building bridges is again slightly ambiguous, and can be interpreted as building bridges between member states, between citizens, between member and non-member states, building economic, cultural or political bridges.

She also states that:

“The Union’s clear message is that financing for development [...] needs to ensure mobilisation and effective use of domestic resources. This includes responsible public finance management, preventing tax avoidance and evasion, fight against illicit financial outflows, introducing financial transactions tax and other innovative taxation. But we must not only ask others in the developing world to improve tax fairness and transparency. We must start with that at home in Europe.”<sup>15</sup> (European Commission, 26 March 2015)

This part of the speech encourages participation. It is interesting to see how “taxation”, which is normally perceived in a negative way, is associated with the term “innovative”, to give it a positive connotation, as financing has a development purpose, without clearly specifying what taxation or what development is to be expected. Moreover, how domestic resources are used effectively is again an aspect that is perceived and quantified differently.

Ambiguity should be regarded more than as a lack of conveying a singular, clear message, as a capacity of producing multiple understandings, a way of reconciling the diversity of the individuals and the institutions envisaged. Ethical aspects are, in many cases, difficult to be established, as they depend on the intention of the author, but strategic ambiguity should not be associated with unethical behaviour, as even a very clear message can have unethical intentions behind it.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem.*

Similar perceptions of ambiguous messages give individuals the feeling of belonging or confirm their belonging to a group. Therefore, the ambiguity used in institutional discourse is a valuable tactic and, even though we do not encourage the lack of clarity, we are aware of the fact that, in some cases, ambiguity is a feature of intercultural communication.<sup>16</sup>

**Questions to discuss:**

- How can we determine if the purpose of strategic ambiguity is ethical or not?
- What other examples of strategic ambiguity can you give?
- Speaking assignment:  
You are a candidate for the position of mayor of Smartville. Answer this question, addressed by a journalist:  
*How do you plan to deal with the problem of migration in our city?*  
Aspects to consider in your answer: illegal immigration and human rights, migration and employment, majority vs. minority rights.
- What do you think about the use of the term *irregular migrants* for foreigners who enter a country without permission?

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<sup>16</sup> Section adapted from Delia Pop-Flanja, Roxana Maria Gâz, *op.cit.*

### 1.3. MODERN DOUBLESPEAK TERMS AND MULTIPLE-CHOICE COMMUNICATION

Some terms have a strong negative impact on the audience. They can be considered either offensive, or they might lead to panic and fear. This is one of the reasons why some messages are conveyed in a softer, less offensive, or less disturbing way. Doublespeak can, however, also be used to offer multiple interpretations and not to take a clear position on a particular topic.

Examples of modern double speak terms used in the media<sup>17</sup>:

- *Extremism, Extremist*

instead of *terrorism*

- *Ethnic Cleansing*

instead of *genocide*

- *Enhanced Interrogation*

instead of *torture*

- *Extrajudicial Killing*

instead of *assassination*

- *R2P (Responsibility to Protect)*

instead of *invasion* or *preventive attack*; to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

- *Collateral Damage*

instead of *people killed* in a raid, strike, incursion, invasion, or battle

- *Eliminate, Neutralize, Depopulate*

instead of *killing* and *murder*

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<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Makia Freeman, "Top 20 Modern Doublespeak Terms to Be Aware of", published in *The Freedom Articles* on 31 March 2016, <https://thefreedomarticles.com/top-20-modern-doublespeak-terms/>, accessed 01.03.2018.

- *WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction)*

instead of *chemical weapons* or *nuclear weapons*

- *Negative Patient Care Outcome*

instead of an adverse response to a therapeutic intervention or *malpractice*

- *Climate Change Denier*

instead of *not in favour of the world carbon tax program*

- *Globalism*

instead of *growing centralization of power* or *exploiting new markets* with no protection

- *Reasonable Suspicion*

instead of *probable cause* (the standard by which police authorities have a reason to obtain a warrant for the arrest of a suspected criminal)

- *Job Creators*

instead of *wealthy, rich*

**Other examples of politically correct terms**

Politically correct term	Equivalent
undocumented/irregular immigrant	illegal immigrant
firefighter	fireman
mail carrier	postman
chairperson/chair	chairman
flight attendant	stewardess
assistant manager	secretary
banned	blacklisted
extortion	blackmail
intellectually impaired	stupid

senior citizen/ experienced	old person
lacking formal education	uneducated
domestic helper	maid
artificial	manmade
reality/mentally challenged	insane
economically deprived area	slum/ghetto
disorder ( <i>partial synonym</i> )	disease
differently abled	disabled
cosmetic surgery	plastic surgery
festive season	Christmas
sex worker	prostitute
job seekers	unemployed

Table 1.1. Politically correct terms and phrases.

Mark Peysha, CEO of Robbins-Madanes Training, brings into discussion the oratory style of Donald Trump and what he calls a *very sophisticated doublespeak* and a form of *multiple-choice communication*, as he gives multiple options on what he might mean.<sup>18</sup>

#### Examples

A. Trump: despite five years of low rainfall in California, “There is no drought. They turn the water into the ocean. If I win, believe me, we’re going to start opening up the water so that you can have your farmers survive.”

#### Possible meanings:

1. There never was a drought (perhaps the drought was a myth?)
2. There was a drought, but it has ended naturally.
3. There was a drought, but somebody fixed it.

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Peysha, *Donald Trump is no fool: The dangerous demagogue knows exactly what he's saying*, retrieved from Salon.com page, on 10 June 2016, [https://www.salon.com/2016/06/10/donald\\_trump\\_is\\_no\\_fool\\_the\\_dangerous\\_demagogue\\_knows\\_exactly\\_what\\_hes\\_saying\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2016/06/10/donald_trump_is_no_fool_the_dangerous_demagogue_knows_exactly_what_hes_saying_partner/) accessed 5.05.2018.

4. There is no drought, because what others call drought is simply their inability to drain the Sacramento River Delta and use its water for farming.
  5. There is drought, but as president of the United States, Trump will singlehandedly change California water policy. The fact that a large engineering project, like draining the Sacramento River Delta, is theoretically possible, is the same as there never having been a drought in the first place.<sup>19</sup>
- B. Trump called Judge Gonzalo Curiel, who was presiding over a lawsuit against Trump University, a “very hostile judge” and a “hater,” and added: “What happens is the judge, who happens to be, we believe, Mexican, which is great. I think that’s fine.”

Possible meanings:

1. Anyone who gets in my way, I can single them out in a speech and focus the crowd’s hate on them.
2. I can describe any American as foreign (Mexican) rather than as an American.
3. Judge Curiel’s professional behaviour may be based on his being Mexican.
4. Judge Curiel’s ethnic heritage is up to my approval, and I think it’s great that he is Mexican (even though he’s not Mexican).<sup>20</sup>

**Questions to discuss:**

- Are you familiar with the terms discussed? In what context did you hear/use them? Can you give similar examples?
- What do you understand by the following terms: *BIPOC*, *LGBTQIA+* and *affirmative action*?
- Is the term *people of colour* politically correct?

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

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## 2. POLITICAL JARGON AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

### 2.1. POLITICAL JARGON

Political jargon refers to the shared language, the words and phrases used to talk about political issues, usually by people activating in the political spectrum or representatives of the media.

#### Examples of political jargon<sup>21</sup>

- Ad hoc committee

*A committee that is formed to carry out a particular task and then breaks up when the task is over;*

- Allegation<sup>22</sup>

*A statement saying that someone has done something wrong;*

- Amendment

*A minor change to a law or contract;*

- Ballot paper

*A slip of paper, usually with representatives' names and photos, that registered voters use to mark their preferences in an election. A referendum ballot paper will have the wording of the proposed change to the Constitution for the people to vote for or against;*

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<sup>21</sup> Definitions retrieved from National Adult Literacy Agency, *A Plain English Guide to Political Terms*, 2015, [https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/news/attachments/a\\_plain\\_english\\_guide\\_to\\_political\\_terms.pdf](https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/news/attachments/a_plain_english_guide_to_political_terms.pdf), accessed, 03.05.2016.

<sup>22</sup> Retrieved from *Collins Dictionary*, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>, accessed on 10.01.2021.

- Absentee ballot<sup>23</sup>

*A ballot in which votes are cast in advance because voters are unable to go to the polling place;*

- Bandwagon effect

*The tendency for a popular candidate or proposal to gather even more support simply because they appear to be winning; also called the snowball effect;*

- Brown envelope

*A term referring to the practice of politicians receiving illegal payments (in brown envelopes) in exchange for political favours;*

- Canvassing

*Trying to win votes by contacting voters directly, for example by going door to door;*

- Caucus

*A group or a meeting of people, especially members of a political party, with the power to decide on a policy;*

- Census

*An official count of a country's population. In Romania, the census is carried out by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) every five years;*

- Checks and balances

*A term describing the actions of the three branches of government – the legislature, executive, and judiciary – to monitor (check) each other's work and limit each other's powers (balance), so no branch becomes too powerful;*

- City and County Councils

*Local authorities responsible for services such as housing, planning, roads, water supply and recreation facilities in both a city and a county;*

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

- Coalition government

*A government made up of more than one political party because no single party got enough votes to form a government on its own;*

- Constituency

*A specific region where political representatives are elected by the voters living there;*

- Defamation

*Saying or writing something false about a living person that is proven to damage their reputation in the eyes of right-minded people;*

- Libel

*A published (in print or on the internet) or broadcast statement about a person that is proven to be false and damaging to their reputation;*

- Slander

*Something spoken about a person (for example at a public meeting) that is proven to be false and damaging to their reputation;*

- Empowerment

*Making it possible for people to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens;*

- Exit poll

*A survey of some voters leaving a polling station asking them who (or what) they voted for to give an early indication of voting trends and help predict results;*

- Floating voter

*A person who is undecided about how to vote in an election or referendum; a voter who doesn't always vote for the same political party;*

- Front runner

*A candidate who is likely to win an election or be nominated by their party to take part in an election;*

- Green Paper

*A document that sets out ideas about a proposed new law and invites comments from individuals and interested groups;*

- White paper

*A document that outlines a government's proposals on particular issues and sometimes forms the basis of later laws. A white paper is usually drafted after people have given feedback on the green paper;*

- Incumbent

*A person who currently holds a post or office;*

- Lame duck

*An elected representative, usually a leader, who is coming close to the end of their term of office, and who is regarded as being less powerful due to the limited time they have left to serve;*

- Landslide victory

*An overwhelming majority of votes for one candidate or party in an election;*

- Lobby

*An organised attempt by individuals or groups to influence decision makers – for example, by writing letters, making proposals, or meeting decision makers;*

- MEP

*Member of the European Parliament - An elected politician who represents a region of their own country in the European Parliament;*

- Motion of no confidence

*A vote on the performance of a leader or a government, usually proposed by the opposition, that, if passed, may require the person to resign or the government to stand down and request a general election;*

- Mudslinging

*The practice of saying negative things about an opponent during a political campaign; also known as dirty politics;*

- **Nominee**  
*A person who is nominated or proposed by others, as a candidate for public office;*
- **Non-party candidate**  
*An independent candidate, one who is not a member of a political party;*
- **PPPs**  
*Public-Private Partnerships - Partnerships between public bodies and private businesses to fund, develop and sometimes operate services for the public – for example, roads, hospitals and transport services;*
- **Philanthropy**  
*The action, usually by wealthy people, of funding or giving other forms of practical support to organisations, without wanting anything in return, based on the desire to do good for society;*
- **Photo op<sup>24</sup>**  
*Photo opportunity - an opportunity, either preplanned or accidental, for the press to photograph a politician, celebrity, or event;*
- **Pledge**  
*A solemn promise to do something, usually made when somebody takes a high-level official role;*
- **Protest vote**  
*A vote for a candidate, not out of support for them, but to show disapproval of another political party and its candidate;*
- **Public servant**  
*A person who works with the civil service, a local authority or other state body;*
- **Referendum**  
*A vote by the people on a single political question;*

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*

- Swing voter

*A person who votes, but whose support can switch from one political party to another, depending on the issue at stake;*

- Trial balloon<sup>25</sup>

*A proposal that you mention or an action that you try to determine other people's reactions to it, especially if you think they are likely to oppose it;*

- Veto

*Blocking or rejecting a proposed law or change to the constitution;*

- Whistleblower (Whistle-blower)

*An employee or a former employee of a business or public body who reports wrongdoing to another person who can take corrective action themselves or can embarrass others into doing so.*

**Exercise:**

Simulate a press conference with a politician accused of unethical practices in his/her campaign; use some of the terms from the political jargon above!

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem.*

## 2.2. KEY CONCEPTS IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- **Discourse analysis (DA)**- “the study of the rules governing appropriate language use in communicative situations”<sup>26</sup>
- **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** - “An approach to the analysis of discourse which views language as a social practice and is interested in the ways that ideologies and power relations are expressed through language.”<sup>27</sup> According to Norman Fairclough: “1. It is not just analysis of discourse (or more concretely texts), it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. 2. It is not just general commentary on discourse, it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts. 3. It is not just descriptive, it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them.”<sup>28</sup>
- **Political Discourse Analysis (PDA)** - the analysis of discourse in political context. “PDA is both about political discourse, and it is also a critical enterprise”[...] Critical PDA “deals especially with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Collins Dictionary,  
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/discourse-analysis>,  
accessed 03.10.2020.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece, *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, “What is Political Discourse Analysis?” in *Political Linguistics*, eds. Jan Blommaert & Chris Bulcaen, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997, p 11.

## 2.3. POLITICAL SPEECH ANALYSIS

### Elements to analyse in a political speech

- message of the speech;
- political doctrine/electoral message;
- structure of the speech;
- length of sentences: short/long sentences;
- coherence of the speech;
- arguments presented;
- errors in argumentation;
- appeal to emotion;
- rhetorical figures: *metaphors, similes, antithesis, tricolon, anaphora, repetition, rhetorical questions, hypophora etc.*;
- buzz-words;
- positive/negative governing words (see below);
- words frequency;
- clichés;
- overstatements/understatements;
- humour/irony;
- strategic ambiguity (purpose);
- inclusive words (1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronoun *we*);
- empowering words (e.g. *Let's, Look around you!, Let us begin*);
- body language;
- persuasiveness vs. fact-checking.

## Examples of positive and negative governing words<sup>30</sup>

### Positive words

- active(ly)
- activist
- building
- candid(ly)
- care(ing)
- change
- children
- choice/choose
- citizen
- commitment
- common sense
- confident
- courage
- dream
- duty
- empower (ment)
- fair
- family
- freedom
- hard work
- incentive
- initiative
- learn
- legacy
- liberty
- light
- listen
- mobilize
- moral
- movement
- opportunity
- passionate
- peace
- pioneer
- preserve
- principle
- pro(issue):  
flag, family, child, jobs
- prosperity
- protect
- proud/pride
- provide
- reform
- rights
- share
- strength
- success
- truth
- unique
- vision
- we / us / our

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<sup>30</sup> Adapted from John K. Wilson, *How the Left Can Win Arguments and Influence People: A Tactical Manual for Pragmatic Progressives*, NYU Press, 2001, pp. 24-26.

## Negative words (with reference to the opposition)

- abuse of power
- anti (issue):  
flag, family, child, jobs
- betray
- bizarre
- bureaucracy
- cheat
- collapse(ing)
- corrupt
- corruption
- crisis
- cynicism
- destroy
- destructive
- disgrace
- endanger
- excuses
- failure (fail)
- greed
- hypocrisy
- impose
- incompetent
- insecure
- insensitive
- intolerant
- lie
- limit(s)
- pathetic
- permissive attitude
- pessimistic
- punish
- self-serving
- selfish
- sensationalists
- shallow
- shame
- sick
- spend(ing)
- stagnation
- steal
- taxes
- they/ them
- threaten
- traitors
- waste

## Exercise

Analyse the communication strategies and rhetorical figures used in the political speech below:

*Now is the time to restore the Promise of America! Many Americans have given up on this president, but they haven't ever thought about giving up. Not on themselves. Not on each other. And not on America. It doesn't take a special government commission to tell us what America needs. What America needs is jobs. Lots of jobs.*

*In the richest country in the history of the world, or the universe, this almighty Obama economy has crushed the middle class. Family income has fallen by \$4,000, but health insurance premiums are higher, food prices are higher, utility bills are higher, and gasoline prices have doubled. So, they have done a great job in conducting this country... Should we just stand by and do nothing to fight the abuse of power, the incompetence and the corruption?*

*Today more Americans wake up in poverty than ever before. Nearly one out of six Americans is living in poverty. Look around you! These are not strangers. These are our brothers and sisters, our fellow Americans.*

*It is time to construct, time to build bridges, as communication is always the key to success. I am just a humble citizen, just like you. But I will do my best to try to make this country prouder, stronger and better. We could blame the situation on the faulty governance, on the global economic crisis may be responsible for what is happening, but now we owe it to our children to make this world a better and fairer place.*

*Some journals have accused me of not revealing the names of the members of my governing team. We plan to be as transparent as possible, and the information will get to you shortly.*

*That united America will care for the poor and the sick, will honour and respect the elderly, and will give a helping hand to those in need. Our children deserve it, our nation depends upon it, the peace and freedom of the world require it. And with your help, we will deliver it and we will make a change. Let us begin that future together tonight!*

(Adapted from Mitt Romney's Acceptance Speech, delivered at the Republican National Convention, 2012)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> NPR media organization, *Transcript: Mitt Romney's Acceptance Speech*, <https://www.npr.org/2012/08/30/160357612/transcript-mitt-romneys-acceptance-speech>, accessed 05.09.2016.

## 2.4. PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

In order to put in practice elements related to discourse analysis, to understand the use of language in presidential debates and to become aware of how candidates use words to influence the opinions of their viewers, two political debates will be analysed:

- the 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton,<sup>32</sup>
- the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden.<sup>33</sup>

### **The second presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton - 2016**

The second 2016 town hall presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton was moderated by Martha Raddatz of ABC News and Anderson Cooper of CNN, and was held at Washington University in St. Louis, on 9 October 2016.

The two candidates had two minutes each to respond to the questions addressed, and an additional minute was allocated for the moderators to facilitate discussion on the topic. Members of the audience were also allowed to ask questions.

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<sup>32</sup> New York Times, *Transcript of the 2<sup>nd</sup> debate between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton*, 10.10.2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/10/us/politics/transcript-second-debate.html>, accessed 01.11.2020.

<sup>33</sup> The Telegraph, *First presidential debate in full: Trump vs Biden | US Election 2020*, 30.09.2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CweqW7Pzcx8>, accessed 01.11.2020.

### **Selections from the debate**

Q: [...] “Knowing that educators assign viewing the presidential debates as students’ homework, do you feel you’re modeling appropriate and positive behavior for today’s youth?”

Clinton: “Well, thank you. Are you a teacher? Yes, I think that that’s a very good question, because I’ve heard from lots of teachers and parents about some of their concerns about some of the things that are being said and done in this campaign. And I think it is very important for us to make clear to our children that our country really is great because we’re good. And we are going to respect one another, lift each other up. We are going to be looking for ways to celebrate our diversity, and we are going to try to reach out to every boy and girl, as well as every adult, to bring them in to working on behalf of our country. [...] If we set those goals and we go together to try to achieve them, there’s nothing in my opinion that America can’t do. So that’s why I hope that we will come together in this campaign. Obviously, I’m hoping to earn your vote, I’m hoping to be elected in November, and I can promise you, I will work with every American. I want to be the president for all Americans, regardless of your political beliefs, where you come from, what you look like, your religion. I want us to heal our country and bring it together because that’s, I think, the best way for us to get the future that our children and our grandchildren deserve.”

Trump: “[...] I began this campaign because I was so tired of seeing such foolish things happen to our country. This is a great country. This is a great land. I’ve gotten to know the people of the country over the last year-and-a-half that I’ve been doing this as a politician. I cannot believe I’m saying that about myself, but I guess I have been a politician. And my whole concept was to make America great again. When I watch the deals being made, when I watch what’s happening with some horrible things like Obamacare, where your health insurance and health care is going up by numbers that are astronomical, 68 percent, 59 percent, 71 percent, when I look at the Iran deal and how bad a deal it is for us, it’s a one-sided transaction where we’re giving back \$150 billion to a terrorist state, really, the number one terror state, we’ve made them a strong country from really a very weak country just three years ago.[...] But I want to do things that haven’t been done, including fixing and making our inner cities better for the African-American citizens that are so great, and for the Latinos,

Hispanics, and I look forward to doing it. It's called make America great again."

[...]

Q: [...] "are you both modeling positive and appropriate behavior for today's youth? We received a lot of questions online, Mr. Trump, about the tape that was released on Friday, as you can imagine. You called what you said locker room banter. [...] That is sexual assault. You bragged that you have sexually assaulted women. Do you understand that?"

Trump: "No, I didn't say that at all. I don't think you understood what was — this was locker room talk. I'm not proud of it. I apologize to my family. I apologize to the American people. Certainly, I'm not proud of it. But this is locker room talk. You know, when we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off heads, where you have — and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening, this is like medieval times. We haven't seen anything like this, the carnage all over the world. And they look and they see. Can you imagine the people that are, frankly, doing so well against us with ISIS? And they look at our country and they see what's going on. Yes, I'm very embarrassed by it. I hate it. But it's locker room talk, and it's one of those things. I will knock the hell out of ISIS. We're going to defeat ISIS. ISIS happened a number of years ago in a vacuum that was left because of bad judgment. And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS. [...] And we should get on to much more important things and much bigger things."

[...]

Trump: "If you look at Bill Clinton, far worse. Mine are words, and his was action. His was what he's done to women. There's never been anybody in the history politics in this nation that's been so abusive to women. [...] Hillary Clinton attacked those same women and attacked them viciously. Four of them here tonight. [...] I am absolutely — I apologize for those words. But it is things that people say. But what President Clinton did, he was impeached, he lost his license to practice law. He had to pay an \$850,000 fine to one of the women. Paula Jones, who's also here tonight. And I will tell you that when Hillary brings up a point like that and she talks about words that I said 11 years ago, I think it's disgraceful, and I think she should be ashamed of herself, if you want to know the truth."

Clinton: "Well, first, let me start by saying that so much of what he's just said is not right, but he gets to run his campaign any way he chooses. He gets to decide what he wants to talk about. Instead of answering people's questions, talking about our agenda, laying out the plans that we have that we think can make a better life and a better country, that's his choice. When I hear something like that, I am reminded of what my friend, Michelle Obama, advised us all: When they go low, you go high. And, look, if this were just about one video, maybe what he's saying tonight would be understandable, but everyone can draw their own conclusions at this point about whether or not the man in the video or the man on the stage respects women. But he never apologizes for anything to anyone. [...] And Donald insulted and attacked them for weeks over their religion. He never apologized to the distinguished federal judge who was born in Indiana, but Donald said he couldn't be trusted to be a judge because his parents were, quote, "Mexican." He never apologized to the reporter that he mimicked and mocked on national television and our children were watching. And he never apologized for the racist lie that President Obama was not born in the United States of America. He owes the president an apology, he owes our country an apology, and he needs to take responsibility for his actions and his words."

[...]

Trump: "When I speak, I go out and speak, the people of this country are furious. In my opinion, the people that have been long-term workers at the FBI are furious. There has never been anything like this, where e-mails – and you get a subpoena, you get a subpoena, and after getting the subpoena, you delete 33,000 e-mails, and then you acid wash them or bleach them, as you would say, very expensive process. So we're going to get a special prosecutor, and we're going to look into it, because you know what? People have been – their lives have been destroyed for doing one-fifth of what you've done. And it's a disgrace. And honestly, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Clinton: "OK, Donald. I know you're into big diversion tonight, anything to avoid talking about your campaign and the way it's exploding and the way Republicans are leaving you. But let's at least focus..."

[...]

Clinton: "Democrats, Republicans, independents, people across our country. If you don't vote for me, I still want to be your president."

[...]

Q: "Perhaps the most important aspect of this election is the Supreme Court justice. What would you prioritize as the most important aspect of selecting a Supreme Court justice?"

Clinton: "Thank you. Well, you're right. This is one of the most important issues in this election. I want to appoint Supreme Court justices who understand the way the world really works, who have real-life experience, who have not just been in a big law firm and maybe clerked for a judge and then gotten on the bench, but, you know, maybe they tried some more cases, they actually understand what people are up against. Because I think the current court has gone in the wrong direction. And so I would want to see the Supreme Court reverse Citizens United and get dark, unaccountable money out of our politics. Donald doesn't agree with that.

I would like the Supreme Court to understand that voting rights are still a big problem in many parts of our country, that we don't always do everything we can to make it possible for people of color and older people and young people to be able to exercise their franchise. I want a Supreme Court that will stick with Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to choose, and I want a Supreme Court that will stick with marriage equality. Now, Donald has put forth the names of some people that he would consider. And among the ones that he has suggested are people who would reverse Roe v. Wade and reverse marriage equality. I think that would be a terrible mistake and would take us backwards. I want a Supreme Court that doesn't always side with corporate interests. I want a Supreme Court that understands because you're wealthy and you can give more money to something doesn't mean you have any more rights or should have any more rights than anybody else."

Trump: "Justice Scalia, great judge, died recently. And we have a vacancy. I am looking to appoint judges very much in the mold of Justice Scalia. I'm looking for judges – and I've actually picked 20 of them so that people would see, highly respected, highly thought of, and actually very beautifully reviewed by just about everybody. But people that will respect the Constitution of the United States. And I think that this is so important. Also, the Second Amendment, which is totally under siege by people like Hillary Clinton. [...] So I will have in my race more than \$100 million put in – of my money, meaning I'm not taking all of this big money from all of

these different corporations like she's doing. [...] I ask Hillary[...] Why isn't she funding, not for \$100 million, but why don't you put \$10 million or \$20 million or \$25 million or \$30 million into your own campaign?"

[...]

Q: "My question to both of you is, regardless of the current rhetoric, would either of you name one positive thing that you respect in one another?"

Clinton: "Well, I certainly will, because I think that's a very fair and important question. Look, I respect his children. His children are incredibly able and devoted, and I think that says a lot about Donald. I don't agree with nearly anything else he says or does, but I do respect that. And I think that is something that as a mother and a grandmother is very important to me.[...]"

Trump: "Well, I consider her statement about my children to be a very nice compliment. I don't know if it was meant to be a compliment, but it is a great – I'm very proud of my children. And they've done a wonderful job, and they've been wonderful, wonderful kids. So, I consider that a compliment. I will say this about Hillary. She doesn't quit. She doesn't give up. I respect that. I tell it like it is. She's a fighter. I disagree with much of what she's fighting for. I do disagree with her judgment in many cases. But she does fight hard, and she doesn't quit, and she doesn't give up. And I consider that to be a very good trait."

## Guidelines for analysis

### a. Time allocated to each candidate

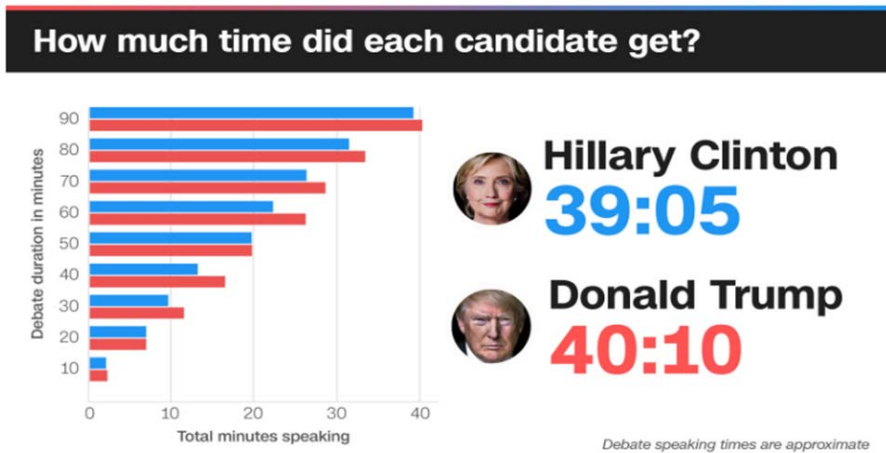


Figure 2.1. Time allocated to each candidate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential debate of 2016, retrieved from CNN Politics<sup>34</sup>

### b. Word Analysis of the 2nd Presidential Debate<sup>35</sup>

- Overall words: Trump 7,334 / Clinton 6,272 (17%).
- Unique words: Trump 1,131 / Clinton 1261 (11.5%)
- Trump's # 3 word was "Hillary" (26 occurrences)/Clinton's #2 word was "Donald" (32 occurrences)

<sup>34</sup> CNN Politics, *Which candidate got more time at the 2nd presidential debate?*, 10. 10. 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/10/politics/debate-speaking-times-clinton-trump/>, accessed 01.05.2019.

<sup>35</sup> Ken Flerlage, *Word Analysis of the 2nd Presidential Debate*, [https://www.flerlage.twins.com/2016/10/word-analysis-of-2nd-presidential-debate\\_26.html](https://www.flerlage.twins.com/2016/10/word-analysis-of-2nd-presidential-debate_26.html), accessed 01.05.2019.

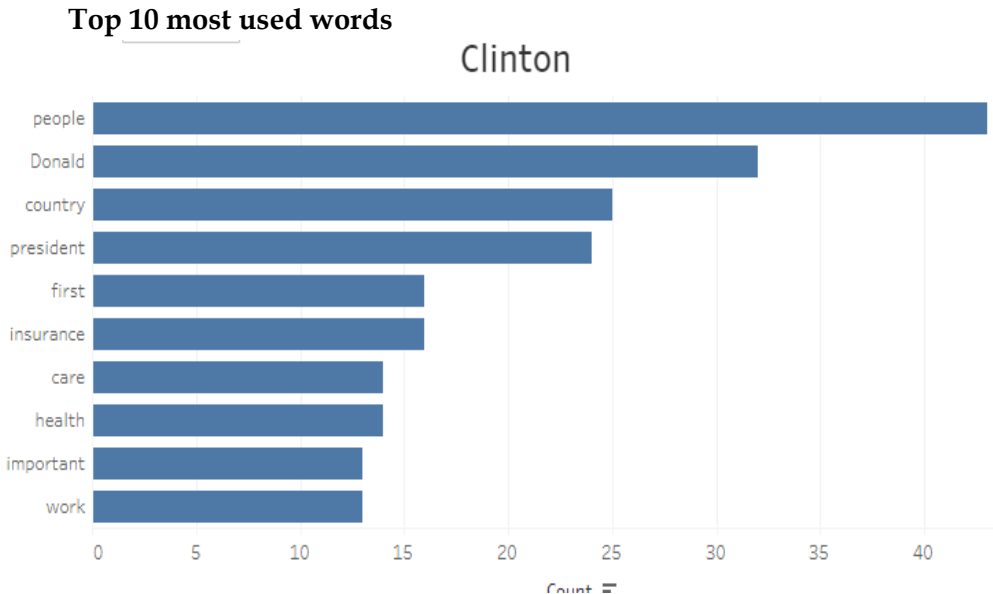


Figure 2.2. Top 10 most used words by Clinton in the 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential debate of 2016<sup>36</sup>

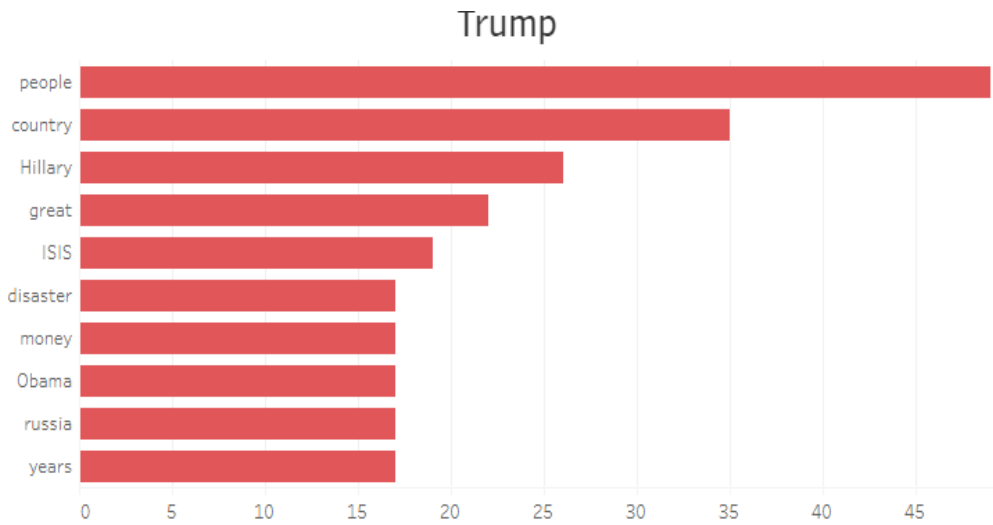


Figure 2.3. Top 10 most used words by Trump in the 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential debate of 2016<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem.*

### c. Fact -Checking

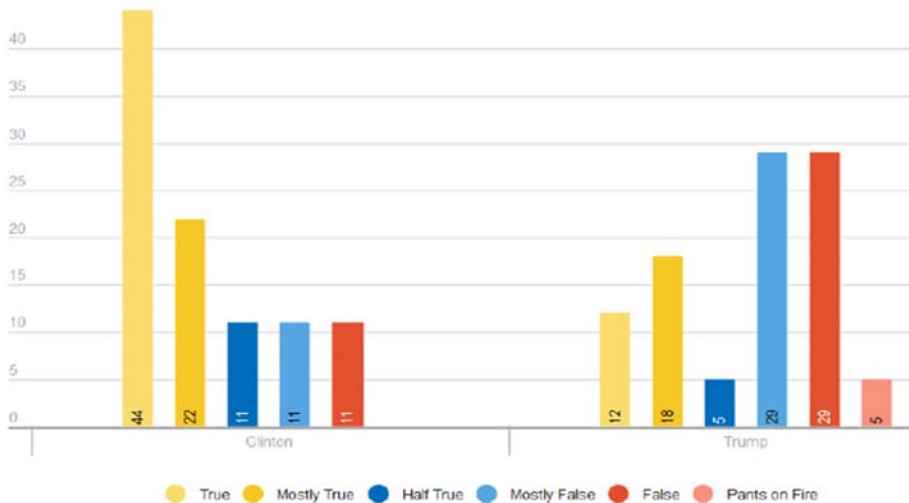


Figure 2.4. PolitiFact fact-checking the 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential debate of 2016<sup>38</sup>

### d. General observations

#### Clinton

- formulates longer sentences, which can indicate the presence of a more detailed explanation;
- offers feedback on the questions of the audience and directly addresses the audience;
- has a more thought-through body language;
- uses empowering and inclusive words;
- uses more positive words than the opponent;
- uses repetition/anaphora;
- policy issues and elements from the political doctrine of the party and from the electoral campaign are more visible in Clinton's speech than in the case of Trump;
- focused more on healthcare and insurance.

<sup>38</sup> Katherine Burns, *The Truth-O-Meter scorecard for the second 2016 presidential debate*, PolitiFact, 19.10.2016, [https://infogram.com/\\_/m7Xz7J6woWLvoDHI6FV7](https://infogram.com/_/m7Xz7J6woWLvoDHI6FV7), accessed 05.05.2017.

## Trump

- formulates shorter sentences, which can contribute to a better understanding;
- uses a more offensive language;
- uses more appeal to emotions;
- uses equivocation and digressions from the topic of the questions being addressed more often than the opponent;
- uses repetition more often than the opponent;
- uses more criticism and negative words than the opponent;
- interrupts more and is more present on the screen, even during Clinton's interventions;
- Trump's focus was on foreign policy (ISIS, Syria, Russia); policy issues and elements of the political doctrine are less visible than in the case of Clinton, but we can observe more repetition of the electoral campaign slogan *Make America Great Again!*

## **The first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden - 2020**

The first 2020 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden was moderated by Chris Wallace of Fox News, on 29 September 2020 in Cleveland, Ohio. In the COVID-19 context, no audience was present in the debate room.

### **Selections from the debate**

Q: "Gentlemen, a lot of people have been waiting for this night, so let's get going. Our first subject is the Supreme Court.[...] My first question to both of you tonight, why are you right in the argument you make and your opponent wrong? And where do you think a Justice Barrett would take the court?"

Trump: "I will tell you very simply. We won the election. Elections have consequences. We have the Senate, we have the White House, and we have a phenomenal nominee respected by all. Top, top academic, good in every way. Good in every way. In fact, some of her biggest endorsers are very liberal people from Notre Dame and other places. So I think she's going to be fantastic. We have plenty of time. Even if we did it after the

election itself. I have a lot of time after the election, as you know. So I think that she will be outstanding. She's going to be as good as anybody that has served on that court. We really feel that. We have a professor at Notre Dame, highly respected by all, said she's the single greatest student he's ever had. He's been a professor for a long time at a great school. [...] So we won the election and we have the right to do it, Chris."

Biden: "The American people have a right to have a say in who the Supreme Court nominee is and that say occurs when they vote for United States Senators and when they vote for the President of United States. They're not going to get that chance now because we're in the middle of an election already. The election has already started. Tens of thousands of people already voted and so the thing that should happen is we should wait. We should wait and see what the outcome of this election is because that's the only way the American people get to express their view is by who they elect as President and who they elect as Vice President.[...] And the justice, I'm not opposed to the justice, she seems like a very fine person. But she's written, before she went in the bench, which is her right, that she thinks that the Affordable Care Act is not Constitutional. The other thing that's on the court, and if it's struck down, what happens?"

[...]

Biden: "You're the worst president America has ever had."

Biden: "Everybody here knows he's a liar... You picked the wrong guy on the wrong night at the wrong time... Folks, do you have any idea what this clown's doing? I tell you what, he is not for anybody needing healthcare. "

Biden: "Will you shut up, man? This is so unpresidential. ... Keep yapping, man. "

[...]

Trump: "You could never have done the job we've done. You don't have it in your blood."

Trump: "Did you use the word smart? ...He graduated, either lowest or almost the lowest in his class. Don't ever use the word 'smart' with me. ...There's nothing smart about you, Joe"

[...]

Wallace to Trump: "I think the country would be better served if we allowed both people to speak with fewer interruptions. I'm appealing to you, sir, to do that."

Trump: "The only thing I haven't done a good job, and that's because of the fake news, no matter what you say to them, they give you a bad press on it. It's just fake news. They give you good press, they give me bad press because that's the way it is, unfortunately. But let me just say something. I don't care. I've gotten used to it. But I'll tell you, Joe, you could never have done the job that we did. You don't have it in your blood. You could've never done that, Joe."

[...]

Biden: "It is what it is because you are who you are. That's why it is. The president has no plan."

[...]

Biden: "How many of you are in a situation where you lost your mom or dad, and you couldn't even speak to them—the nurse had to hold the phone up so you could, in fact, say goodbye?"

[...]

Trump "People want their places open."

Biden "People want to be safe."

[...]

Trump: "The top 10 cities and just about the top 40 cities are run by Democrats in many cases, radical left, and they've got you wrapped around their finger, Joe, to a point where you don't want to say anything about law and order. And I'll tell you what the people of this country want and demand law and order, and you're afraid to even say it."

Biden: "Law and order with justice, where people get treated fairly."

Biden: "American people have a right to have a say in who the Supreme Court nominee is."

Biden: "You talk about helping African Americans -- 1 in 1,000 African Americans has been killed because of the coronavirus. ... And if he doesn't do something quickly, by the end of the year, 1 in 500 will have been killed. 1 in 500 African Americans. ... This man is the savior of African Americans? This man cares at all? This man's done virtually nothing. Look, the fact is, you have to look at what he talks about. You have to look at what he did, and what he did has been disastrous for the African American community."

[...]

Trump: "You have treated the black community about as bad as anybody in this country."

Trump: "I believe that we have to do everything we can to have immaculate air, immaculate water, and do whatever else we can that's good."

[...]

Biden: "The first thing I will do, I will rejoin the Paris Climate Accord."

### **Guidelines for analysis**

Exchanges over policy issues such as health care, Roe v. Wade, Supreme Court, coronavirus, finances and racial protests.

Trump

- repeated interruptions of the opponent;
- attack on personal and family matters;
- claims to be a victim of fake news and dishonest media;
- appeal to fear;
- speech focused on dominance;
- simple and direct communication style, avoiding complex formulation and vocabulary;
- abundance of descriptive adjectives.

Biden

- repeated appeal to the American people and encouragement to vote;
- directly addresses citizens;
- a softer and more diplomatic approach;
- structures his speech with a strong focus on empathy and kindness, but his anger is manifested in a rather uncontrolled manner;
- more soft-spoken attacks on personal and family matters.

### Analysing the Presidential Debate 2020 with text mining techniques<sup>39</sup>

The most occurring proper nouns, common nouns, and adjectives used by Trump and Biden:

- *China* is the most used proper noun by Trump;
- *People* is used by Trump and Biden for more than 60 times each in the debate;
- The most used adjective by Trump is *wrong* and *true* by Biden;
- The most used positive word by Trump is *won* and *affordable* by Biden.

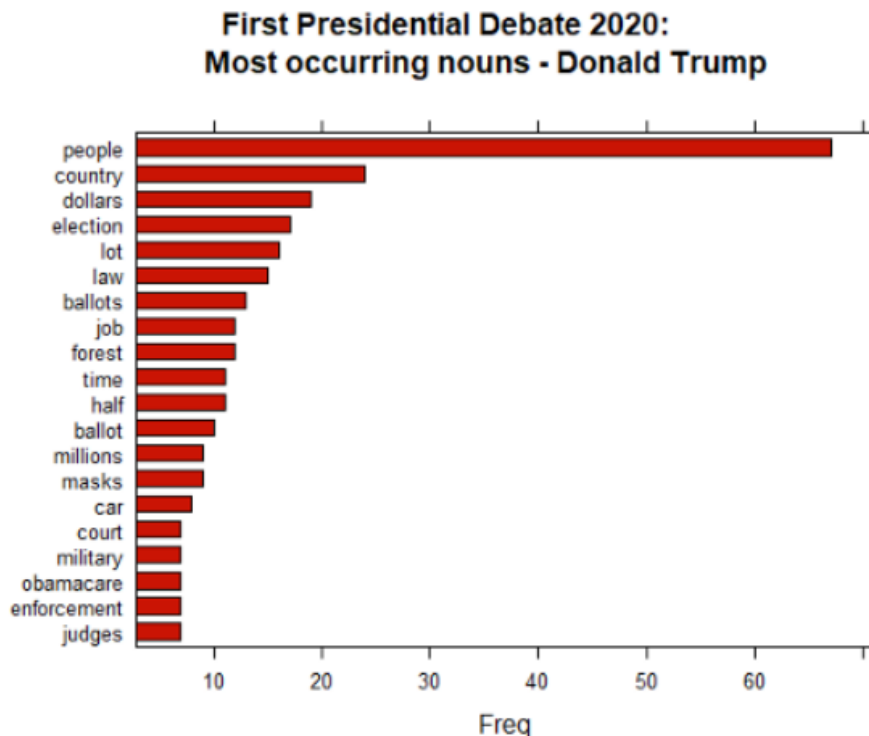


Figure 2.5. Most occurring common nouns in the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate of 2020 – Trump <sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Feng Lim, *Analyzing the Presidential Debate 2020 with text mining techniques. Looking at the debate with Data Science*, Oct 15, 2020, <https://towardsdatascience.com/analyzing-the-chaotic-presidential-debate-2020-with-text-mining-techniques-238ed09d74c1>, accessed 10.11.2020.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

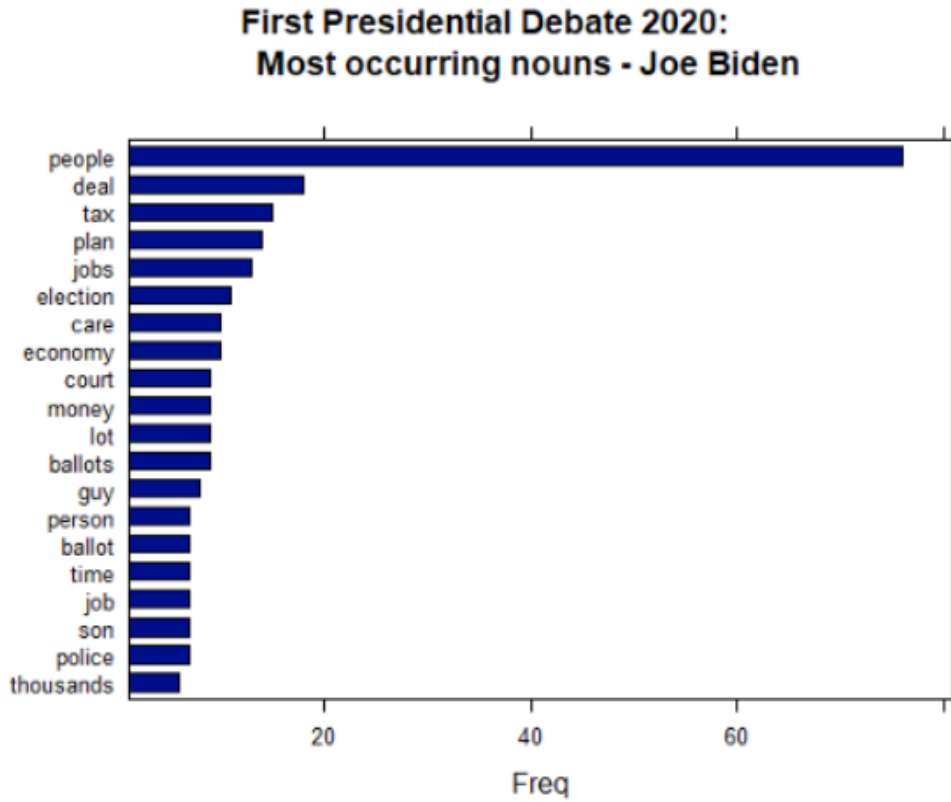


Figure 2.6. Most occurring common nouns in the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate of 2020 - Biden<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*

### First Presidential Debate 2020: Most occurring adjectives - Donald Trump

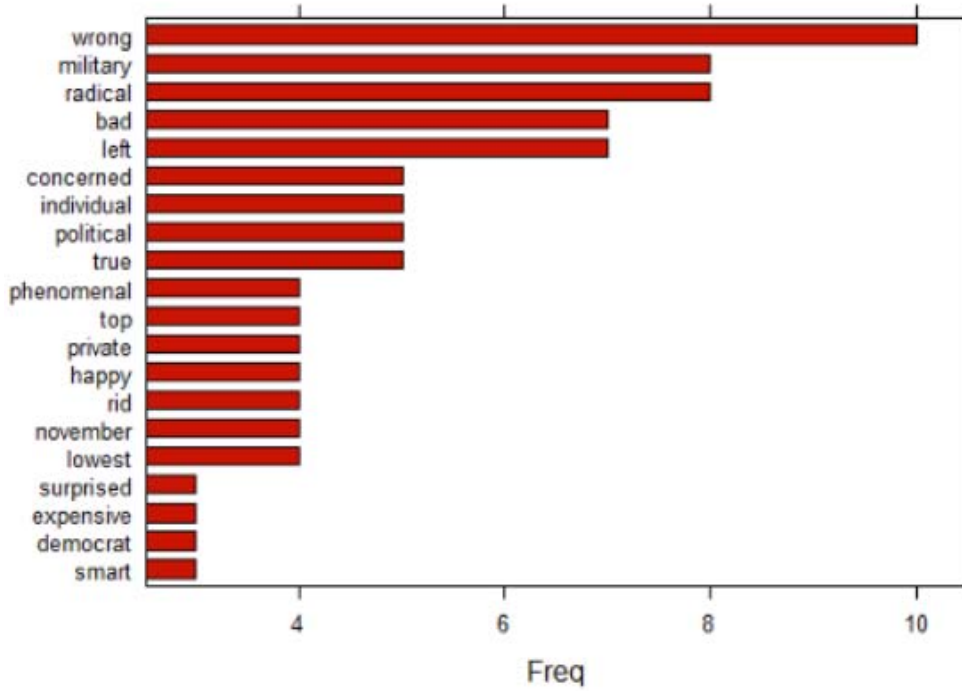


Figure 2.7. Most occurring adjectives in the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate of 2020 - Trump<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem.*

### First Presidential Debate 2020: Most occurring adjectives - Joe Biden

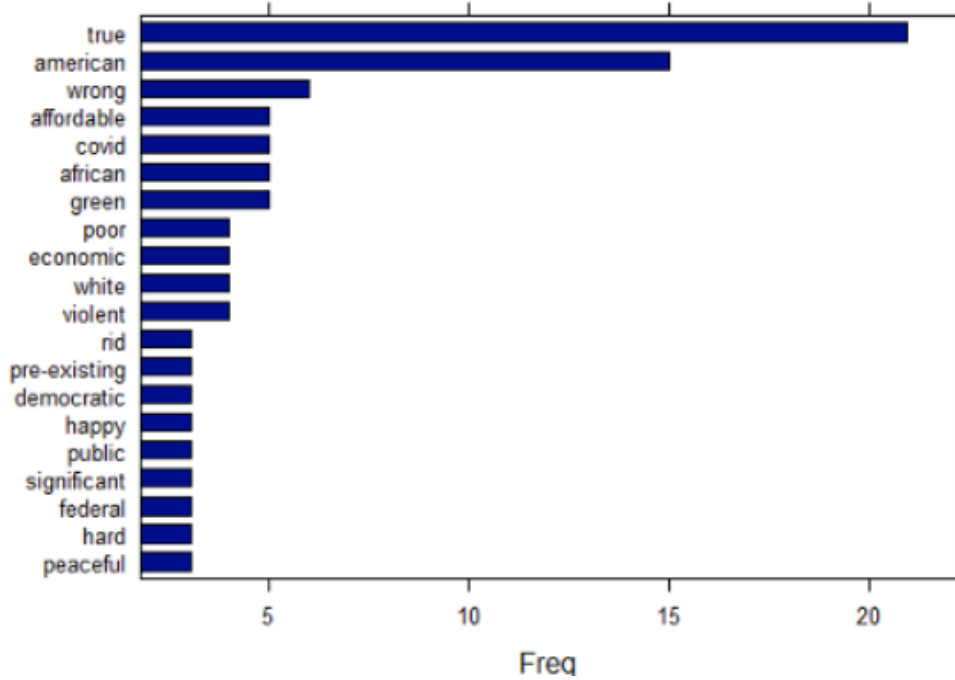


Figure 2.8. Most occurring adjectives in the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate of 2020 - Biden<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem.*

The bar chart below shows the overall polarity by categorizing their speeches as either positive or negative:



Figure 2.9. Positive/negative speeches in the 1<sup>st</sup> presidential debate of 2020 - <sup>44</sup>

### Body language

In the case of Donald Trump, we can observe an abundance of hand gestures, most of them explanatory or accusatory, such as repeatedly pointing the finger at Biden. Eye contact is directed mostly towards the moderator and the opponent.

In the case of Joe Biden, we also have several explanatory and accusatory hand gestures, but, on a lot of occasions, we can observe his arms open wide, as a sign of openness towards the audience, as well as pointing towards the camera and maintaining a lot of eye contact with the camera, in order for the audience to feel that the speaker is addressing them directly. Even when dealing with Trump’s attacks, Biden tried to appear in control, often smiling, laughing and shaking his head.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem.*

## Exercises and questions to discuss

- How were the two debates represented in the mass media and perceived by the public? Conduct a brief research to respond to this question.
- What is the difference between the two debates, from the point of view of Donald Trump's discourse and the discourses of his opponents?
- What examples of doublespeak (e.g., Roe v. Wade instead of abortion laws) and strategic ambiguity can be identified in the two debates?
- In the slogan used by Trump - *Make America Great Again* - original, or was it used by other politicians before?
- Why do US presidency candidates use first names when addressing each other?
- Deliver a five-minute political speech on a controversial topic; topics will be available upon request. Provide a written copy of the speech.

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### 3. CONFLICT OF IDEAS AND TACTFUL LANGUAGE

#### 3.1. CONFLICT AND DEFENSIVENESS

It is well known that, in order to resolve conflicts, communication is essential; however, it is not only the lack of communication, but also the improper way of expressing ourselves or the differences in communication styles that can make conflicts escalate.

In a TEDxSantaCruz event talk, Jim Tamm, a former law professor and senior administrative law judge for the state of California, who mediated nearly 2000 employment disputes and is an expert in building collaborative workplace environments, talked about what makes us defensive, what our signs of defensiveness are (e.g., playing poor me, obsessive thinking, blaming or shaming others) and what can be done in order to activate in a more collaborative work environment. Defensiveness leads to rigid thinking, drop in IQ and a low problem-solving ability. So, what do we get defensive against? According to Tamm, three of the most common fears at the workplace are the fears about

- *our own significance,*
- *our competence*
- *and our likability.*

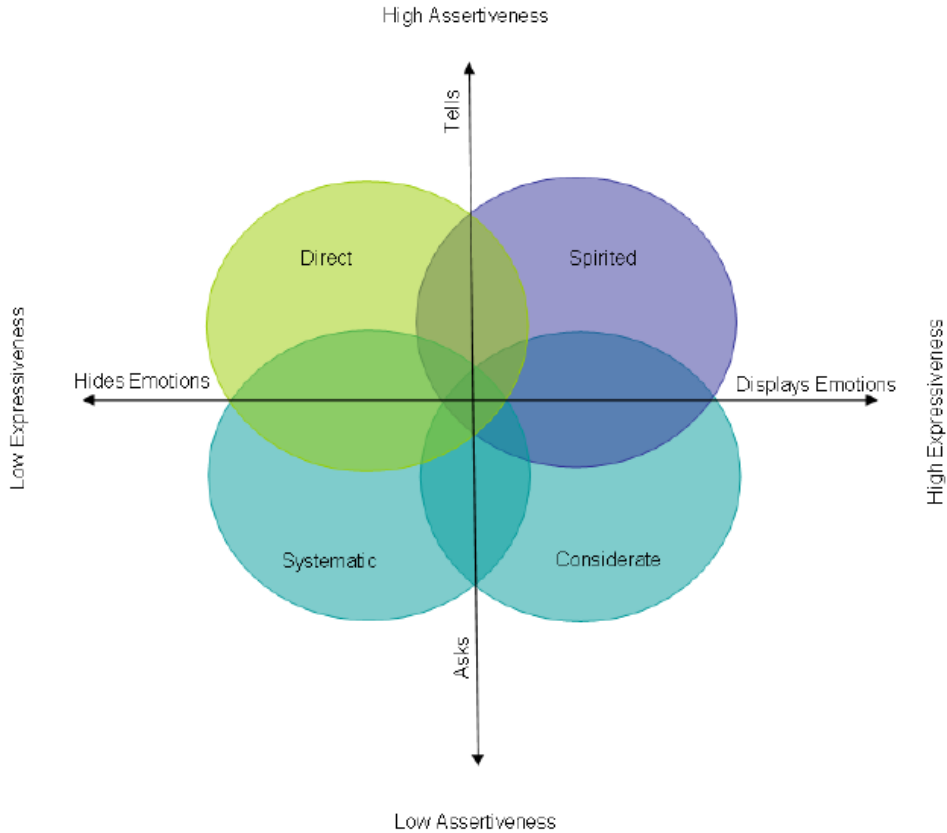
The discomfort caused by these fears can lead to defensive strategies that can easily turn into conflict.<sup>45</sup>

The fears and defensiveness mentioned above are not the only aspects that influence our workplace communicative behaviour. Different styles of communication can also have a substantial impact.

Dr. Eileen Russo's Communication Styles Matrix shows that there are two different dimensions in communication styles: *the level of expressiveness* and *the level of assertiveness*. Based on these dimensions, she identified four styles of communication:

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<sup>45</sup> Jim W. Tamm, TEDxSantaCruz: Radical Collaboration speech, *Cultivating Collaboration: Don't Be So Defensive!*, 2015, <http://www.tedxantacruz.org/talks/jim-tamm/>, accessed 10.09.2018.



**Figure 3.1.** *Eileen Russo's Communication Styles Matrix*<sup>46</sup>

### 1. Direct Style

Characteristics:

- high assertive and low expressive;
- have the tendency to tell more than to ask;
- good time savers;
- focus on results;
- might appear dictatorial and cold;
- might need improvement of listening skills.

What they should pay attention to when communicating:

- listen and avoid interruptions;

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<sup>46</sup> Sean McPheat, *Effective Communication Skills*, BookBoon, MTD Training and Ventus Publishing, 2010, <http://promeng.eu/downloads/training-materials/ebooks/soft-skills/effective-communication-skills.pdf>, accessed 10.10.2020, p. 33.

- recognize the need of others to express themselves;
- consider the utility of brainstorming;
- show appreciation for others' contributions;
- avoid emails for sensitive topics;
- allocate time for questions and feedback.

How to communicate with them:

- get to the point quickly;
- limit off topic discussions;
- be as specific as possible in your requests;
- make only promises that you can deliver;
- avoid discussing personal issues, unless the discussion is initiated by them.<sup>47</sup>

## 2. Spirited Style

Characteristics:

- high assertive and high expressive;
- have the tendency to tell more than to ask;
- the inventors and innovators of the group;
- focus on the big picture, not on the details;
- might be perceived as persuasive;
- find it hard to follow agendas.

What they should pay attention to when communicating:

- consider how to put new ideas into practice;
- try to stick to the agenda;
- try to limit the sharing of personal anecdotes;
- listen more and let others contribute with suggestions and ideas;
- be as clear as possible when expressing ideas and requests;
- show appreciation for others' contributions.

How to communicate with them:

- use an agenda/check-list/reminder;
- show appreciation and praise them;
- tactfully redirect them to the topic if needed;
- challenge them to be more specific;
- restate what they agreed on.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 36-38.

### 3. Systematic Style

Characteristics:

- low assertive and low expressive;
- have the tendency to ask more than to tell;
- focus on facts and details, rather than on opinions or on the big picture;
- likely uncomfortable with expressing feelings;
- tend to avoid confrontations;
- might be slower in responses, as they tend to analyse the situation.

What they should pay attention to when communicating:

- show consideration for others' work;
- learn to ask qualifying questions;
- make sure they understand the scope of the project;
- if they need more time for the tasks, they should try to explain the benefit of gathering more information.

How to communicate with them:

- focus on facts rather than on opinions;
- speak with precision and accuracy;
- be organized and give logical reasons for your actions;
- allow them time for research before the decision-making;
- avoid personal topics, unless initiated by them.<sup>49</sup>

### 4. Considerate Style

Characteristics:

- low assertive and high expressive;
- have the tendency to ask more than to tell;
- concerned about the feelings of others;
- they like to work and connect with others on a personal level;
- want to receive recognition for their contributions;
- natural trainers and counsellors;
- might refrain from expressing opinions that could displease others.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 38-39.

What they should pay attention to when communicating:

- try to recognize that other people's opinions about the topic are separate from their opinions about the person;
- allow others to open personal topics before asking questions;
- recognize that they do not need to be friends with everybody.

How to communicate with them:

- if needed, reassure them that your opinions about the topic, not about them;
- express interest in their feelings;
- encourage them to share opinions;
- show appreciation for their support;
- try to settle conflicts quickly.<sup>50</sup>

### Exercise

Imagine this workplace scenario: you have been working with your colleagues at a new online business platform; you consider that the direction in which you are going is not the best one and you want to propose some changes. Prepare a short speech in accordance with the communication style that was assigned to you and then simulate a discussion with students that were assigned different roles.

### Questions to discuss

- Is it helpful to identify your style of communication? How about the styles of others?
- Is it possible to have more than one, a blended, or a secondary style of communication?

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 39-41.

### 3.2. TACTFUL LANGUAGE

Tactful language refers to the ability to convey messages in a way that is not offensive to the recipient.

*Mind Tools*, a popular digital, on-demand career and management learning platform, offers some guidelines on how to be tactful.<sup>51</sup> One of the recommendations is to make sure that you handle issues assertively, but not submissively. Since tact is also influenced by culture, another recommendation refers to being culturally alert when giving feedback in an intercultural and multicultural environment. Active listening, together with empathy and emotional intelligence, are also presented as important factors in displaying tact. Nevertheless, it is not just the words *per se* that should be carefully chosen, but also the body language and the timing, as an improper context might diminish their impact. Since we discussed above about defensiveness and its negative effects, note should be taken of the recommendation of controlling one's emotions, and understanding one's emotional triggers as a possible method of having more control over them. The authors also bring forward the situation in which offering negative feedback is required, and they recommend starting with the positive aspects and applying the sandwich technique (positive-negative-positive). In some contexts, even the usage of jargon or long sentences can be perceived as tactless, as the audience might not clearly understand your points and that might put them in an inferior position.

Other recommendations:

- When making observations and for the purpose of not being perceived as accusatory, avoid starting sentences with the word *you* and opt for *I* statements during conflict, or when giving give constructive criticism. (e.g. *I consider that....* or *I see it differently*);
- Placing a connecting sentence can also act as a buffer against offensiveness (e.g. *I appreciate your opinion, but...*);
- Use modals (e.g. *may/might/could be*);
- Use indirect language (e.g. *it seems/I think/I'm not sure*);
- Use qualifiers as softeners (e.g. *a little/slightly/kind of*);

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<sup>51</sup> MindTools, *How to Be Tactful. Responding with Diplomacy and Grace*, <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/tactful.htm>, accessed 15.10.2019.

- Use positive language instead of negative and the positive outcome before the request (e.g. *not correct* instead of *wrong*).

### Examples

1. Your boss asks you to do some extra work during the weekend, but you have other plans. How do you respond?

Suggestion: "Thank you for trusting me with some of your responsibilities. I'm sorry that I can't help you this time because of my workload. Is there anything I could help you with next week, when I have more time?"

2. One of your team members is regularly late for work and it affects her performance and the performance of the team.

Suggestion: "I've noticed you've had trouble getting to work on time. What can I do to help?"

3. You have been invited to an event but you cannot attend. How do you decline tactfully?

Suggestion: Start with a positive comment: "Thanks for thinking of me. I'm sure it will be a wonderful event." Then, decline: "I'm sorry that I can't attend." End on a positive note: "Hopefully, my schedule will be less hectic next time and we can get together then."

4. You have been asked to give your opinion on a person or a situation, but you do not want to do that. How do you politely say *No*?

Suggestion: "I prefer not to talk about this, especially since we don't know the facts. Let's discuss the upcoming merger instead." or "How about we talk about this when we have more facts and everyone involved can address these issues?"<sup>52</sup>

5. You are working in customer support and one of the clients is complaining about a malfunction, but he is very angry and not sufficiently clear in his explanations.

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<sup>52</sup> Examples adapted from MindTools, *How to Be Tactful. Responding with Diplomacy and Grace*, <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/tactful.htm>, accessed 15.10.2019.

Suggestion: Ensure the client that you understand that he is upset “I/We understand that you are dissatisfied with the product and I am/we are sorry for the inconvenience”. Then, encourage him to clarify the problem “In order to be of assistance, I need to clearly understand the problem. Can you give me more(specific) details?”. Restating might help to see what has been understood so far, but also to put it in a different perspective: “If I understood well, the equipment did not function at the capacity that you needed and...”. Even if you cannot offer the solution expected, validate the concerns of the client “I/We appreciate your feedback and I/we will take your suggestions into consideration, but, unfortunately...”. If possible, offer him another form of compensation, for his effort not to be completely unrewarded.

### Exercise

Rephrase the following sentences, using tactful language:

1. You are a bad team player. You can't always work alone here!
2. You do not work sufficiently. I want your report right now!
3. Do not brag about these achievements as if they are your own, since this was a team project.
4. You have too many spelling mistakes in your e-mails.
5. You didn't pay attention to the deadline. Now, we all have to work overtime.
6. You should give us a call two weeks in advance if you want us to help you.
7. We are letting you go because you did not perform well at this job.
8. You are wrong. You didn't even understand what my presentation was about.
9. Your clothing is inappropriate and you are damaging the image of our company.
10. Sorry, I can't come to the event, since you are only letting me know one day before. Next time, pay more attention!

## Questions to discuss

- Give examples of conflictual situations that were (not) handled well. Who was responsible for the conflict? How was the conflict settled and by whom?
- What do you think are some of the main reasons for workplace conflicts? Give specific examples.

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## 4. BUSINESS AND BUYER PERSONAS

In this chapter, we will discuss about what business and buyer personas are, and how we can use the information that we obtain by analysing these personas. In a business setting, we rarely have the possibility to fully express our personalities or to be able to fully know our target audience or customers. Hence, knowing what aspect of you to bring forward or how to select your target customers in order to obtain a maximum profit can make this endeavour easier.

### 4.1. KEY CONCEPTS

- **Persona** - Someone's persona is “the aspect of their character or nature that they present to other people, perhaps in contrast to their real character or nature.”<sup>53</sup>
- A **business persona** is the representation of yourself that you use when you activate in the online or offline business environments.
- A **buyer persona** is a representation or a profile of the customer that is more likely to be interested in your product or service, or the customer that you target, based on real data and research.
- An **elevator pitch** (also **elevator speech**) is “a short but effective explanation that is intended to persuade someone to buy a product or accept an idea”<sup>54</sup>, usually not longer than two minutes.

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<sup>53</sup> Collins Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/persona>, accessed 08.01.2021.

<sup>54</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/elevator-pitch>, accessed 08.01.2021.

## 4.2. HOW TO CREATE A BUSINESS PERSONA

Certainly, creating a proper business persona also depends on your personality, your domain of activity, your expertise, or your experience. The more you are advanced in your career and influential, the more you have the freedom to express your true personal self, your private character, as your activity speaks for itself and you can focus more on personal aspects. However, there are certain general guidelines that can help you with a starting point.

- Do not underestimate the power of the first visual impact and get professional or creative headshots;
- Maintain a social media presence worth noticing, not just from the point of view of the visual impact, but also through the content and the rate and speed of response and interaction;
- Develop a brand pitch, or an element that attracts the attention of your audience and differentiates you from your competitors;
- Create a simple portfolio site or blog;
- Get a professional email account;
- Gather past client reviews and praise, as endorsement from previous collaborators makes you more believable and trustworthy;
- Update your biography and create at least two versions, a formal and a conversational one;
- Create a business card worth keeping, professional but also memorable;
- Provide a way to take payments, as this can be an evidence of the dimension and reach of your business, but also of your business transparency;
- Craft a plan, for people to see that you have a vision and an intention to develop your business.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Adapted from Regina Anaejiou, "10 Steps to Creating a Business Persona Ready for Any Opportunity", *Entrepreneur Europe*, 11 April 2014, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/232959>, accessed 10.09.2016.

## Example



Image 4.1. *Chris Marentis*<sup>56</sup>

“Chris Marentis is a passionate entrepreneur and innovator determined to leave a legacy bigger than himself. Chris grew up in an entrepreneurial family with a father who owned a home contracting HVAC business. When traditional media was disrupted by the online world, empowering consumers to rely less on sales people and advertisements to make decisions, large companies with big budgets could afford to play the game, but the local entrepreneur, like Chris’s father was left behind. This disadvantage inspired Chris to write *Surefire Social*: the guide for local SMB’s to compete in the digital world. Chris was invited to speak at events and demand grew for ways to implement his ideas. He turned his vision into a reality when he started *Surefire Social* in 2009. Feedback was strong. Businesses began asking for help implementing their digital marketing and *Surefire* evolved into a SaaS and services business. The company’s dramatic growth came with only 1-2 sales people at any given time and a limited marketing budget, thanks to referrals from rabidly loyal clients. The company’s latest innovation *Surepulse*, provides data insights and competitive tactics to marketing novices. Chris has spoken at the following events: Hanley Wood International Roofing Show and Contractor Summit, NAILBA National Conference, Tech Summit, CCN, GAF Wealth Builders, Gutter Helmet National Dealer Meeting. Publications Chris contributes to: *Street Fight*, *Search Engine Land*, *iMedia*, *Social Media Today*, *Franchising World*.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> SearchEngineJournal, Chris Marentis, <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/author/chris-marentis/#close>, accessed 10.10.2020.

<sup>57</sup> Tiger 21, Chris Marentis, <https://tiger21.com/presenter/chris-marentis-surefire-social/>, accessed 10.10.2020.

## Business persona analysis

- headshot and background (professional setting, choice of colours and paintings, smile, glasses, outfit, mirror image);
- accent on evolution, passion and innovation;
- focus on family and legacy;
- appeal to emotion;
- entrepreneurial background and experience;
- storyline structure with a somewhat relatable story;
- disadvantage turned into advantage;
- friendly tone and usage of his first name;
- good feedback from collaborators;
- proof of value through invitations to speak at events;
- proof of value through publications.

## Exercises

1. Listen to motivational business speaker Rob Brown in one of his TEDx Talks on *The Personal Brand of You*<sup>58</sup>, and explain what this speech teaches us about business personas.
2. Analyse and compare the five representations of the business personas, in the Twitter accounts below.

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<sup>58</sup> Rob Brown, TEDxUoN, *The Personal Brand of You*, 3 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGbsb6aXbzc>, accessed, 10.10.2016.



Image 4.2. (retrieved from Twitter)<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hilary Clinton Twitter account, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton>, accessed 10.01.2021.



The image shows a screenshot of Hillary Clinton's Twitter profile. At the top is a large photo of her speaking at a podium with a "STRONGER TOGETHER" sign, with a crowd of supporters holding similar signs in the background. To the left is a circular profile picture of her. Below the photo are statistics: 9,951 Tweets, 768 Following, 19.6M Followers, 1,165 Likes, 1 List, and 3 Moments. A "Follow" button is on the right. The bio reads: "Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate." Below the bio are tabs for "Tweets", "Tweets & replies", and "Media". A pinned tweet from November 9, 2016, is displayed: "To all the little girls watching...never doubt that you are valuable and powerful & deserving of every chance & opportunity in the world." with 63K replies, 681K retweets, and 1.3M likes.

Image 4.3. (retrieved from Twitter)<sup>60</sup>



The image shows a screenshot of Donald J. Trump's Twitter profile. At the top is a large photo of him speaking at a podium with an American flag in the background, with a large crowd of people in military uniforms in the foreground. To the left is a circular profile picture of him. Below the photo are statistics: 36.3K Tweets, 45 Following, 42.1M Followers, 23 Likes, and 5 Moments. A "Follow" button is on the right. The bio reads: "45th President of the United States of America" with a location tag for "Washington, DC". Below the bio are tabs for "Tweets", "Tweets & replies", and "Media". A tweet from 36 minutes ago is displayed: "Getting ready to leave for South Korea and meetings with President Moon, a fine gentleman. We will figure it all out!" with 3.5K replies, 3.2K retweets, and 16K likes.

Image 4.4 (retrieved from Twitter)<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Hilary Clinton Twitter account, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton>, accessed 01.09.2016.

<sup>61</sup> Donald Trump Twitter account, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>, accessed 01.07.2017.



Image 4.5. (retrieved from Twitter)<sup>62</sup>



Image 4.6. (retrieved from Twitter)<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Joe Biden Twitter account, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/joebiden?lang=en>, accessed 08.02.2021

<sup>63</sup> Barack Obama Twitter account, retrieved from [https://twitter.com/BarackObama?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/BarackObama?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor), accessed 08.02.2021.

### 4.3. HOW TO CREATE AND USE A BUYER PERSONA

In order to attract as many customers as possible and to gain their trust, you need to understand who they are and what is the best way to address them. Creating buyer personas can give you customer insights to direct your activity and build effective marketing strategies.

The image below, proposed by marketing professional Amy Wright, is a representation of the elements that you should look into and the common questions you should ask when researching on your ideal customers.

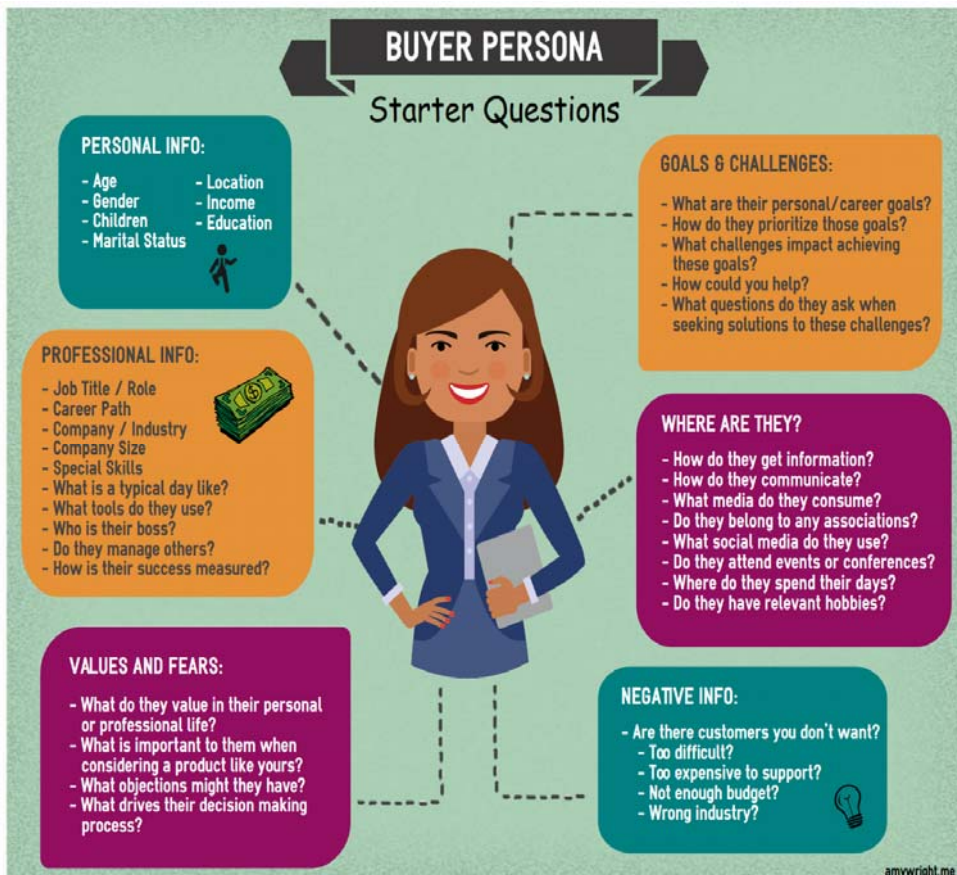


Image 4.7. Common questions to create business personas (Amy Wright) <sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Amy Wright, *What is a Buyer Persona and Why is it Important?*, on SocialMediaToday, 11 October 2017, <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/what-is-a-buyer-persona-and-why-is-it-important/507404/>, accessed 10.10.2020.

As we can observe, the research, surveys or interviews conducted in order to create buyer personas should include elements related to personal information and demographics, professional information, what potential customers value and fear, what their goals and challenges are, where they get the information from and how, and what could be their objections to you offer.

#### 4.4. HOW TO WRITE AN ELEVATOR PITCH

After researching on the potential customers and creating the buyer personas, you can work on how to address them. The elevator pitch is the short description of your proposition, in a way that it is appealing and persuasive to your audience. The reason it is called an elevator pitch is that it should be sufficiently short to be delivered during an elevator ride, generally from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

In the section below, you can see several examples of elevator speeches and the strategies that were used to make them effective<sup>65</sup>.

##### a. The Attention-Grabbing Question Strategy

*Has your boss ever asked you to write a quick report before the end of the day? You say yes with a sinking heart, because you know it will be the opposite of quick. The founders of my company, AnswerASAP, constantly dealt with this problem in their roles as marketing executives. So, they created a tool that puts all your data in one place and creates unique reports within 30 seconds or less.*

Advantages:

- it grabs the attention with a question;
- it addresses one of your needs;
- it displays empathy;
- it is clear, simple and does not use jargon.

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<sup>65</sup> Examples adapted from Aja Frost, "10 Elevator Pitch Examples to Inspire Your Own", on *HubSpot*, 26 August 2020, <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/elevator-pitch-examples>, accessed 11.10.2020.

### **b. The Credibility Boost Strategy**

*As an account executive for AnswerASAP, I talk to hundreds of marketers per month, and 99% of them hate creating reports. It's time-consuming, it's tedious, and it's usually not your highest priority. That's where our tool comes in: it pulls from all of your data to create any report you want in less than the time it takes to pour a cup of coffee.*

Advantages:

- it displays authority;
- it reinforces the problem and the need;
- it uses a common metaphor.

### **c. The Customer Story Strategy**

*Siena Rosen, a marketer at Dunder Mifflin, used to spend 30 minutes per day manually creating reports. Now that she uses AnswerASAP, that's gone down to four minutes. She's making twice as many reports in less time. Our tool helps marketers like Siena answer any question on their mind (or their boss's) nearly instantly. If you're curious, I can explain more.*

Advantages:

- it uses an example to gain credibility;
- it shows a before and after scenario;
- it demonstrated value.

### **d. The Reality Check Strategy**

*Every day, the average marketer spends half an hour putting together reports. Most of the time, these reports are barely glanced at, or, worse, ignored altogether. AnswerASAP, which stores all of your data from every tool your business uses, is a game-changer here. Just type what report you want: For example, "A bar chart of revenue from every lead source in the past month." You'll get your report in 30 seconds.*

Advantages:

- it makes you realize the true productivity cost of reporting;
- it shows innovation - game-changer;
- it clearly explains how the product works.

### **e. The Joke Strategy**

*How many marketers does it take to do monthly reporting? None, if they've automated the process with AnswerASAP. Each employee that uses this tool saves 30 minutes per day on average, which is time they can spend on marketing tasks more worthy of their time, such as improving performance on campaigns and increasing Return on Investment across the board.*

Advantages:

- it is humorous and engages the audience;
- it provides instant relatability;
- it proposes an unexpected solution to a common problem.

### **f. The Emotional Appeal Strategy**

*When I started my career in marketing, I thought I would be making a difference for my organization right away, but as the junior member of the team, all the reporting and administrative tasks were pushed onto me. I was spending so much time creating reports for key stakeholders that could've been diverted to more important revenue-generating activities. If you're not using AnswerASAP, you're spending too much of the organization's time, money, and talent on something that can be generated by our tool on-demand in 30 seconds.*

Advantages:

- it evokes emotion and empathy through storytelling;
- it establishes a pain or problem you can relate to;
- it draws the conclusion as a moral of the story.

### **g. The One-Liner Strategy**

*AnswerASAP saves marketers time by eliminating the tediousness of data-gathering and formatting to create beautiful marketing reports in less than 30 seconds.*

Advantages:

- it is short and to the point;
- it demonstrates the company's value proposition.

### **Exercises and questions to discuss**

1. Which elevator pitch example was more convincing to you and why?
2. What are some of the disadvantages of the strategies used in the examples of elevator pitch above?
3. Should the price be mentioned in the elevator pitch? Why?
4. Write an elevator pitch for a new online business platform and present it to your colleagues! Next, adapt your elevator pitch to two different types of buyer personas.

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## 5. QUESTIONNAIRES AND BUSINESS PROPOSALS

In this chapter, the focus will be on elaborating questionnaires and on writing business proposals. The purpose of bringing into discussion the writing of questionnaires is not to discuss aspects related to the research methodology in this domain, but to understand how the questions should be formulated so that the recipient understands them in the manner intended by the sender, in order for the answers to be relevant and unbiased. The section dedicated to writing business proposals is a continuation of the discussion on elevator speeches, as the objective is also to convince, but in a more lengthy and complex manner.

### 5.1. KEY CONCEPTS

- An **opinion poll** involves asking people's opinions on a particular subject, especially the one concerning politics.<sup>66</sup>
- A **survey** is a detailed study or inspection, as by gathering information through observations, questionnaires, etc. and analysing it.<sup>67</sup>
- A **questionnaire** is a written list of questions which are answered by a lot of people in order to provide information for a report or a survey.<sup>68</sup>
- A **unique selling point (USP)** is a feature of a product that is emphasized in advertising material and sales presentations.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Collins Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/opinion-poll>, accessed 10.02.2021.

<sup>67</sup> Collins Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/survey>, accessed 10.02.2021.

<sup>68</sup> Collins Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/questionnaire>, accessed 10.02.2021.

<sup>69</sup> Collins Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/unique-selling-point>, accessed 10 February 2021.

## 5.2. HOW TO DESIGN A QUESTIONNAIRE

### General guidelines

When designing a questionnaire, keep in mind that the title needs to be concise, clear and appealing. A description of your intentions and of the purposes of the questionnaire can draw the attention of the surveyed subjects, especially if the benefits for them are highlighted, as it can increase their motivation.

The time allocated to filling in the questionnaire is also relevant, as it can influence the decision of participating in the survey. Giving instructions can ease the burden of the respondents and increase the relevant response rate.

Similarly, the anonymity of the respondents, the confidentiality of the information provided or the access that respondents can have to the results of the questionnaire can influence this decision. As a general rule, do not ask for personal information or identifiers that are not necessary to the survey (such as names or addresses), as they might decrease the availability of the respondents to answer the questions. Moreover, keep in mind to thank the respondents for their effort at the end of the questionnaire.

### Types of questions

#### A. Rating/ranking questions

1. **Rating questions** - the degree to which the respondents feel about a certain topic.

e.g. *On a scale on 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest, what is the degree to which you support the introduction of compulsory school uniforms.*

2. **Ranking questions**- how the respondents feel about a particular aspect, in comparison with other aspects.

e.g. *Please, rank the following measures that the Ministry of Education should take, in order of importance:*

- *to introduce compulsory school uniforms*
- *to offer free transportation for students*
- *to decrease university tuition fees*
- *to introduce more tutoring activities*
- *to offer psychological counselling to students*

## B. Closed/open/partial pre-coding questions

1. **Closed questions** – respondents are given predefined answers that they can choose from:

e.g. *Does your school require wearing uniforms?*

- *Yes*
- *No*
- *I don't know*

2. **Open questions** – respondents are not given pre-defined answers. Even if these types of questions offer respondents more freedom of expression, they are usually more time consuming and difficult to be interpreted.

e.g. *What is your opinion about school uniforms?*

*Open answer.....*

3. Questions with **partial pre-coding** – respondents can freely give different answers, but there are also some potential answers that they can choose from.

e.g. *Why do you consider school uniforms are not beneficial?*

- *they are expensive*
- *they limit the freedom of expression*
- *they are generally not comfortable*
- *other reasons:.....*

### Tips for designing survey questions

- Keep the questions short and simple;
- Adapt the questions to your audience (e.g. avoid using jargon; use a formal/informal language register);
- Avoid repetitions, unless you want to check consistency in answers;
- Avoid double barrelled/twofold questions (e.g. *How do students and teachers feel about school uniforms?*);
- Keep consistency in your questions (e.g. *What colours do you prefer for your school uniform?* Options: *blue, green, light colours, dark colours, yellow etc.*);
- Make sure the questions are not biased (e.g. *How much do you support the introduction of compulsory school uniforms, which offer students more security?*);

- Ask questions that the respondents can answer (*What is the exact amount of money that you spent on your child's uniforms?*);
- Group questions based on subject;
- Move from more general (e.g. demographics) to more specific questions;
- Place more sensitive questions, or questions more difficult to answer, towards the end of the questionnaire.<sup>70</sup>

### Exercises

1. Assess the validity of the following survey questions and propose other versions, when necessary!
  - a) How much do you like ice-cream?
  - b) Do you like high-quality furniture?
  - c) Do you find the rapidly increasing crime rates a reason to worry about the safety of our town?
  - d) What type of kitchen appliances do you and your spouse usually buy?
  - e) How many times per month do you eat at a fancy restaurant?
  - f) Do you support the mayor's efforts to completely ban immigrants?
  - g) Do you encourage animal cruelty, through buying products tested on animals?
  - h) As a high school student, do you consider that data inconsistency contributes to the misperception of R2P measures?

2. How do you explain the differences in responses in the survey below?

In 1992, Roper conducted surveys to identify if some groups of Americans believed that the Nazi Holocaust never happened.

The question was asked in two different ways:

- a) *Does it seem possible or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened?*

Answers: 22% possible, 12% did not know

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<sup>70</sup> Some general recommendations, classifications of questions and tips for questions designs are retrieved from Nigel Mathers, Nick Fox and Amanda Hunn, *Surveys and Questionnaires*, The NIHR RDS for the East Midlands / Yorkshire & the Humber, 2009, pp. 19-27.

b) *Does it seem possible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened, or do you feel certain that it happened?*

Answers: 91% were certain that the Holocaust happened.<sup>71</sup>

3. Prepare a questionnaire on a topic that interests you and apply it to at least 10 people. Present it to your colleagues and discuss if the questions are valid or not.
4. Conduct an interview with a person who currently holds a position that you would like to hold upon graduation, and write a report summarizing what you find out in the interview.

Follow these steps for the assignment:

- Conduct your own research regarding a job and potential companies that interest you;
- Gather basic information, such as a job description, starting salary, level and type of education required for the position, and specific information regarding the company of interest. Use this information to formulate interview questions;
- Formulate your interview questions;
- After the interview, write a *thank-you* note and email it to your interviewee.
- Next, write a two/three-page report about your interview. This report is a professional document in style and content, which includes the following topics:
  - description of the industry/product/service
  - description of the position
  - requirements for the position (education, experience, skills)
  - general summary of what you have learned, including your own thoughts and reactions
- Be prepared to make a brief informative presentation about your interview.

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<sup>71</sup> Richard M. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the Twenty-First Century*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, New York and London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 114-115.

### 5.3. HOW TO WRITE BUSINESS PROPOSALS

According to writing trainer Tim North, a business proposal, in addition to a report that has an informative purpose, has as primary goal to persuade the reader to make the choice you propose. Hence, in planning the business proposal, we must be able to answer seven questions:

1. What's your goal or objective? (GOAL)
2. What problems or opportunities are your readers faced with? (PROBLEM)
3. What results will you deliver? (DELIVERABLES)
4. How will you deliver these results? (SOLUTION)
5. Why should your readers believe that you can deliver those results? (EXPERIENCE)
6. How can you justify the costs of the results? (COST)
7. Why should your readers want these results? (BENEFITS)

However, even if our goal is the first thing that we should keep in mind when preparing the proposal, it should not be present in the proposal *per se*, since your readers and potential business partners care first and foremost about their own needs. Perhaps, if our goal overlaps to some extent with the one of the readers, that can be brought into discussion as evidence that we will do our best to accomplish it.

North considers that the fourth step, finding the solution to the problem that you identified, through what you deliver, is the most time-consuming and it requires a lot of creativity. Apart from providing details about the solution that we are offering and explaining why this solution is better than others in delivering the results, preventing the risk of failure is also an important element in this section.<sup>72</sup> It is, we could say, the unique selling point of your business, what makes you stand out and differentiates you from the competitors.

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<sup>72</sup> Tim North, *Business proposal writing made easy. Write successful business and technical proposals*, Scribe Consulting, 2014. [https://www.academia.edu/23361550/Business\\_Proposal\\_Writing\\_Made\\_Easy](https://www.academia.edu/23361550/Business_Proposal_Writing_Made_Easy), accessed 10.09.2020, pp. 2-19.

## Example of a Freelance Business Proposal<sup>73</sup>

[LOGO]

### Freelance Writing Proposal

Prepared for:

[Client.FirstName] [Client.LastName]  
[Client.Company]

Prepared by:

[Sender.FirstName] [Sender.LastName]  
[Sender.Company]

#### Greetings

My name is John Smith and I am a freelance blog writer. When it comes to the written word, I am an expert. My voice is clear, succinct, and memorable. I have been writing blogs, marketing material, and other content for [Number.Of.Years] years for numerous publications both in print and online, and I take pride in effective communication. My work with [Previous.Client] helped expand their online audience and brand presence. I hope this outline shows you my vision and commitment to effective copy.

#### Expectations

[Client.Company] is in need of content creation for their blog on social media. Posts will consist of well-researched information on topics important to this field, such as new forms of social media, existing apps and websites, and emerging technology. [Client.Company] is a go-to source of news and information on social media not only for the industry, but also for users. They have achieved this through quality content and presentation, and I strive to be an asset to the team.

I have been writing about the tech industry for [Number.Of.Years]. My work has appeared in [Publication], [Publication], and [Publication]. I have a strong sense of SEO and how to structure blog posts so they receive the utmost attention in online searches.

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<sup>73</sup> Adapted from PandaDoc, *Freelance Writing Proposal Template*, <https://www.pandadoc.com/freelance-writing-proposal-template/>, accessed 15.10.2016.

### Solution and Results

I will write 2 blog posts five days a week, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each will be between 400 and 500 words and include relevant SEO tags and suggested art and where to source it. The content will focus on social media and what is most relevant to the industry on a daily basis. Aggregation will be part of the process, but original content will also be needed. To that end, forming relationships with key players in the industry is a must.

Blog posts will use language appropriate to the audience while being free of typos and others mistakes, and be properly attributed when necessary. All blogs must be pre-approved by an in-house editor before work can begin.

### Delivery

I will be expected to adhere to the following schedule on a daily basis, and be available for questions and edits throughout the day, ending at 5 p.m.:

Time	Task
8 AM	Blog pitches sent to editor for approval
8:30 AM	Blogs approved or changed at the behest of the editor
10 AM	First of two daily blogs filed for posting
NOON	Blog pitch changes sent to editor for approval, if needed
12:30 PM	Approval of changes to second blog, if needed
2 PM	Second of two daily blogs filed for posting

### Payment

I request a flat rate of \$200 per day for two blog posts. Invoices will be filed per the schedule already established by [Client.Company]. If payments are not received by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, I reserve the right to suspend work until the issue is settled. [Client.Company] will decide how payments are received, i.e. online or in check form.

### Agreement

Once this proposal is agreed upon by both parties, work will commence with an open-end date to be decided by [Client.Company]. I will be given two weeks' notice of the contract end date, and any outstanding payments must be made within 30 days of termination.

[Sender.FirstName] [Sender.LastName]      [Client.FirstName] [Client.LastName]

[Client.Company]

[Date]

[Signature]

[Date]

[Signature]

### Exercise

Write a one/two-page business proposal on a product/service at your own choice. Include in the proposal the problem, deliverables, solution, experience, cost and benefits. Try to make it clear, specific and easy to be read.

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## 6. EMPLOYMENT, GRIEVANCE LETTERS AND CHARACTER REFERENCES

### 6.1. EMPLOYMENT TERMINOLOGY<sup>74</sup>

- Casual worker

*a person employed as required without fixed hours or attendance arrangements.*

- Collective bargaining

*the process by which labor and management negotiate the terms and conditions of employment, including working hours and workplace conditions.<sup>75</sup>*

- Employment at will

*a common law doctrine under which either party may terminate an employment relationship at any time for any reason, unless a contract specifies otherwise.<sup>76</sup>*

- Whistle-blowing

*an employee's disclosure to government, the press, or upper-management authorities that the employer is engaged in unsafe or illegal activities.<sup>77</sup>*

- Wrongful discharge

*an employer's termination of an employee's employment, in violation of an employment contract or laws that protect the employees.<sup>78</sup>*

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<sup>74</sup> Unless specified, the definitions are retrieved from Citizens Information, *Glossary of employment terms*, [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/reference/checklists/checklist\\_glossary\\_of\\_employment\\_terms.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/reference/checklists/checklist_glossary_of_employment_terms.html), accessed 30.01.2021.

<sup>75</sup> Retrieved from Chegg Prep, *Chapter 34: Employment, Immigration, and Labor*, <https://www.chegg.com/flashcards/chapter-34-employment-immigration-and-labo-706f40e3-eef2-4b97-8445-a2364f4d4930/deck>, accessed 30.01.2021.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem.*

- **Disciplinary procedure**  
*sets out in writing how the employer will deal with the alleged shortcomings of an employee.*
- **Dismissal**  
*This occurs when your contract of employment is ended. If you are dismissed by your employer you may be able to claim unfair dismissal.*
- **Unfair dismissal**  
*If your employer terminates your contract of employment, your dismissal is presumed to be unfair unless your employer can justify it on fair grounds.*
- **Constructive dismissal**  
*when you terminate your contract of employment because of your employer's behaviour.*
- **Duty of care**  
*Your employer owes you a duty of care to provide a safe workplace and this is implied by law in your contract of employment. It means that you should not have to work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions.*
- **Domestic worker**  
*someone who is employed to work in a private home.*
- **Fixed-term contract**  
*a contract of employment which ends on an agreed date.*
- **Force majeure leave**  
*leave from work for an employee for urgent reasons because of the illness or injury of a family member.*
- **Fringe benefits**  
*advantages offered in addition to salary (life insurance, retirement scheme, employee discounts, company car, etc.). Also called perks, an abbreviation for perquisites.<sup>79</sup>*

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<sup>79</sup> Retrieved from Verma Shalini and Anand Reetesh, (2007), *Word Power Made Handy*, 2nd Edition, New Delhi: S Chand, 2007. p. 140.

- Grievance procedure (raise a grievance = make a complaint)  
*this sets out how to complain about something in your employment terms and conditions which affects you.*
- Gross misconduct  
*flagrant misbehaviour at work such as assault, stealing, bullying, or harassment.*
- Lay off  
*when you are let go from your job temporarily as your employer has no work for you.*
- Notice (hand in one's notice)  
*an announcement by the employee or employer that the employment contract will end on a certain date.*
- Open-ended contract  
*a contract of employment which continues until the employer or employee ends it. It is known as a contract of indefinite duration. This is what employees often refer to as a permanent job.*
- Maternity leave  
*leave from work for a woman who is pregnant or who has just given birth.*
- Paternity leave  
*leave from work for a parent (other than the mother) following the birth or adoption of a child.*
- Sick leave  
*absence because of illness - to be on sick leave.<sup>80</sup>*
- PAYE  
*(Pay as You Earn) is the system where tax is deducted from your wages by your employer and sent to the Revenue Commissioners.*

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<sup>80</sup> Retrieved from Learn English Today, *Employment-Jobs Vocabulary*, <https://www.learn-english-today.com/business-english/employment-vocabulary.html>, accessed 30.01.2021.

- Personnel  
*people who work for a firm or company (employees).<sup>81</sup>*
- Probationary period  
*a specified period at the start of an employment to see if the employee is suitable for the job.*
- Redundancy (to make redundant, redundancy pay)  
*redundancy is when your job ceases to exist because of lack of work or your company closing down.*
- Statutory entitlement  
*legal right governed by law.*
- Trade union  
*an organisation which negotiates with an employer for better pay and conditions.*
- Zero-hours contract  
*a type of employment contract where the employees make themselves available for work for a specified number of hours and get paid for a proportion of those hours even if not required to work.*

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem.*

## 6.2. HOW TO WRITE A GRIEVANCE LETTER

In order to officially complain about unfair treatment or a problem at work, one should write a grievance letter. This is the first step to take if one wants to file a complaint or a grievance.

### General guidelines<sup>82</sup>

- Give sufficient details for your employer/ the person who deals with grievances to be able to investigate your complaint properly.
- Keep to the facts and do not make allegations you cannot prove.
- Use formal language.
- Do not use abusive or offensive language.
- Explain how you felt about the reason of your complaint, but do not use emotive language.

Include in the letter:

- your name, address and contact number;
- your employer's name and address;
- the key facts of your complaint; say what happened and try to include the date and time of the incident, where it occurred, the names of the people involved, the names of any witnesses;
- any evidence you have to support your claims;
- if possible, a reasonable solution to your complaint;
- your demands.

### Example

*Dear Mr. Sparks,*

*I am writing to seek your help in resolving a problem that I am experiencing at work. It is a problem that is causing me some concern and that I have been unable to solve without bringing to your attention. I hope in doing so we can deal with the issue quickly and amicably.*

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<sup>82</sup> Adapted from Citizens Advice – England, *Complaint about a problem at work – grievance letter checklist*, <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/problems-at-work/complaint-about-a-problem-at-work-grievance-letter-checklist/>, accessed 10.02.2021.

*In December, some time before the office Christmas party, my boss said that she would have to review my working arrangements in the new year. I currently work from home on Fridays as I find commuting into town five days a week very tiring. Up to now, she has been very supportive of me, but her attitude toward me has changed since I told her I was pregnant. That was in late October or early November. Since then, she has been criticising my work in ways she never did before, making derogatory comments about me to some of my colleagues and they have started saying that I don't pull my weight and am never in the office. In fact, I have been in the office four days a week and on the day I work from home, I get through more work than I do in the office. My boss has acknowledged this in the past. I was very worried over the Christmas period and hoped things would get better in the new year.*

*However, on 2 January, the first day back at work, my boss said that I would have to work in the office every day of the week until I went on maternity leave. When I asked why, she just said she needed staff in the office. I said I would try, but I had been finding it hard before I was pregnant, and it was only likely to get harder as my pregnancy advanced. She said if I couldn't work in the office, I should look at other options. I asked what she meant, and she said I was free to go elsewhere.*

*I raised this matter informally, but haven't been satisfied with the outcome. I tried talking to my boss but she refused to talk to me about this and said she had said all she had to say on the matter.*

*I was very upset about this as I have been in this job for over 10 years and have not had any problems in the past. I enjoy my work and cannot understand why her attitude toward me has changed. I was so worried and upset that I have had to go to my GP and have been signed off sick for a month.*

*I would welcome the chance to talk this through to you at a convenient time and place. I would like to be accompanied to the meeting by J. Sinden.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Jade Caine<sup>83</sup>*

### **Exercise**

Write a grievance letter addressing one of these issues:

- work relations/ practices
- work safety
- harassment
- discrimination

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem.*

### 6.3. HOW TO WRITE A CHARACTER REFERENCE

In order to explain what a character reference/personal reference is and how it should be written, we will use the guidelines provided by Alison Doyle, job search and career expert for *The Balance Careers*.

“A character reference is a recommendation provided by someone who knows you personally and can describe your attributes and traits. [...] A potential employer, school, landlord, volunteer group, or professional organization may ask you to provide them with a character reference. Rather than speaking to your work experience and skills, as a work reference might, a character reference attests to your character and interpersonal abilities.”<sup>84</sup>

According to Doyle, a character reference should include:

- the reason for writing;
- how the person knows you, and for how long;
- information on your personality and abilities, with examples;
- contact information.

The structure:

1. Salutation
2. First paragraph – explains the connection with the recommended person and why the writer is qualified to write the letter.
3. Following paragraphs – information about the recommended person, with a focus on the skills and characteristics suitable for the purpose of the letter. The letter should be long enough as to show that you know the person sufficiently; a short letter might send the message that you either do not know the person well, or you do not fully recommend her.
4. Closing paragraph – contact information, availability and reiteration of the recommendation, whether it is strong or with reservation.
5. Signature.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Alison Doyle, *What Is a Character Reference?*, The Balance Careers, 15 June 2020. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-a-character-reference-2061943#how-to-get-a-character-reference>, accessed 30.01.2021.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-write-a-reference-letter-2064324>, accessed 30.01.2021.

## Example of character reference/personal reference

*John Smith  
123 Main Street  
Anytown, CA 12345  
555 555-5555  
jsmith@email.com  
September 1, 2018*

*Jane Kiel  
Director, Human Resources  
Anytown Riding Institute  
123 Business Rd.  
Anytown, CA 54321*

*Dear Ms. Kiel,*

*I have known Jane Doe in a variety of capacities for many years. She has been my daughter's riding instructor for the past several years. In addition, she is my partner in a small business where she is responsible for writing and editing articles and website content.*

*Jane is efficient, detail-oriented, and extremely competent. She often successfully finishes a task well before the deadline. She is extremely organized, and never misses a deadline or forgets an assignment.*

*Jane also has an excellent rapport with people of all ages. She has taught riding to both young children and the elderly, and every age in between. Her excellent communication skills (both written and verbal) allow her to connect with all kinds of people and to inspire them.*

*In summary, I highly recommend Jane for any position or endeavor that she may seek to pursue. She will be a valuable asset to any organization.*

*If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.*

*Sincerely,  
John Smith<sup>86</sup>*

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/character-reference-letter-example-2058721>, accessed 30.01.2021.

## Example of a professional reference letter

Melissa Bradley  
123 Business Rd., Business City, NY 54321 · 555-555-5555 ·  
melissa@abmedia.com

July 9, 2020

Jim Lee  
Saber Marketing & PR  
321 Business Ave.  
Business City, NY 12345

Dear Mr. Lee,

*I am thrilled to recommend Sarah Jones for the digital marketing manager position at Saber Marketing & PR. As the marketing director at A & B Media, I had the pleasure of working as Sarah's supervisor when she was employed here as a marketing associate. Responsible, punctual and extremely bright, Sarah was among the best talents at A & B Media, and I absolutely endorse her qualification and her skill set.*

*I was continuously impressed by the knowledge she brought to the table and her dedication to staying on top of the latest in the field. Sarah combines sharp analysis skills with a strong intuition, and I always knew I could rely on her to meet deadlines and exceed our expectations. During her two years with us, she achieved numerous accomplishments, from increasing our social media engagement by 20%, to lowering our website bounce rate by 10%, to increasing our ROI on digital campaigns by 15%.*

*While Sarah's professional acumen was immensely valuable to A & B Media, she was also a wonderful team player. Optimistic, engaging and easy to get along with, Sarah was a true joy to have in the office and fostered many positive relationships within our department as well as throughout the company.*

*With that said, I am highly confident in my recommendation and believe that Sarah would be a great fit for Saber Marketing & PR. If you would like to speak further about my experience working with Sarah, please email me at melissa@abmedia.com or call me at 555-555-5555.*

Sincerely,  
Melissa Bradley  
Marketing Director  
A & B Media <sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibidem.

## Useful Phrases for a Character or Professional Reference<sup>88</sup>

### Introduction Phrases

- I am honoured to support John Doe as a candidate for the position of
- I am pleased to provide a reference for...
- I am pleased to write a character reference for...
- I am happy to recommend...
- I am pleased to comment on...
- I can offer the highest recommendation for...
- I first became acquainted with...
- John Doe has worked under my supervision for
- I have known Mr./Ms. Doe for
- I have no hesitation in recommending...
- I am writing in response to your enquiry...
- John Doe was a student in two of my classes...

### Describing Qualifications

- a creative problem-solver
- always behaves professionally
- among her significant contributions to the company are
- broad range of skills
- I can attest to his integrity
- careful attention to detail
- communicates her ideas clearly
- communicates effectively in writing
- completely loyal and trustworthy
- deals sensitively with customers and co-workers
- demonstrated particular strengths in
- follows tasks through to completion
- fulfilled the job requirements admirably
- gets along well with others
- handles responsibility well
- has a take-charge personality
- innovative and creative
- mature beyond her years
- intelligent and ambitious

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<sup>88</sup> Adapted from WriteExpress, *Write a Recommendation or a Reference Letter*, <https://www.writeexpress.com/tutorial/recomm01.html>, accessed 30.01.2021.

- personable and easy to work with
- keeps calm under pressure
- one of our finest, most well-rounded undergraduates
- outstanding leadership abilities
- punctual and hard-working
- self-motivated individual
- demonstrated a wide-range knowledge of
- willing to go beyond what is required
- willing to take on new responsibilities
- works efficiently and effectively
- works well independently

#### Ending Phrases

- I have confidence in his/her ability to
- has my highest recommendation
- I hope this information proves helpful
- if I can further assist
- if you have further questions
- if you need additional information
- if you would like more information
- recommend without reservation
- writing to request your favourable consideration of
- should be given serious consideration
- should you have any questions
- I will be happy to speak with you/give you more details
- will meet your expectations
- will be successful in any enterprise he undertakes
- will be a great addition to
- would be a valuable addition/an asset to

#### Exercises

1. Look at the two letters above and explain what the difference between a character reference and a professional reference is.
2. One of your colleagues needs a character reference for an internship programme in the United States. The position involves teaching team-work, creative and outdoor activities to children aged 8 to 14; it requires excellent communication and leadership skills, and the ability to interact well with co-workers and children. Based on the instructions and examples above, write a one-page character reference for your colleague.

## 6.4. FORMAL LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE OF CONTRACTS

Since the types of letters presented above require the usage of a formal language register, next, we will look into some guidelines for transforming informal language into a formal one.

Guidelines:

- Avoid using contractions;
- Avoid using acronyms and abbreviations that might not be clearly understood;
- Write in complete, longer, more complex sentences;
- Keep exclamation marks to a minimum;
- Spell out numbers less than one hundred;
- Write in third-person point of view;
- Avoid using slang, idioms and clichés;
- Try providing signposts and connectors (e.g. *in addition, nevertheless, on the other hand, by contrast, although, alternatively*) to guide the reader through your writing.<sup>89</sup>

### Examples of language registers in corporate emails

Informal/Semi-formal language	Formal language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks for the email.</li> <li>• Re ...</li> <li>• Please could you ...</li> <li>• I'm sorry to tell you that ...</li> <li>• I'm sorry for ...</li> <li>• Could you ...?</li> <li>• You haven't ...</li> <li>• Don't forget that ... I need to ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you for your email received 12 Feb.</li> <li>• With regard/reference to ...</li> <li>• I would be grateful if you could</li> <li>• We regret to inform you that ...</li> <li>• Please accept our apologies for ...</li> <li>• I was wondering if you could ...</li> <li>• We note that you have not ...</li> <li>• We would like to remind you that...It is necessary for me to...</li> </ul>

<sup>89</sup> BBC, Bitesize, *Formal and informal*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z996hyc/revision/1>, accessed 28.01.2021.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I might ...</li> <li>• Shall I ...?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• But, ... / Also, ... / So, ...</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you'd like more details, let me know.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See you next week.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think it's better than ... (+ing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is possible that I will...</li> <li>• Would you like me to ...?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, .../I addition, ... / Therefore, ...</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.</li> <li>• I look forward to meeting you next week</li> <li>• I think this option would be preferable to ... (+ing)</li> </ul>
Hi/Hello Peter	Dear Mr. Smith
Thanks for your email. Re your email, ... Sorry I haven't written for ages, but I've been really busy.	Thank you for your email of ... Further to your last email, ... I apologize for not getting in contact with you before now.
Just a short note about ... I'm writing about ... Here's the ... you wanted. I got your name from ... Please note that ...	I am writing in connection with ... I am writing with regard to ... In reply to your email, here are ... Your name was given to me by ... We would like to point out that ...
Just a note to say ... We can confirm that ... Good news! Unfortunately, ...	I'm writing to let you know that ... We are able to confirm that ... I am delighted to tell you that ... We regret to inform you that ...
Can you tell me a little more about...  I'd like to know ... Please send me ...	Could you give me some information about ... I would like to know ... I'm interested in receiving/finding out ...
Could you ...?  I'd appreciate your help on this.	I'd be grateful if you could ... I wonder if you could ... Thank you in advance for your help in this matter.
I'll look into it. I'll get back to you soon.	I'll investigate the matter. I will contact you again shortly.
Just give me a call if you have any questions. My number is ...	Please, feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My phone number is...
Looking forward to ... (+ ing) Best wishes to .. Bye (for now)/All the best	I am looking forward to ... (+ ing) Give my regards to ... Best wishes/ Regards
Just a quick note to arrange a time to meet.	I am writing to arrange a time for our meeting.

When would suit you?	What time would be convenient for you?
I'm free Thursday am. I won't be around until after lunch. Any time after that is okay. Sorry, can't make it next Monday.	I would be able to attend the meeting on Thursday morning. I am out of the office until 2pm. Any time after that would be fine. I am afraid I can't manage next Monday.
Thursday is good for me. That should be okay. I'll get back to you if there's a problem.	I would like to confirm ... That's fine. I will call/email you tomorrow to confirm the details.
See you in Brussels. Give me a call if anything changes.	I look forward to meeting you in Brussels. Let me know if you need to change the arrangements.
I'm writing to invite you to ... Would you like to come to ...? Please let me know if you can make it	We would be very honoured if you could come to ... I would like to invite you to ... / attend our ... Please let me know if you will be able to attend.
Thanks a lot for the invitation. The date's fine for me. I'd love to come to the meeting. It sounds like a great idea.	Thank you for your kind invitation. The date you suggest is fine. I would be delighted to attend the meeting. I am sure it will be very useful.
Help / because of / ask / tell / facts / get / job / have / give / fix / ask for / needs / check (prove)	Assistance / due to / enquire / inform / information / obtain / occupation / possess / provide / repair / request / requirements / verify

**Table 6.1. Formal and informal language registers in corporate emails.**<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Adapted from Helder Fanha Martins, *Corporate emails in English: brief contexts and language*, Lisbon Accounting and Business School, 2016. <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.21/7214>, accessed, 10.09.2018.

## Exercises

1. Rewrite the e-mail below and address it to your boss, instead of your friend. Use a formal language register.

Hi John 😊

*So sorry I couldn't get to your house-warming party last Thursday :( Btw, congrats on your new home! I really wanted to come and I was all ready to leave, when my cousin, Amy, from Scotland came to my house for a surprise visit, out of the blue!! She was only in town for one evening before she went to my sister's house... so I kind of had to stay with her.*

*I tried to phone you but your line was busy the 2 times I tried. Then I was out with my cousin in town and didn't get to ring again.*

*Well, next time maybe! Hope you're not too angry with me. My evening with my cousin was really boring...if that makes you feel any better.*

*PS: Need some help with something this week? Just give me a call!!*

*See you soon, Nick.*

2. Rewrite the sentences below using a formal language register.
  - We had to fire him because he didn't do much at work.
  - Our guy fixed the problem. Now it's your turn to pay us!!
  - Need some help? Just give me a call!!
  - I'm super happy to tell you that you got the job. Congrats!
  - Our accountant can't find the payment you say you've made.
  - You can buy a refrigerator for less than 1000 RON. How cool is that?
  - We have to do this asap!
  - I am very impatient for you to write back. Write soon!
  - Long time no see! How are you, Julia? Are the kids OK?
  - Can you tell me a bit more about that business idea you had in mind? Too bad we didn't hang to talk about it.

## Language of contracts

The language of contracts can sometimes be difficult to be understood by laypeople and the message might seem to be hidden behind complicated words. Since employment also requires signing a contract, in this section we will discuss some common aspects related to the language used in these types of documents.

Modal verbs *shall* and *must* are used to create duties in Contracts (*agrees to, is obligated to, is required to*) and modal verb *may* is used to create privileges. The names of the parties are generally written in capital letters (e.g. *Employer, Employee*). An aspect that makes contracts even more difficult to be understood is the common use of pronominal adverbs (e.g. *hereof, thereof, hereunder*).

The phrases “subject to” and “notwithstanding” are used as a cross-referencing phrases linking a main rule to an exception. *Subject to* looks ahead to the exception whereas *notwithstanding* (=despite) looks back to the main rule.<sup>91</sup>

## Common legal terms and phrases

- Indemnification

*the action of compensating someone for the loss suffered, to restore them to the financial position they were in before the loss happened;*

- Damages

*compensation for the loss or injury, paid in money; money that a court orders a person to pay because they have hurt another person or damaged that person's property;*

- Breach

*to break or violate a law, obligation, duty or contract term etc;*

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<sup>91</sup> Pascale Chauvot, *Legal English in focus: the language of contracts – “subject to” and “notwithstanding”*, 1 October 2011. <https://www.communicaid.com/business-language-courses/blog/legal-english-in-focus-the-language-of-contracts-subject-to-and-notwithstanding/>, accessed 02.02.2021.

- Force majeure  
*an unexpected event, outside the control of the parties to an agreement, due to which a part of an agreement cannot be performed and which may be used as a defence in a breach of contract case;*
- Aforementioned  
*previously mentioned, mentioned above; the one or the ones mentioned previously;*
- Severability  
*the ability of a provision to be separated completely from the main part of a contract, statute, or other legal document but still leave the rest of the document legally valid: Severability of individual provisions.*
- Effective Date  
*the time at which an agreement, law or other measure takes effect: The effective date of the provision was clearly stated in the Act.*
- IN WITNESS WHEREOF  
*written to show that someone has certified a legal document with their signature: IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Assignment Agreement as of the date first above written.*
- Foregoing  
*what has just been mentioned or stated;*
- Heretofore  
*before now;*
- Herein  
*contained within this document*
- Hereby  
*by this means or by reason of this;*
- Hereto  
*to this contract;*
- Hereunder  
*as provided for under the terms of this document; further on in a document;*

- Hereinafter  
*from this point onwards (in this document);*
- Hereafter  
*starting from this moment;*
- Thereunder  
*under something that has been mentioned (in the text); according to a specific rule or law that has been mentioned (in the text): When a contract is rescinded, the breaching party will restore to the injured party what he has received thereunder.*
- Therefrom  
*from that: Accounts shall mean all of Company's Accounts, whether now existing or hereafter arising or acquired, together with the proceeds therefrom.*
- Subject to  
*if one event is subject to another event, then the holding of the first event depends on whether and how the second event happens; depending on the stated thing happening: We would be pleased to offer you the lease, subject to our receipt of a reference from your current or previous landlord.<sup>92</sup>*
- Will be deemed accepted  
*Will be considered accepted*
- Upon their acceptance  
*After they accept*
- Pursuant to/under the provision  
*In accordance with (the stipulations)*

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<sup>92</sup> The definitions of the legal terms above are retrieved from TransLegal World Law Dictionary, <https://www.translegal.com/dictionary/en/>, accessed 02.02.2021.

## Typical employment contract for contract staff

### CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

The European Commission, *hereinafter* referred to as the "Commission",  
represented by Mr/Mrs. .... of the Directorate General Joint  
Research Centre

AND Mr/Mrs Name SURNAME (pers. Nr. ....)  
*hereinafter* referred to as "the employee"

#### HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

##### Article 1

The Commission appoints Mr/Mrs ..... as a member of the contract staff *with effect from date* in accordance with Article 3b of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities.

*Under* this contract, the employee *shall be bound by* the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities, and in particular Articles 79 to 84 and 88 to 119 *thereof*, and by the Regulation laying down the tax for the benefit of the European Communities.

##### Article 2

The employee *is appointed to* carry out clerical and secretarial tasks, office management and other equivalent tasks, as set out in the table in Article 80(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities.

The place of assignment is Directorate General Joint Research Centre.

##### Article 3

The employee is in function group II, grade 4; 5; 6; 7; and step 1.

The employee *shall* be paid monthly.

##### Article 4

1. This contract is concluded for a period of x months.
2. This contract may be renewed. The total length of this contract and any renewals *thereof may not exceed* 3 years.

The total duration of the presence of the employee must respect the Commission decision C(2004) 1597 of 28.04.2004, on the maximum duration for the recourse to non-permanent staff in the Commission services.

**Article 5**

*Under the provisions of Article 84(1) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities, the employee shall serve a probationary period of nine months.*

**Article 6**

*Pursuant to Article 119 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities, the contract may be terminated by the Institution or by the employee for the reasons referred to in Articles 47 to 50a of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities, under the conditions laid down in those Articles.*

*In accordance with the provisions of Articles 119 and 47(b)(ii) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities, the period of notice is fixed at one month per year of service, with a minimum of one month and a maximum of three months.*

**Article 7**

*This contract shall come into effect on the date when the employee actually starts work.*

*Done in duplicate at .....  
on*

*Read and approved,  
.....  
(signature of employee)<sup>93</sup>*

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<sup>93</sup> Retrieved from the European Commission, *Typical employment contract for contract staff*, [https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/contract\\_employment\\_fg2.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/contract_employment_fg2.pdf), accessed 02.02.2021.

## Exercise

Explain the meaning of the sections below, retrieved from an employment contract.

*WHEREAS the Employer desires to obtain the benefit of the services of the Employee, and the Employee desires to render such services on the terms and conditions set forth. [...]*

*IN CONSIDERATION of the promises and other good and valuable consideration (the sufficiency and receipt of which are hereby acknowledged) the parties agree as follows[...]*

*It is understood and agreed that the first ninety days of employment shall constitute a probationary period during which period the Employer may, in its absolute discretion, terminate the Employee's employment, for any reason without notice or cause.[...]*

*The Employer may terminate the employment of the Employee at any time without the requirement to show sufficient cause pursuant to (b) above, provided the Employer pays to the Employee an amount as required by the Employment Standards Act 2000 or other such legislation as may be in effect at the time of termination. This payment shall constitute the employee's entire entitlement arising from said termination[...]*

*As full compensation for all services provided the employee shall be paid at the rate of \_\_\_\_\_. Such payments shall be subject to such normal statutory deductions by the Employer.[...]*

### *Severability*

*The parties hereto agree that in the event any article or part thereof of this agreement is held to be unenforceable or invalid then said article or part shall be struck and all remaining provision shall remain in full force and effect.[...]*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Employer has caused this agreement to be executed by its duly authorized officers and the Employee has set his hand as of the date first above written.[...]<sup>94</sup>*

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<sup>94</sup> Sections retrieved from Stanford University, *Sample of Employment Agreement*, <https://sehub.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/SampleEmploymentContract.pdf>, accessed 02.02.2021.

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## FINAL REMARKS

This coursebook provides extensive coverage of the communication skills included in the syllabus of the course *Communication for international careers 1*, offered to BA students enrolled at the Faculty of European Studies within Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. The course is part of a three-semester module designed to teach and train students to communicate effectively and efficiently in English in professional contexts.

The module is designed to offer fundamental theoretical knowledge on the topics discussed, and on the terminology pertaining to those topics, but it has a strong interactive and practical approach, as one of our goals is to help students understand the important dynamics of group communication, learn how to put their knowledge into practice and offer constructive feedback, for the purpose of improving their communication competencies.

At the end of this course, students should be able to: analyse political and institutional discourse; identify strategic ambiguity and doublespeak; understand politically correct language; use tactful and nonconflictual language; mediate workplace conflicts; design questionnaires, business and buyer personas; write formal emails, elevator speeches, business proposals, grievance letters and character references; understand political jargon, employment terminology and the language of contracts; speak with confidence and power; accurately present themselves and communicate in diverse professional settings.



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