

**Interrupting and overlapping in the US
presidential debates
– A comparative study**

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This thesis studied the occurrence of overlapping and power-oriented interruptions in the presidential debates of USA. The study was conducted by comparing the debates of the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections and its aim was to provide an image of the developmental direction of interrupting in the presidential debates.

The theoretical frame was constituted on “An analysis in terms of relationally neutral, power- and rapport-oriented acts” by Julia A Goldberg (1990) and “A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation” by Harvey Sacks et al. (1974). The main alignment of the study was Julia Goldberg’s power-oriented interruptions and its two subheadings “content control interruptions” and “process control interruptions”.

In the study it was found that the power-oriented interruptions were more prevalent in the 2016 elections than in the 2012 elections. The difference was most visible in the prevalence of content-control interruptions as there was a major increase in their number in 2016 debates.

Keywords: Discourse, turn-taking, power-oriented acts, interruption, Harvey Sacks, Julia A. Goldberg, presidential elections, USA

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1. Introduction

In September 2016 two New York Times reporters, Meghan McDonald and Darold Cuba, wrote an article about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's first debate. They included calculations on how the debate actually went, counting for example minutes each candidate spoke, how many questions they asked or dodged and finally, how many times they were interrupted (McDonald and Cuba 2012, n. pag.). The noticeable difference in these numbers between the candidates evoked curiosity on whether this has always been like this, if it will continue as such and what could be found out about it.

My study was conducted with transcriptions of presidential debates in the USA in 2012 and 2016. The debates were studied in order to recognize situations in which there could have had been interruptions of any kind. The theory that was chosen is turn-taking by Harvey Sacks et al. and from that frame especially interrupting and overlapping. The theory was applied to the material as needed and analysis was made. The study is conducted in order to provide more information about the debates and some very central changes that are visible for the audiences. The main aim of this study was to show the various ways in which interruption may arise and through that data to provide information about the quantity of interruptions. Even though the exact number of each occurrence is somewhat difficult to conclude, as it can be debatable to which group each phenomenon should belong, an estimate of the number of each occurrence will be made.

The subject is particularly interesting in terms of what it reflects and how it can be seen as an image of contemporary societies. Politics have gained popularity among vast audiences which makes it even more vulnerable to inspection. To these audiences it may not be sufficient to hear the politicians or presidential candidates to that extent, to discuss the political issues in a manner which requires further understanding of terminology or global politics. Here the aspect of entertainment can be brought to discussion. The sense of entertainment may bring more audience to a regular political discussion as it provides a contemporary image also to those demographic groups which usually would not be interested in politics itself. Overlapping and interrupting increases the pace in a

discussion which usually is considered as a complicating factor when following a discussion. For untrained political audiences this may, however, provide a welcome relief that makes it simpler to follow the intense and often terminology-filled debates.

The research will provide examples of how interrupting and overlapping can also be used as an overpowering method for example between a man and a woman. An interesting point of view would be whether interruptions increase in discussions in which a man experiences deteriorating of their sense of power over a woman. It can be interpreted that some of this is indicated in the study, but it will not be further discussed as it would preferably require a study of its own among its separate field. In addition to this the paper indicates different manners in which it is possible to lead the discussion to a direction of one's own preferences. The found methods may not be specifically versatile but they do provide a glance of the available resources.

The greatest problems that were encountered were the question of whether I could remain as unbiased as possible, how to ignore the images the media has provided for years at this point and how to see through it all in order to conduct the study in the best way possible.

The goal is to provide an image of the versatile use of interruptions and overlapping. The study will also aim to prove that the amount of interruptions has increased and that the general form of the debates may be standing in a turning point. The exceptional setting that the 2016 debates had with a candidate who had no qualifications to become the president of the United States provides an interesting baseline. Thus the hypothesis for the study is "power-oriented interrupting was more prevalent in the 2016 presidential debates compared to the 2012 debates."

2. Presidential elections in the USA

The history of the presidential election in the USA dates back to year 1789, when George Washington was elected as the first president in the country. There were no political parties during that time as they were originally founded during 1790s, the Federalist Party being the first one. The Federalists were a highly elitist, pro-industry party, whose main goals were to rapidly develop the amount of trading. Their opposite was a party originally called “antifederalists”, who were a democratic-republican party with priorities in democratically lead society (Buhl 2016, n. pag.).

As the Federalist Party was discontinued in the 1820s, the Whig party took its place in opposition. The Whig party was constituted of both Federalists and the Democratic - Republican Party. The contemporary Democratic Party was founded in 1828 and it took the place of the Democratic - Republican Party. A few decades later the Whig party was also discontinued and the Republican Party was founded acquiring the most of the ideology of the former Whigs and Federalists. These two parties still exist in the USA with some changes in the orientation throughout the years (Buhl 2016, n. pag.).

Through the history of presidential elections in the USA there have been 18 presidents from the Republican Party and 16 from the Democratic Party. Before the formation of these two parties, the Democratic - Republican Party had four, Whig Party also four and the Federalists had one. Naturally George Washington was independent as none of the parties were founded when he was elected (Buhl 2016, n. pag.).

In contemporary elections, the population vote for electors in their state, not directly the candidate they wish to become the president. The electors are a part of the Electoral College, which is a group of 538 people who ultimately choose the president. The amount of each state’s electors depends on their number of congress representatives, which does not vary as much as the population. The amount of voters behind each elector may vary greatly, which is how the election of the electors should balance the system (Buhl 2016, n. pag.). The Electoral College should, in theory, enable the possibility to affect the result even for the smaller

states.

In the end, the electors have the power to vote who they wish and it has been seen in the past how this may not be as straightforward as it could be. The elector may not vote for the candidate they have originally promised and there is nothing the people can then do. Also the “Winner-takes-all” system may distort the results, as this may lead to a situation, where a nearly 50/50 result still could lead to the strongest candidate to have all the votes of the state in question (Buhl 2016, n. pag.).

The system may then lead to a situation, where the presidential candidate, who has received the most votes from the citizens, may still not become the president. Before the 2016 elections this had happened only four times, mostly in the 1800s and once in the year 2000 (Historianet 2016, n. pag.). In 2016 in an election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump this happened once again as the electoral votes made Trump the president even when Clinton won in the number of popular votes.

The presidential pre-elections consist of more candidates and they work as a sounding of the voters’ opinions in the matter of popularity and which one of the candidates would be the most likely to gain the best results in the final election. After the pre-elections are done the actual elections may begin, which is when the debating starts. In the following chapter I will discuss the effect of debates in the elections.

3. Influence and role of debates in elections

“Voters are influenced by a variety of factors, some stemming from the candidates’ campaigns and some beyond the candidates’ control” (Erikson and Wlezien 1 2012, 2).

The debates do not have a very specific influence in the final results of an election. Even though there is a contradiction in what the voters say and what the studies on the subject show. Two-thirds of voters consider debates helpful in the decision-making (Ordway and Wihbey 2016, n. pag.) there are studies that actually do show that the debates do not affect the voting (Pew Research Center 2004, n. pag.). Minor changes can be seen, but the general idea is, that the debates do not carry the weight of the elections and thus should not be considered as the most noteworthy section of the run. The campaign as a whole should be paid attention to, as Erikson and Wlezien note in “The 2012 Campaign and the Timeline of Presidential Elections”:

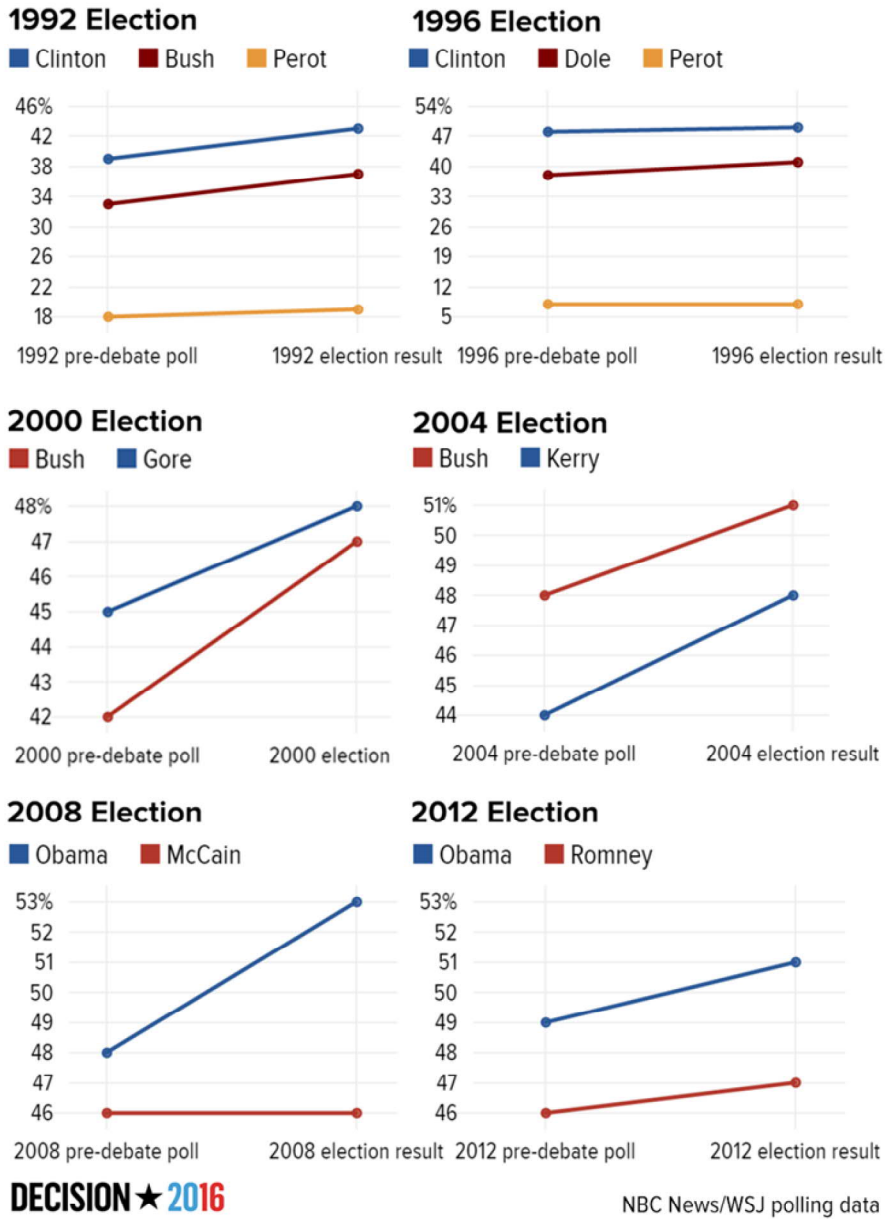
Campaign events can also generate long-term (think “permanent”) change in preferences that last throughout the campaign, which we refer to as “bumps.” Figure 1(b) contrasts a bump from a bounce. Because bumps do not expire, a series of bumps accumulate rather than decay. Bumps matter, carrying forth to Election Day. Effects on different days may cancel out. Or they may compound. There is no permanent equilibrium, only a moving equilibrium as preferences shift up or down depending on the unpredictable direction of the next event. The election outcome would be the sum of all of the campaign effects that occur over the timeline.

(Erikson and Wlezien 2 2014, chap.1)

The minimal differences, the debates make in the voting, can be seen when observed carefully, but in relation the difference between the votes each candidate gets, usually remains the same. There may be more votes for each, but there most often is no significant difference in how the votes are distributed. Dante Chinni (2016, n. pag.) presented this in his article for NBC about the effect of the debates. The graph shows how the voters shifted after the debates. Mostly there is no actual difference, but there are a few graphs that show how some features in the debate have proven to alter the difference between the candidates, but even then, only to

an extent. Such features could be for example misbehaving or coming out as unqualified for the task (Chinni 2016, n. pag.)

How Much Do Voters Shift Post-Debate?



(Chinni 2016)

In the year 2000 there was one of the clearest effects in the history of debates. Al Gore presented himself in a manner, which was not approved of by the public, which caused Bush's votes to increase just enough to make a difference (Sides 2012, n. pag.).

In the studies mentioned earlier in this chapter it was noted that the debates may have an effect to the final result of the elections if the candidate appears to be unqualified for the task or if they misbehave in a matter of speaking. The interesting point is that Mr. Trump appeared to have made all of this and yet he managed to gain more voters during the debates and eventually won the elections.

Hence the future appears to be slightly less predictable. Now something that would have previously made a negative impact on the voters has now been marked as something that the voters actually approve of and furthermore support. It must be observed closely whether this style of debating will be the future of presidential elections in the USA and whether the style of proving oneself by achievements and expertise can be replaced by something that could at its worst be called "a good show".

More research should be conducted in the subject of whether this will be the image of future elections and their debates. Has the 2016 elections opened a new pathway for a different approach and rules when common behavior and expertise is in question or can the elections be trusted to be a glitch in the system after which the candidates will regain their credibility in the eyes of politics and the voters. The extremely interrupting style of debating must be studied and exact data must be provided for the future studies to research how the elections were actually won by conducting such behavior. I will not focus deeply on the future predictions in my study but will leave the questions to be answered by further research. This study aims to provide material for those studies.

As a conclusion, the debates should be seen as reinforcement for the candidate's campaign and also as a section that provides extra entertainment. The debates provide the audiences a possibility to see more of their candidate, how they function in a stressful situation and under pressure and show whether they could be qualified to become the president, but even with all these functions, the debates do not have a vast effect on the actual result. During the elections it is very

likely that people remain loyal to their own candidate and follow the debates with the presupposition that their candidate's opinions are the correct ones with plenty of things to agree with and they should thus win the debate. This means that the public opinion is very unlikely to change even with the help of the debates. The 2016 elections slightly rocked the boat by going against the predictions and previous assumptions, which is why the subject must be studied even further.

4. Theoretical framework

Turn-taking is a vast entity as a whole, but it also provides a more concentrated view with a theory of interrupting. Interrupting is an interesting phenomenon which may be considered as significant as such but may also rise to a new level when connected to an environment with great significance. Such environment may be politics, for example. The theoretical frame of interruptions is suitable for a study of presidential debates because for example Mr. Trump's controversial approach to leadership and politics may be an indicator to how his behavior may be in the debates.

In the eyes of a layman it appears to be obvious that several interruptions do occur in the debates between Mr. Trump and Secretary Clinton and slightly less in the debate between Obama and Romney. Thus it provokes interest in whether the scientific point of view points out the same outcome or whether it is merely an illusion which doesn't have any significant linguistic support. Hence this theoretical background is suitable for the study.

4.1 turn-taking

Turn-taking is a part of a bigger entity, called the conversation analysis, which was questioned and further developed by Harvey Sacks (Larrue and Trognon 1993, 177) and it indicates the vast variety of how participants in a conversation give and take turns in speech. The turn-taking "rules" can also have greater power than any other system that is utilized in conversational situations. "[...]no other system can organize transitions independent of the turn-taking system" (Sacks et al. 1974, 725), which leads to a situation in which it can be pointed out that "while an addressed question requires an answer from the addressed party, it is the turntaking system, rather than syntactic or semantic features of "the question", that requires the answer to come "next"" (ibid.). Thus turn-taking brings order in the communicational situations.

The components of turn-taking, according to Clift (2016, 97) have been divided into several sections by Sacks et al. The main sections are "Turn-constructive component" and "Turn-allocational component", which both have

specific units through which they appear in the turn-taking. The Turn-constructive component usually consists of sentences, clauses, phrases and other lexical items, whereas the Turn-allocational component consists of different techniques for allocating turn. This includes self-selection and other speaker selection (ibid.).

The turn-constructive component includes the concept of transition-relevance place, syntactic completion, pragmatic markers of completion and the prosodic and phonetic features of completion although the latter have not been accepted completely unreservedly (Nofsinger 1991, 98-110).

The transition relevance place is the moment where the speakership is transferred, if that generally is to happen and it is executed by the participants of a conversation. The norm-like structure is well acquired by the participants, which leads to transition relevance place to be treated as a rule that is not reasonable to break. Once such violations or breaking of the rules happens, the participants of the conversation aim to correct the problem and restore the order (Nofsinger 1991, 98). In other words, the term "transition relevance place" can be used in order to indicate the natural point, where a speaker's turn may be completed. This point can be noticed by participants themselves, after which they use three basic practices in order to allocate the next turn in the conversation (Nofsinger 1991, 85).

The syntactic completion refers to the phenomenon in which speakers use a syntactic completion to indicate a moment for possible transition (Nofsinger 1991, 100). Prosody is referred to as being also important, but syntax is said to be the primary way of determining completion (eff:237). Pragmatic completion is said to relate to the action that is conducted during the turn and is then completed (Clift 2016, 108).

Turn-allocational component consists of the two basic practices which are also referred to as the "turn-taking rules" (Sacks et al. 1974, 703). When observed more closely, the rules are as follows: when the current speaker gets to select the next speaker, the current speaker is expected to stop their turn and give room for the next speaker to start theirs. If the situation does not lead to a point, where the current speaker would select the next one, any other participant is allowed to select themselves. Nofsinger also adds, that if there is no selection happening, the current speaker usually continues (1991, 85).

Turn-taking usually also works as an incentive for the participants to listen, what the current speaker is saying, as the listener should know exactly when to participate and when to take their turn. “The system translates a willingness or potential desire to speak into a corollary obligation to listen” (Sacks et al. 1974, 728).

4.1.1 Overlapping

Overlapping and interruption are very likely to appear in a common conversation as there may be several participants or groups of participants speaking simultaneously. Overlapping can be divided into four types: chordal, conditional access to the turn, continuers and terminal overlaps. Chordal overlapping means overlaps that happen simultaneously with another speaker, as there have been no actual turns given. Such overlapping may be, for example, laughter that occurs at the same time with another participant (Schegloff 2000, 6).

Conditional access to the turn refers to a situation where the current speaker may give their turn up for another speaker or otherwise invite them to join the conversation (Schegloff 2000, 5). Continuers use overlapping in the measures of expressing their understanding. Examples of this are the phrases “mm hm” and “uh huh”. The terminal overlaps can be seen a speaker, who is waiting for their turn, mistakenly assumes that the current speaker will finish their turn shortly (Schegloff 2000, 5).

A categorization by Gail Jefferson has been made regarding the overlaps in conversation. According to Jefferson there are three types: Progressional, recognitional and transitional overlaps (Jefferson 1984, 2). Progressional overlap can be seen in situations in which the current speaker has a pause in their speech and another speaker takes the opportunity to start their turn by utilizing the gap (Jefferson 1984, 2).

Recognitional overlap occurs in situations in which the listener finishes the current speaker’s unfinished sentence in a manner they anticipated the current speaker to end the sentence. Transitional overlapping occurs if a listener jumps in the conversation at the point where they anticipate the utterance to be completed (Jefferson 1984, 2).

Overlapping can be categorized to be either competitive or cooperative. Khiet P. Truong (2013) explains the two types as follows:

***Competitive** The overlapper disrupts the speech (breaks the flow) of the overlappee to take the turn and say something. The overlappee could be offended because he/she was not able to finish his/her sentence. Although the overlappee does not need to show that he/she is offended, the overlap could have been perceived as intrusive and/or competitive by the overlappee. The need to say something arises from the overlapper's own wants.*

***Cooperative** The intention of the overlapper is to maintain the flow of the conversation, to coordinate the process and/or content of the ongoing conversation, and to offer help to the speaker when needed. The overlap does not abruptly disrupt the speech flow of the overlappee. It is most likely that the overlappee does not perceive this overlap as intrusive."*

(Truong 2013, 1405)

4.1.2 Interrupting

Julia A. Goldberg suggests that types of interruptions could be marked as types of overlapping. The two types of interruption, Goldberg refers to, are power- and rapport-oriented acts. The suggestion appeals to the listener's obligations as a supporter and the speaker's expectations in the situation, as they both may be jeopardized by interruptions. There is, however, a difference in the type of interruption and how it affects the expectations and obligations. "Some interruptions may convey one's rapport, cooperation, or camaraderie with the interrupted speaker. These interruptions appear to be triggered by the interruptor's enthusiastic interest and active involvement in the discourse." (Goldberg 1990, 3).

Power-oriented interruptions can be seen as aggressive and not in line with a mutual goal. "Power-oriented interruptions are generally heard as rude, impolite, intrusive and inappropriate; conveying the interruptor's antipathy, aggression, hostility, dislike, disdain, apathy, etc. towards the interrupted speaker and/or the talk at hand." (Goldberg 1990, 8). These power-oriented interruptions

may be further separated into two categories; content control interruptions and process control interruptions.

Content control interruptions utilize conversational methods and statements that are not related to the current topic. These kinds of interruptions are seen as negative and threatening as they aim to take the control from the current speaker (Goldberg 1990, 10). Process control interruptions are seen as less threatening as they return the control to the current speaker despite the fact that they are used in order to change the subject. When process control is utilized, it is executed by using questions and requests (ibid.).

Rapport-oriented interruptions are conveyed in order to contribute to a conversation and are made in order to cooperate with the speaker to reach mutual understanding. "Rapport-oriented interruptions, on the other hand, are generally understood as expressions of open empathy, affection, solidarity, interest, concern.." (Goldberg 1990, 8).

4.2 Previous studies on turn-taking

Turn-taking has been a highly popular theoretical frame in linguistics and hundreds of different studies can be found of the field. There seems to be some regularity in the subjects, naturally among the so-called wild cards. For example children's language has been studied quite far with turn-taking as a frame, as has communities of computer experts and enthusiasts, as well. In this chapter I will introduce some of these studies in order to provide a vast enough picture of turn-taking as a framework.

In their article *"Conversational characteristics of children with semantic-pragmatic disorder. I: Exchange structure, turntaking, repairs and cohesion"*, Catherine Adams and Dorothy V. M. Bishop studied samples of conversation from a group of children between ages 8 and 12. The first group of children was chosen according to their specific language impairments whereas a second group that was chosen to work as a control group consisted of children between ages 4 and 12.

In the first group there were some children who could be categorized in the clinical description of semantic-pragmatic disorder and it was later proved that they made more initiations than the children without this impairment, although some violated the turn-taking rules by interrupting their partner. For this group the use of cohesion was typical, but the children with other impairments did not apply to this. The final result was that analyzing actual conversations could turn out to be more useful than traditional language testing in order to recognize abnormalities in the children's linguistic skills (Adams and Bishop 2009).

In *"The Eyes of the Beholder: Understanding the Turn-Taking System in Quasi-Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication"*, Angela Cora Garcia and Jennifer Baker Jacobs compare different turn-taking systems occurring in regular oral conversation and in computer-mediated communication.

The study differs from earlier ones in its material as it uses video recordings of actual computer screens instead of simple transcriptions of conversations. This way the moments that lead to the actual communication can also be recorded. Because of the new method of collecting data, the study has a

vast database of everything the participant had accessible. The result was that conversations had via computer (quasi-synchronous CMC conversations) differ drastically from oral conversations (Garcia and Jacobs 2010).

David Greatbatch's article "*A turn-taking system for British news interviews*" tells about a study of the typical turn-taking rules in British news. The article presents how the most typical pre-allocations lead to a situation where everyday conversations are fairly different from the news interviews. The article points out how the legal and institutional restrictions affect the content of the interviews and the interaction of the participants. To point out the effect of these restrictions the article also indicates the vast differences between broadcast interviews and news interviews in terms of turn-taking (Greatbatch 2008).

In their article "*Turn-taking and speech act patterns in the discourse of senile dementia of the Alzheimer's type patients*" Danielle N. Ripich, Diane Vertes, Peter Whitehouse, Sarah Fulton and Barbara Ekelman examine conversational discourse patterns in dyadic conversations. The test groups were elderly people and people with Alzheimer's, all of whom had conversations with the examiner.

The main findings were differences in turn-taking, word usage and speech production, the Alzheimer's subjects speaking in shorter turns and utilizing the non-verbal responses more often than the non-Alzheimer's subjects. The subjects with Alzheimer's were also recorded to have more answers with unintelligible utterances. The result suggests that the amount of compensatory elements in the speech of the subjects with Alzheimer's may help the subjects to retain their communicative skills in the early stages of the disease (Ripich et al. 1991).

4.3 Previous studies on presidential debates

The presidential debates of the USA are a common subject, which has been studied through the years and with many theoretical backgrounds. Some of the most popular subjects seem to have been politeness and non-verbal behavior or the candidates.

The following studies provide a vast image of how versatile a subject the American presidential elections can be. All of these studies approach the subject from a different angle with different goals to achieve, which should be seen as a proof of its versatility. The material that is gained from both this study and the studies mentioned below should be considered as a starting point for future research that could base their own further studies to the previous work. The different angles ensure that the elections as a material can be thoroughly viewed. In the following I will discuss some of the former studies on the US presidential debates.

The study by Seiter, Weger, Kinzer and Sandry (2009) has put research to a somewhat similar subject as my study. My study provides material for research of subjects such as how the behavior that was conducted in the 2016 elections may affect the future elections and whether this will affect in a negative or positive manner to the results. The study by Seiter et al. has put emphasis on how behavior that can at its worst be described as “bratty” affects the voters and their opinions on the candidates. Hence both of the studies research deviant behavior and give way for studies that will take the subject even further.

The nonverbal behavior seems to rise to an important level in the studies conducted. For example John S. Seiter, Harry Weger Jr., Harold J. Kinzer & Andrea Sandry Jensen wrote about how the background behavior of a candidate may affect the audience’s views on the likeability of the candidate. In the study the researchers examined whether how the candidate behaved while it was not their turn to speak affected how the audience saw them.

The study was conducted with students, who were shown televised debates, each group saw one of four versions, the common factor was that during the debates, while one of the candidates was speaking, the other and their

reactions were shown on another screen. The different versions that were made differed in the reactions of the candidates and afterwards the students rated how much they liked the candidates. The results showed that the nonverbal behavior affected only the likeability of the non-speaking candidate (Seiter et al. 2009). Seiter also studied the use of a two-screen technology in the debates, with his colleague Harry Weger. This resulted in the test subjects perceiving the candidates less appropriate when they expressed any disagreement in the background (Seiter and Weger 2010).

Politeness has a strong footing in the studies of interruptions and turn-taking and thus the following studies can be connected to my study through similar theoretical background. Moving on to the politeness studies, Maryam Pakzadian wrote about the politeness principle in the debates held between Obama and McCain in 2008. The study was conducted on diplomatic language and on the idea of the candidates following Leech's politeness maxims. The results show that the following of the maxims can be considered as an important factor in making the diplomatic language more successful (Pakzadian 2012).

Edward A. Hinck and Shelly S. Hinck conducted a study on politeness strategies in the presidential debates held in 1992. The study uses politeness theory as an extension for the political debates. It argues that political leadership is dependent on the person's ability to utilize and manage the political image with the help of politeness strategies.

The 1992 debates were studied from transcripts, using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as the theoretical frame in order to reveal whether the presidential candidates utilized different politeness strategies. The results showed that there were differences in the candidates' face saving strategies, which lead to the consideration of the necessity of politeness strategies in the political field (Hinck and Hinck 2017).

In addition to the already mentioned studies, for example such were also conducted: Alan Cienki and Gianluca Giansante made a study that was published in the *Journal of Language and Politics*, Volume 13 in 2014. The subject was about conversational framing of politicians. The politicians were said to provide themselves as conversation partners for their audience. The hypothesis was that

politicians, who may be seen as “populist” would be more likely to do this, even when speaking in a televised situation.

The study compared American and Italian politicians, who were thought to have similar agenda; Sarah Palin and Silvio Berlusconi and their competitors in the elections. A set of behaviors (such as the use of pronouns, syntax and gestures) was analyzed from televised interviews or debates and the conversational linguistic performance was evaluated (Cienki and Giansante 2014).

Christina S. Beck conducted a study on “social face” examining the 1992 vice presidential debates. The study shows, how modern day expectations require a formation of a social self, which is the whole image the candidates put together during their campaign. This self, or “face” is studied through analyzing the candidates’ interaction during sections of free discussion and it reveals that for example metacommunication enabled the candidates to maintain their turns of speech and affected their further ability to attend the discussion (Beck 2010).

The papers presented above show that the scale of studies conducted in the area of the American presidential debates is very sizeable. Several different theoretical frames were used, but turn-taking cannot be said to be the most popular one, as most of the studies focus on more vast entities, such as politeness. This indicates the need for more studies on the turn-taking, which leads to the niche for this study, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 Niche

Turn-taking is a relevant part of any communication or conversational situation, but its role enhances in situations, where an audience follows the discussion and interruptions can be seen as bothering more people than merely the current speaker. Interruptions are without exception a threat to the speaker’s control, but the level may vary. In situations with audience the threat must be taken into account as a matter which is multiplied with each hearer.

In the presidential debates turn-taking can be said to provide more information than just the fact whether the candidate is capable of waiting their own

turn, when having a conversation. The areas in which more information can be received are, for example, the candidate's ability to function under pressure. In a debate the pressure levels regularly rise high and the candidate's task is to stay calm and get their message through. This can also be measured when, in a debate, the opposing candidate may not always be able to keep the volume or the tone of their voice down, which is when the other candidate's behavior is emphasized. If the candidate remains calm and presents themselves as a professional, it is most likely for them to win the debate.

Turn-taking can be seen to be violated in the 2016 American presidential debates as there are plenty of interrupting and overlapping. The elections were extraordinary in multiple ways, mostly because all of the candidates were not of the most typical type. This may also be the reason for this new extent of conversational violations in the debates. The aim of this study is to find out more about the change in the debates, as in 2012 the situation was not quite similar.

This is the reason for the need of more studies in the fields of turn-taking and presidential debates. It is likely that these types of studies will now increase as there seems to be a clear niche, which could also, in this situation, be called as lack of studies. Also the newly appeared material is likely to provide the needed push for the studies to be conducted.

5. Material and methods

The material consists of transcriptions of the presidential debates from the years 2012 and 2016. From 2012 I will be looking at debate transcriptions from Barack Obama's and Mitt Romney's campaigns and from 2016 the debates will be between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The debates will be analyzed and then the two elections will be compared with each other.

The transcriptions will be provided by the Washington Post, New York Times and by The Commission on Presidential Debates. The CPD can be seen as rather unbiased as a source as it is sponsored by both liberals and conservatives and although The Washington Post and The New York Times can be seen as leaning more towards the liberal end of the political spectrum, there should not be a problem with bias. Transcriptions are very difficult to falsify in situations, where the event is recorded. In my study I verified the transcriptions to be equivalent to the video material provided.

The dates of the 2012 debates were October 3, 16 and 22

Obama & Romney:

1st: 1h 31min, moderator: Jim Lehrer (PBS)

2nd: 1h 37min, moderator: Candy Crowley (CNN)

3rd: 1h 36min, moderator: Bob Schieffer (CBS)

In 2016 the debates were held September 26, October 9 and 19

Clinton & Trump:

1st: 1h 35min, moderator: Lester Holt (NBC)

2nd: 1h 32min, moderator: Martha Raddatz (ABC) and Anderson Cooper (CNN)

3rd: 1h 34min, moderator: Chris Wallace (FOX)

In terms of the used methods, the process started with the choosing of the material that was suitable for the theory chosen, which is how the presidential debates were picked. The material was suitable as it included a versatile collection of turn-taking situations which could be presented for the audience. The debates had had their transcriptions written after each event, which made them easily accessible when starting with my work.

After having found the transcriptions they had to be checked to be accurate. This was made by listening to the debates while going through the transcriptions. After the transcriptions were proven to be accurate, I made notes of the moments of interruptions and overlaps, which I marked in the text to make the studying of the transcriptions easier. After this each turn was colored in order for me to easily recognize which member of the discussion had a turn. The colors also helped in noticing when there were interruptions and by whom they were made in each occasion. After this the interruptions and overlaps were categorized and notes were taken. After the final checkup for the results, the findings were written and connected to the theory frame.

The next phase was to compare the two elections with each other as the hypothesis needed to be proven correct or false. After this the findings were written. I chose to approach the subject debate by debate because it makes the following of the transcripts easier, not being asked to browse between transcriptions as the subject goes on. Each debate has its own entity inside with their features are discussed.

6. Analysis

In the debates overlapping and interruptions are a very central phenomenon, which is why this study focuses on those specifically. The occurrence is quite versatile and should not be put into categories without further examination. In the following paragraphs I will go into them in detail.

6.1 Turn-taking in the material

In general, there are several examples of the execution of turn-taking in the material. Some of the most obvious ones are the turn-allocational components, which are apparent throughout the debates. The most common result in the decision of the next speaker is the one that is made by the other participant in the interaction. Usually they step up and take the turn, at times even quite intrusively. The moderators of the debates also hand out turns, which can be seen as a “current speaker chooses next”-situation. However, between the candidates this does not happen, as there appears to be a competition in the amount of time used per turn.

The turn-constructive components are followed at times and especially the transition-relevance place can be seen followed in a number of places, as the candidates often start their turn immediately once their opponent stops talking. This indicates their ability to follow the opponent’s speech and to read the signs of when the opponent might possibly be finished. The transition-relevance place is, however, often ignored and the candidates start their turn regardless of what the turn-constructive components might suggest. This is when interruptions and overlaps take place.

In the moderators’ turns there is an abundance of overlapping as many of the moderators use it as a way to move on in the debate. They wait until the current speaker’s very last syllable and overlap it with their first word. It has been a successful method in order to not let the other candidate take their turn there.

While examining the material, the features of interruptions were somewhat difficult to determine. It was not always obvious who interrupted whom and which speaker had the right to continue their turn. Also the moderators utilized

their status as a right to interrupt and overlap, which usually made the matters worse. At its worst there were situations during which there were four people interrupting each other, pausing for a few seconds and after that continuing along the path of interruptions.

The aforementioned phenomenon led to situations in which it was very challenging to determine how the material should be related to the theory. The different motives for interruptions and overlapping in the debates made the process of the analysis very multidimensional and, at times, possibly slightly difficult to comprehend. I will start the analysis from the very first debate that was held between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

6.2 The first debate between Clinton and Trump

The first debate in 2016 can be seen as the introduction to the power relations between the candidates and to their strategy in the debates and their campaigns. During the very first turns both candidates respect the other and make sure there is no overlapping whatsoever. The first overlap occurs in a situation, where the moderator of the debate, Lester Holt, intended to lead Mr. Trump back on track, actually answering the question instead of focusing on the faults Secretary Clinton, in Trump's opinion, possessed. This is an example of process control interrupting.

***TRUMP:** ... And why hasn't she made the agreements better? The NAFTA agreement is defective. Just because of the tax and many other reasons, but just because of the fact [] Secretary Clinton and others, politicians, should have been doing this for years, not right now, because of the fact that we've created a movement ...*

***HOLT:** [Let me interrupt just a moment, but..]*

***TRUMP:** They should have been doing this for years. What's happened to our jobs and our country and our economy generally is -- look, we owe \$20 trillion. We cannot do it any longer, [Lester].*

***HOLT:** [Back] to the question, though. How do you bring back -- specifically bring back jobs,*

American manufacturers? How do you make them bring the jobs back?

(Blake 1 2016, n.pag.)

In the situation, Holt acknowledges the fact that he might, in fact, be interrupting but also realizes that such matters should be conducted in order to maintain the line in the debate.

Interruptions like this were very common throughout the debate. For example further on in the debate, Holt was trying to interfere in situation, which appeared to be a back-and-forth argument between the two candidates. Clinton was trying to have her turn and Trump kept interrupting, not allowing her to speak full sentences. This is when Holt jumped in and attempted to change the direction of the conversation.

CLINTON: ... That's why I said new jobs with rising incomes, investments, not in more tax cuts that would add \$5 trillion to the debt. []

TRUMP: *[But you have no plan.]*

CLINTON: *But in -- oh, but I do.*[]

TRUMP: *[Secretary, you have no plan.]*

CLINTON: *In fact, I have written a book about it. It's called "Stronger Together." You can pick it up tomorrow at [] a bookstore*

TRUMP: *[That's about all you've..]*

(CROSSTALK)

HOLT: *[Folks, we're going to...]*

CLINTON: *... or at an airport near you.* []

HOLT: *[We're going to move to...]*

CLINTON: *[But] it's because I see this -- we need to have strong growth, fair growth, sustained growth. We also have to look at how we help families balance the responsibilities at home and the responsibilities at*

business. So we have a very robust set of plans. And people have looked at both of our plans, have concluded that mine would create 10 million jobs and yours would lose us 3.5 million jobs, and explode the debt which would have a recession.

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

In a situation like this it was nearly impossible to stay on track on who was interrupting whom. The sections that ended up escalating in such manner could be categorized as both competitive and cooperative overlapping. In Trump and Clinton's parts the interruptions were clear examples of power-oriented interrupting, and competitive overlapping, as both argued the other and intended to turn the focus on themselves. Also the fact that they did not allow each other finish their sentences, but ploughed through their turn indicates that the category of competitive overlapping is the correct choice.

The other category that was present in the section was the cooperative interruptions which were conducted by Lester Holt. Holt intended to maintain the direction of a sensible conversation and interrupted only when it was becoming obvious that the debate was not moving to a fruitful direction nor did it discuss the given topic. Such interruptions were often ignored, as happened in this situation as well. Eventually Holt did manage to say what he intended to, but it did not actually interrupt the candidates anymore, as they merely continued their turns, after which Holt finally was on top of the situation and the debate was allowed to continue.

Another way of managing the situation for Holt was providing the candidates a time limit. As the candidates became more aggressive with their turns, not giving them up despite the pressure, Holt designated an amount of minutes or seconds, after which the candidate was allowed to finish their turn and to make a point. This however did not salvage the candidate in turn from the interruptions of the other candidate.

HOLT: *Let me get you to pause right there, because we're going to move into -- we're going to move into the next segment. We're going to talk taxes []*

CLINTON: *[That can't – that can't be left to stand.]*

HOLT: *Please just take 30 seconds and then we're going to go on.*

CLINTON: *I kind of assumed that there would be a lot of these charges and claims, and so []*

TRUMP: *[Facts.]*

CLINTON: *So we have taken the home page of my website, HillaryClinton.com, and we've turned it into a fact-checker. So if you want to see in real-time what the facts are, please go and take a look. Because [] what I have proposed...*

TRUMP: *[And take a look at mine, also, and you'll see.]*

CLINTON: *... [would not add] a penny to the debt, and your plans would add \$5 trillion to the debt. What I have proposed would cut regulations and streamline them for small businesses. What I have proposed would be paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy, because they have made all the gains in the economy. And I think it's time that the wealthy and corporations paid their fair share to support this country.*

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

Already during the first debate, Trump introduced a feature, which later became nearly a trademark as a way of debating. He tended to interrupt Secretary Clinton in a manner that appeared to have no further function, but to make his voice audible again, to not let Clinton finish her sentences and to diminish the effect of Clinton's turn. This way of interrupting can be seen as another example of how process control interruptions may come about. It is clearly to interrupt something the interrupting candidate does not wish to have said hence making it very different from the process control interruption which was mentioned earlier.

CLINTON: *Well, I hope the fact-checkers are turning up the volume and really working hard. Donald supported the invasion of Iraq. []*

TRUMP: [Wrong.]

CLINTON: *That is absolutely [] proved over and over again. []*

TRUMP: [Wrong.]

[Wrong.]

CLINTON: *He actually advocated for the actions we took in Libya and urged that Gadhafi be taken out, after actually doing some business with him one time. But the larger point -- and he says this constantly -- is George W. Bush made the agreement about when American troops would leave Iraq, not Barack Obama. And the only way that American troops could have stayed in Iraq is to get an agreement from the then-Iraqi government that would have protected our troops, and the Iraqi government would not give that. But let's talk about the question you asked, Lester. The question you asked is, what do we do here in the United States? That's the most important part of this. How do we prevent attacks? How do we protect our people?*

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

Such comments could have been said during Mr. Trump's own turn, but he acquired a manner that allowed him to interrupt repeatedly.

In the following quote Lester Holt had clearly stated that the turn was Secretary Clinton's and that she should be provided with two minutes in order to make her statement and to prove her point. Despite all these precautions, Mr. Trump interrupts almost immediately, as Secretary Clinton's first comment was to do with Mr. Trump's earlier turn. He decides to show no respect on the turn-taking before Holt stops and reminds him of the rules mentioned earlier.

However, this allows Clinton to continue with her turn only for a few sentences until being interrupted once again by Trump, this time without any obvious reasons to do so. This is when Holt once again was forced to remind Mr. Trump that the two minutes belong to Secretary Clinton and should not be interrupted only to be coarsely ignored again very soon.

HOLT: All right. You have two minutes of the same question to defend tax increases on the wealthiest Americans, Secretary Clinton.

CLINTON: I have a feeling that by, the end of this evening, I'm going to be blamed for everything that's ever [] happened.

TRUMP: [Why not?]

CLINTON: Why not? Yeah, why not?

(LAUGHTER)

You know, just join the debate by saying more crazy things. Now, let me say this, [] it is absolutely the case...

TRUMP: [There's nothing crazy about not letting our companies bring their money back into their [] country.]

HOLT: [This is -- this is Secretary Clinton's two minutes, please.]

TRUMP: Yes.

CLINTON: Yeah, well, let's start the clock again, Lester. We've looked at your tax proposals. I don't see changes in the corporate tax rates or the kinds of proposals you're referring to that would cause the repatriation, bringing back of money that's stranded overseas. I happen [] to support that.

TRUMP: [Then you didn't read it.]

CLINTON: I happen to -- I happen to support that in a way that will actually work to our benefit. But when I look at what you have proposed, you have what is called now the Trump loophole, because it would so advantage you and the business you do. You've [] proposed an approach that has a...

TRUMP: [Who gave it that name? The first I've -- who gave it that [] name?]

(CROSSTALK)

HOLT: [Mr. Trump, this is Secretary Clinton's two minutes.]

CLINTON: ... \$4 billion tax benefit for your family. And when you look at [] what you are proposing...

TRUMP: [How much? How much for my family?]

CLINTON: ... it is.. []

TRUMP: [Lester, how much?]

CLINTON: ... as I said, trumped-up trickle-down. Trickle-down did not work. It got us into the mess we were in, in 2008 and 2009. Slashing taxes on the wealthy hasn't worked. And a lot of really smart, wealthy people know that. And they are saying, hey, we need to do more to make the contributions we should be making to rebuild the middle class.

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

Despite the numerous reminders, Mr. Trump continued on with his chosen method of interrupting and often also diminishing Secretary Clinton while she was speaking. Trump had his way of huffing and yelling out singular words in carefully chosen markers that made Secretary Clinton's message vaguer or less credible. These interruptions were marked as process control interruptions, but could very easily be included in any category.

HOLT: Secretary Clinton?

CLINTON: Well, I've heard -- I've heard Donald say this at his rallies, and it's really unfortunate that he paints such a dire negative picture of black communities in our country. []

TRUMP: [Ugh.]

CLINTON: You know, the vibrancy of the black church, the black businesses that employ so many people, the opportunities that so many families are working to provide for their kids [...]

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

CLINTON: *Well, it's also fair to say, if we're going to talk about mayors, that under the current mayor, crime has continued to drop, including murders. So there is []*

TRUMP: *[No, you're wrong. You're wrong.]*

CLINTON: *No, I'm [] not.*

TRUMP: *[Murders are up. All right. You check it].*

CLINTON: *New York -- New York has done an excellent job. And I give credit -- I give credit across the board going back two mayors, two police chiefs, because it has worked...*

(Blake 1 2016, n. pag.)

From these excerpts it can be seen that interruptions formed a very large entity in the first debate and that there seems to be a pattern that is starting to form between the two candidates. In the first debate between Clinton and Trump the content control interruptions appeared to be the most prevalent. When both the process control interruptions and the content control interruptions were counted, the numbers had some difference between them, as there were 35 points of process control interruptions and 88 of content control interruptions in the debate. However, the two types appeared to maintain a solid alignment throughout the debate as the difference only increased to an extent and thus did not to form a significant gap between them. The difference is something to be expected as the common tone of the debate could be seen as bickering and there were several situations in which a candidate would merely strive for a turn by all means without following the structural rules of a debate.

As content control interruptions are used when the aim is to deprive the turn of speech from someone or to be in control of the subject their presence tends to change the atmosphere of the debate and quite effortlessly provides an impression of the candidates disagreeing heavily. This impression was present in the first debate between Trump and Clinton, which makes it even more interesting to study the remaining two debates in order to learn whether the impression

remains or changes to any direction. Next I will move on to the second debate that was held October 9 2016.

6.3 The second debate between Clinton and Trump

The second debate had exceptionally two moderators, Martha Raddatz and Anderson Cooper. They both can be seen in the quotes and excerpts.

The debate started in a similar manner as the first one as there appeared to be a mutual respect and no interruptions were made. However, in this case the interrupting took place earlier than in the first one. Trump was made a question which made him seemingly uncomfortable as he then started to slither out of the responsibility of answering. This is when one of the moderators of the debate, Anderson Cooper, interrupted Mr. Trump's turn and redirected him to answer the actual question. These attempts are counted as the content control interruptions as Cooper tries to have his turn in the conversation. Eventually Mr. Trump provides a half of an answer while simultaneously moving to other subject, desperately drawing the attention away from his mistake he is now forced to discuss.

TRUMP: ... 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.[]

COOPER: [So, Mr. Trump...]

TRUMP: And we should get on to much more important things and much bigger things.

COOPER: Just for the record, though, are you saying that what you said on that bus 11 years ago that you did not actually kiss women without consent or grope women without consent?

TRUMP: I have great respect for women. Nobody has more respect for women than I do. []

COOPER: [So, for the record, you're saying you never did that?]

TRUMP: I've said things that, frankly, you hear these things I said. And I was embarrassed by it. But I have tremendous respect for women. []

COOPER: [Have you ever done those things?]

TRUMP: And women have respect for me. And I will tell you: No, I have not. And I will tell you that I'm going to make our country safe. We're going to have borders in our country, which we don't have now. People are pouring into our country, and they're coming in from the Middle East and other places. We're going to make America safe again. We're going to make America great again, but we're going to make America safe again. And we're going to make America wealthy again, because if you don't do that, it just — it sounds harsh to say, but we have to build up the wealth of our nation

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

In the first debate Trump was not as forward with demanding to have his rights as a debater. In the second debate he uses interruption as a way of reminding the moderators of his right to have a turn after Clinton.

CLINTON: These are very important values to me, because this is the America that I know and love. And I can pledge to you tonight that this is the America that I will serve if I'm so fortunate enough to become your president.

RADDATZ: And we want to get to some questions from [] online...

TRUMP: [Am I allowed to respond to that? I assume I am.]

RADDATZ: Yes, you can respond to that.

TRUMP: It's just words, folks. It's just words. Those words, I've been hearing them for many years. I heard them when they were running for the Senate in New York, where Hillary was going to bring back jobs to upstate New York and she failed ...

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

Very soon after demanding for these rights, he chooses to bring in the martyr mode, interrupting by claiming that he has been treated in an unfair manner, given fewer opportunities than Clinton. He momentarily appears upset and annoyed, but is quickly calmed down as he is told he would get his voice heard immediately after the next question. These interruptions are process control as Trump is not actually trying to have his turn in the situation of that time, but merely trying to make sure he will get one eventually. Also Raddatz's interruption go into the same category.

TRUMP: ... *We saw that firsthand when she was United States senator. She campaigned where the [] primary part of her campaign*

RADDATZ: *[Mr.Trump, Mr. Trump — I want to get to audience questions and online questions.*

TRUMP: *So, she's allowed to do that, but I'm not allowed to respond?*

RADDATZ: *You're going to have — you're [] going to get to respond right now.*

TRUMP: *[Sounds fair].*

RADDATZ: *This tape is generating intense interest ...*

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

The way of becoming a victim continues throughout the debate once it has first surfaced. Trump interrupts the current speaker, is stopped for some reason and then makes statements which imply that he would be treated in an unfair manner. In the following example he goes after his rights even when he has not just been interrupted.

CLINTON: ... *And I know there's a lot of concern about that in some circles, but I think they should have the equipment they need so that Kurdish and Arab fighters on the ground are the principal way that we take Raqqa after pushing ISIS out of Iraq.*

RADDATZ: *Thank you very much. [] We're going to move on*

TRUMP: *[You know what's funny? She went over a minute over, and you don't stop her. When I go one second over, it's like a big deal.]*

RADDATZ: *You [] had many answers.*

TRUMP: *[It's really — it's really very interesting].*

COOPER: *We've got a question over here from James Carter. Mr. Carter?*

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

Similar behavior occurs later in the debate, as Trump has been interrupted for time technical reasons. He demands for the same time limit as Clinton has had as she, according to Trump's words, has had more time for answering than what Trump was provided. However, once given permission to comment briefly, Trump appears to misuse his right and provides too long an answer for the situation, once again dominating the situation to provide for his own aspirations.

RADDATZ: *There's been lots of fact-checking on that. I'd like to move on to [] an online question...*

TRUMP: *[Excuse me. She just went about 25 seconds over her time.]*

RADDATZ: *She did not.*

TRUMP: *Could I just respond to this, please?*

RADDATZ: *Very quickly, please.*

TRUMP: *Hillary Clinton, in terms of having people come into our country, we have many criminal illegal aliens. When we want to send them back to their country, their country says we don't want them. In some cases, they're murderers, drug lords, drug problems. And they don't want them. And Hillary Clinton, when she was secretary of state, said that's OK, we can't force it into their country. Let me tell you, I'm going to force them right back into their country. They're murderers and some very bad people. And I will tell you very strongly, when Bernie Sanders said she had bad judgment, she has really bad judgment, because we are letting people into this country that are going to cause problems and crime like you've never seen. We're also letting drugs pour through our southern border at a record clip. At a record clip. And it shouldn't be allowed to happen. ICE just endorsed me.*

They've never endorsed a presidential candidate. The Border Patrol agents, 16,500, just recently endorsed me, and they endorsed me because I understand the border. She doesn't. She wants amnesty for everybody. Come right in. Come right over. It's a horrible thing she's doing. She's got bad judgment, and honestly, so bad that she should never be president of the United States. That I can tell you

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

Until quite late in the debate, Secretary Clinton had remained silent during Mr. Trump's turns and had not interrupted him. She did not however allow the moderators interrupt her, either. She continued her turn even when it was quite obvious she was expected to give her turn up and allow the debate to move forward. This is by no means different from what Trump did during his turns. When all the participants decide to follow this manner of taking part, it may lead into unclear situations in which none of the participants is actually being heard and no one succeeds to make their point or get their message through. Cooper's attempts to interrupt Clinton are categorized as content control.

CLINTON: ... *So if we just rip it up and throw it away, what Donald's not telling you is we just turn it back to the insurance companies the way it used to be, and that means the insurance [] companies...*

COOPER: [Secretary Clinton...]

CLINTON: ... *get to do pretty much whatever they want, including saying, look, I'm sorry, you've got diabetes, you had cancer, your child has asthma []*

COOPER: [Your time is up.]

CLINTON: *you may not be able to have insurance because you can't afford it. So let's fix what's broken about it, but let's not throw it away and give it all back to the insurance companies and the drug companies.*

[] *That's not going to work.*

COOPER: [Mr.Trump, let me follow up on this].

TRUMP: *Well, I just want — just one thing. First of all, Hillary, everything's broken about it. Everything. Number two, Bernie Sanders said that Hillary Clinton has very bad judgment. This is a perfect example of it, trying to save Obamacare, which [] is a disaster.*

COOPER: *[You've said you want to end Obamacare..]*

TRUMP: *By the way...*

COOPER: *You've said you want to end Obamacare. You've also said you want to make coverage accessible for people with pre-existing conditions. How do you force insurance companies to do that if you're no longer mandating that every American [] get insurance?*

TRUMP: *[We're going to be able to. You're going to have plans...]*

COOPER: *What does that mean?*

TRUMP: *Well, I'll tell you what it means. You're going to have plans that are so good, because we're going to have so much competition in the insurance industry. Once we break out — once we break out the lines and allow the competition to come []*

COOPER: *[Are you going — are you going to have a mandate that Americans have to have health insurance?]*

TRUMP: *President Obama — Anderson, excuse me. President Obama, by keeping those lines, the boundary lines around each state, it was almost gone until just very toward the end of the passage of Obamacare, which, by the way, was a fraud ...*

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

Trump's methods of interrupting the conversation and other participants' turns developed throughout the debate as he, at one point, started to argue and insist instead of waiting for his turn to come. These continuous interruptions did not actually provide any new information to the situation but merely appeared to be an effort of diminishing Secretary Clinton. For Mr. Trump, this is a very typical way of using the content control interruptions.

CLINTON: ... And the final thing I would say, this is the 10th or 12th time that he's denied being for the war in Iraq. We have it on tape. The entire press corps has looked at it. It's been debunked, but it never stops him from saying whatever he wants [] to say.

TRUMP: [That's not been debunked.]

CLINTON: So, please []

TRUMP: [That has not been debunked.]

CLINTON: go to [] HillaryClinton.com and you can see it.

TRUMP: [I was against — I was against the war in Iraq. Has not been debunked].
And you voted for it. And you shouldn't have. Well, I just want to say ...

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

As in the first debate, Trump was repeatedly told to respect the time that was given to Secretary Clinton in the second debate as well. These interruptions Trump made were distracting Clinton and were, once again, insisting and simply repeating the same idea. Here, Cooper had to tell Mr. Trump to show respect reminding him that Secretary Clinton had, actually, respected his turn and had not interrupted. This is also when Secretary Clinton used her chance to prolong her answer like Trump had done earlier.

CLINTON: Well, here we go again. I've been in favor of getting rid of carried interest for years, starting when I was a senator from New York. But that's not the point here. []

TRUMP: [Why didn't you do it? Why didn't you do [] it?]

COOPER: [Allow her to respond.]

CLINTON: Because I was a senator with a Republican president. []

TRUMP: [Oh, really?]

CLINTON: I will be the president [] and we will get it done. That's exactly right.

TRUMP: [You could have done it, if you were an effective — if you were an effective senator, you could have done it]. If you were an effective senator, you could have done it. But you were not an [] effective senator.

COOPER: [Please allow her to respond. She didn't interrupt you.]

CLINTON: You know, under our Constitution, presidents have something called veto power. Look, he has now said repeatedly, "30 years this and 30 years that." So let me talk about my 30 years in public service. I'm very glad to do so. Eight million kids every year have health insurance, because when I was first lady I worked with Democrats and Republicans to create the Children's Health Insurance Program. Hundreds of thousands of kids now have a chance to be adopted because I worked to change our adoption and foster care system. After 9/11, I went to work with Republican mayor, governor and president to rebuild New York and to get health care for our first responders who were suffering because they had run toward danger and gotten sickened by it. Hundreds of thousands of National Guard and Reserve members have health care because of work that I did, and children have safer medicines because I was able to pass a law that required the dosing to be more carefully done.

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

Towards the end of the debate Secretary Clinton started slipping from her well maintained rule of not interrupting Mr. Trump, as Trump used his turn to make a statement, which Secretary Clinton knew to be untrue. Clinton did recognize she was not following the rules as she interrupted Trump and stated that as well. Clinton's interruptions are categorized as content-control.

RADDATZ: Thank you, Secretary Clinton. [] Mr. Trump?

TRUMP: [First of all, she was there as secretary of state with the so-called line in the sand, which []]

CLINTON: [No, I wasn't. I was gone. I hate to interrupt you, but at some point]

TRUMP: OK. But you were in contact — excuse me. You were []

CLINTON: [At some point, we need to do some fact-checking here].

TRUMP: You were in total contact with the White House, and perhaps, sadly, Obama probably still listened to you. I don't think he would be listening to you very much anymore ...

(New York Times 2016, n. pag.)

The second debate repeated some of the manners in the interruptions from the first debate, but mostly they had escalated and could be seen slightly more severe than in the very first one. In this debate the relation between content control and process control interruptions was showing signs of increasing. The amount of content control interruptions was 96 whereas there were only 30 process control interruptions in the debate. This may be seen as a direction giver for the third debate as the relation may increase rapidly. Next I will move on to the final debate, which was held October 19 2016.

6.4 The third debate between Clinton and Trump

In the third debate, which was moderated by Chris Wallace, the greatest visible difference was the fact that there was a lot more crosstalk. Situations in which either the candidates or the candidates and the moderator together were all interrupting and overlapping each other were prominently more numerous.

CLINTON: ... I'm just amazed that he seems to think that the Iraqi government and our allies and everybody else launched the attack on Mosul to help me in this election, but that's how Donald thinks. You know, he always is looking for some [] conspiracy.

TRUMP: [Chris, we don't gain anything.]

CLINTON: He has all [] the conspiracy theories...

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: [Iran is taking over Iraq.]

WALLACE: Secretary Clinton, [] it's...

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: *[Iran is taking over Iraq. We don't gain anything.]*

CLINTON: *This conspiracy theory, which he's been spewing out [] for quite some time.*

TRUMP: *[If they did it by [] surprise]*

(CROSSTALK)

WALLACE: *[Wait, wait, wait, Secretary Clinton, it's [] an open discussion.]*

CLINTON: *[He says...]*

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: *[We could have gained if they did it by surprise.]*

WALLACE: *[Secretary, please let Mr. Trump speak.]*

CLINTON: *[... unfit, and he proves it every time [] he talks.]*

TRUMP: *[No, you are the one that's unfit. You know, WikiLeaks just actually came out -- John Podesta said some horrible things about you, and, boy, was he right.]*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

In situations like this the point is undoubtedly lost, which does not serve any of the candidates, or their audience. Despite this, such occasions occurred. Mostly they started out when the subject was somewhat incendiary and ended in situations where everyone is insisting and raising their voices. This did not happen in this scale in the earlier debates.

The most apparent interruptions in the debate are moments when Mr. Trump's attempts to diminish Secretary Clinton, or her message. There were several occasions in which Trump overlapped and interrupted Clinton mid-sentence in order to make less of her. In the early stages Trump was denigrating Clinton's message immediately after she had started her turn. In this situation Clinton and Wallace are trying to take the turn from Mr. Trump, which makes their contribution

content control whereas Trump with his short comments is bringing process control to the conversation.

TRUMP: ...We're going to bring the \$2.5 trillion []

WALLACE: [Time, Mr. Trump.]

TRUMP: that's offshore back into the country. We are going to start the engine rolling again, because []

WALLACE: [Mr. Trump?]

TRUMP: ... right now, our country is dying at 1 percent GDP.

CLINTON: Well, let me translate that, if I can, Chris, because []

TRUMP: [You can't].

CLINTON: the fact is, he's going to advocate for the largest tax cuts we've ever seen, three times more than the tax cuts under the Bush administration I have said repeatedly throughout this campaign: I will not raise taxes on anyone making \$250,000 or less.

I also will not add a penny to the debt. I have costed out what I'm going to do. He will, through his massive tax cuts, add \$20 trillion to the debt.

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

Following this, Clinton brought out Trump's questionable history of saying things about other people, which Trump did not feel comfortable with. He being uncomfortable led to a decision of diminishing Clinton's message and indicating it was not worth even mentioning.

CLINTON: In the 1980s, I was working to reform the schools in Arkansas. He was borrowing \$14 million from his father to start his businesses. In the 1990s, I went to Beijing and I said women's rights are human rights. He insulted a former Miss Universe, Alicia Machado, called her an eating machine. []

TRUMP: *[Give me a break.]*

CLINTON: *And on the day when I was in the Situation Room, monitoring the raid that brought Osama bin Laden to justice, he was hosting the "Celebrity Apprentice." So I'm happy to compare my 30 years of experience, what I've done for this country, trying to help in every way I could, especially kids and families get ahead and stay ahead, with your 30 years, and I'll let the American people make that decision.*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

To top all this, Trump also stuck with the method he had acquired in his earlier debates. In several different sections he interrupted Secretary Clinton's speech just to point out he thought Clinton was not correct. These, however annoying they may seem, are process control as Trump is not exactly trying to take the turn.

CLINTON: *I -- I find it ironic that he's raising nuclear weapons. This is a person who has been very cavalier, even casual about the use of nuclear weapons. He's[]*

TRUMP: *[Wrong.]*

CLINTON: *advocated more countries getting them, Japan, Korea, even Saudi Arabia. He said, well, if we have them, why don't we use them, which I think is terrifying*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

CLINTON: *... So we know what he has said and what he's done to women. But he also went after a disabled reporter, mocked and mimicked him [] on national television.*

TRUMP: *[Wrong].*

CLINTON: *He went after Mr. and Mrs. Khan, the parents of a young man who died serving our country, a Gold Star family, because of their religion ...*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

CLINTON: *Well, you know, once again, Donald is implying that he didn't support the invasion of Iraq. I said it was a mistake. I've said that years ago. He has consistently denied what is []*

TRUMP: *[Wrong.]*

CLINTON: *a very clear fact that []*

TRUMP: *[Wrong.]*

CLINTON: *before the invasion, he supported it. And, you know, I just want everybody to go Google it. Google "Donald Trump Iraq." And you will see the dozens of sources which verify that he was for the invasion of Iraq []*

TRUMP: *[Wrong.]*

CLINTON: *And you can actually hear the audio of him saying that. Now, why does that matter? Well, it matters because he has not told the truth about that position. I guess he believes it makes him look better now to contrast with me because I did vote for it.*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

The connecting factor in all these excerpts is the fact that whenever Trump is uncomfortable with the change of direction or thinks that the subject in question should not be mentioned, he immediately interrupts in order to decrease the subject's value.

However, as these interruptions can be seen as diminishing the political credit and value of Secretary Clinton and her points, Trump did also go further. In the earlier debates he has mostly stayed clear of any specifically personal interruptions and insults, but during the last one he decided to take that path, as well, trying to break Clinton in a new way discovered.

CLINTON: *My Social Security payroll contribution will go up, as will Donald's, assuming he can't figure out how to get out of it. But what we want to do is to replenish the [] Social Security Trust Fund*

TRUMP: [Such a nasty woman.]

CLINTON: *by making sure that we have sufficient resources, and that will come from either raising the cap and/or finding other ways to get more money into it. I will not cut benefits.*

...

The Affordable Care Act extended the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund. So if repeals it, our Medicare problem gets worse. What we need to do is go [] after...

TRUMP: [Your husband disagrees with you.]

CLINTON: *the long-term health care drivers. We've got to get costs down, increase value, emphasize wellness. I have a plan for doing that. And I think that we will be able to get entitlement spending under control by with more resources and harder decisions.*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

It appears that Trump felt trapped as he could not state how wrong Clinton in his opinion was. This made him still choose to go for an interruption and the result is as shows.

Secretary Clinton does interrupt in this debate as well, but mostly in aforementioned situations of crosstalking, in which there are several participants trying to be heard.

WALLACE: *Secretary Clinton, I want to []*

CLINTON: [We will not have open borders. [] That is]

WALLACE: [Well, let me – Secretary]

CLINTON: [That is a rank mischaracterization.]

WALLACE: [Secretary Clinton]

CLINTON: *We will have secure borders, but we'll also have reform. And this used to be a bipartisan issue. Ronald Reagan [] was the last president...*

WALLACE: *[Secretary Clinton, excuse me. Secretary Clinton.]*

CLINTON: *to sign immigration reform, and George W. Bush supported it, as well.*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

During the debate there a few of such interruptions, which ended quite shortly. In addition to this, Clinton mostly interrupted when attempting to sharpen a point or correct a fact, executing the manner of process control interruptions.

WALLACE: *We're a long way away from immigration, but I'm going to let you finish this topic. You got [] about 45 seconds.*

TRUMP: *[And she always will be.]*

CLINTON: *[I – I] find it ironic that he's raising nuclear weapons. This is a person who has been very cavalier, even casual about the use of nuclear weapons. He's []*

TRUMP: *[Wrong.]*

CLINTON: *advocated more countries getting them, Japan, Korea, even Saudi Arabia. He said, well, if we have them, why don't we use them, which I think is terrifying ...*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

In addition to his other ways of interrupting, Trump returned back to the insisting, he had adopted in the earlier debates. He had decided to make himself visible in situations in which others were speaking and used this method to ensure it.

CLINTON: *Well, that's because he'd rather have a puppet as president of [] the United States.*

TRUMP: *[No puppet. No puppet.]*

CLINTON: *And it's pretty clear []*

TRUMP: *[You're the puppet!]*

CLINTON: *It's pretty clear you won't admit []*

TRUMP: [No, you're the puppet.]

CLINTON: that the Russians have engaged in cyberattacks against the United States of America, that you encouraged espionage against our people, that you are willing to spout the Putin line, sign up for his wish list, break up NATO, do whatever he wants to do, and that you continue to get help from him, because he has a very clear favorite in this race ...

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

CLINTON: ... Well, he held a number of big rallies where he said that he could not possibly have done those things to those women because they were not attractive enough for [] them to be assaulted.

TRUMP: [I did not say that. I did not say that.]

CLINTON: In fact, he went on to say []

WALLACE: [Her two minutes -- sir, her two minutes. Her two minutes.[]]

TRUMP: [I did not say that.]

WALLACE: It's her two minutes.

CLINTON: He went on to say, "Look at her. I don't think so." ...

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

Trump also interrupted moderator Wallace a number of times as Wallace was asking a question or trying to make a subject shift. He raised himself on a new level in terms of enthusiasm to be heard and to not let other finish without him interrupting the subject. One example of the phenomenon is the following.

WALLACE: Well, let's pick up on another issue which divides you and the justices that whoever ends up winning this election appoints could have a dramatic effect there, and that's the issue of abortion []

TRUMP: [Right.]

WALLACE: *Mr. Trump, you're pro-life. But I want to ask you specifically: Do you want the court, including the justices that you will name, to overturn Roe v. Wade, which includes -- in fact, states -- a woman's right to abortion?*

TRUMP: *Well, if that would happen, because I am pro-life, and I will be appointing pro-life judges, I would think that that will go back to the individual states.*

WALLACE: *But I'm asking you specifically. Would you like to []*

TRUMP: *[If they overturned it, it will go back to the states.]*

WALLACE: *But what I'm asking you, sir, is, do you want to see the court overturn -- you just said you want to see the court protect the Second Amendment. Do you want to see the court overturn Roe [] v. Wade?*

TRUMP: *[Well, if] we put another two or perhaps three justice on, that's really what's going to be -- that will happen. And that'll happen automatically, in my opinion, because I am putting pro-life justices on the court. I will say this: It will go back to the states, and the states will then make a determination.*

WALLACE: *Secretary Clinton?*

(Blake 2 2016, n. pag.)

In the final debate the relation between content control and process control interruptions elevated and the final numbers were 159 for the content control and 44 for the process control. This was noticeable in the amount of crosstalk and in sudden, often unnecessary interruptions. The debate had a slightly more aggressive tone to it, which could also be explained in the amount of content control interruptions. The debates appeared to have escalated and the candidates became more enthusiastic about their agenda throughout the elections. Next I will move on to the 2012 elections and its first debate which was held in October 3 2012.

6.5 The first debate between Obama and Romney

The 2012 elections were very different from the 2016 ones. They did not have the same shock effect that the 2016 elections had and the chemistry between the candidates was very different. This can also be seen in all of the three debates that were held during the elections. The interruptions were of different kind and the motives for doing so appeared to not be similar.

The most common kind of interruption appeared in situations of crosstalking. In these situations both candidates were trying to make a point and get their turn and moderator Jim Lehrer was attempting to recover order and to keep the conversation flowing. These are categorized as content control interruptions.

OBAMA: ... And this is the reason why AARP has said that your plan would weaken Medicare substantially. And that's why they were supportive of the approach that we took.

One last point I want to make. We do have to lower the cost of health care, not just in Medicare [] and Medicaid...

LEHRER: [Talk about that in a minute.]

OBAMA: ... but -- but -- but overall.[]

LEHRER: [OK.]

OBAMA: And so []

ROMNEY: [That's -- that's a big topic. Can we -- can we stay on Medicare?]

OBAMA: [Is that a -- is that a separate topic?]

(CROSSTALK)

LEHRER: [Yeah, we're going to -- yeah, I want to get to it.]

OBAMA: [I'm sorry.]

LEHRER: [But all I want to do is go very quickly..]

ROMNEY: [Let's get back to Medicare.]

LEHRER: *[before we leave the economy]*

ROMNEY: *[Let's get back to Medicare.]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[The president said] that the government can provide the service at lower cost and without a profit.*

LEHRER: *All right.*

ROMNEY: *If that's the case, then it will always be the best product that people can purchase. []*

LEHRER: *[Wait a minute, Governor.]*

ROMNEY: *But my experience -- my experience the private sector typically is able to provide a better product at [] a lower cost.*

LEHRER: *[All right]. Can we -- can the two of you agree that the voters have a choice -- a clear choice between [] the two...*

ROMNEY: *[Absolutely].*

LEHRER: *of you on Medicare []?*

ROMNEY: *[Absolutely.]*

OBAMA: *[Absolutely.]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

As seen here, the situations may go on for a while as no one is quite ready to give their turn up, which is when the moderator has a role of resuscitating the situation and remain on the given path, as Lehrer here did. The crosstalking situations also often led to result in which one of the candidates gave up and the other was able to make their point without further interruptions, like in the following:

OBAMA: *That's what we've done, made some adjustments to it, and we're putting it forward before Congress right now, a \$4 trillion plan []*

ROMNEY: *[But you've been -- but you've been president four years]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[You've been president four years.] You said you'd cut the deficit in half. It's now four years later. We still have trillion-dollar deficits. The CBO says we'll have a trillion-dollar deficit each of the next four years. If you're re-elected, we'll get to a trillion-dollar debt. I mean, you have said before you'd cut the deficit in half. And this -- I love this idea of \$4 trillion in cuts. You found \$4 trillion of ways to reduce or to get closer to a balanced budget, except we still show trillion-dollar deficits every year. That doesn't get the job done.*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

One of the other types of interruptions that were present quite often was the short notes or clarifications in the middle of the other candidate's turn. The candidates may ask a short question from the other or refer to them mid-sentence, which the other candidate then answers and the asking candidate may continue with their speech. These were the few situations in which process control interruptions were seen.

ROMNEY: *And if not, I'll get rid of it. Obamacare's on my list.*

I apologize, Mr. President. I use that term with all respect, by the way [].

OBAMA: *[I like it.]*

ROMNEY: *Good. OK, good. So I'll get rid of that. I'm sorry, Jim, I'm going to stop the subsidy to PBS. I'm going to stop other things. I like PBS, I love Big Bird. Actually like you, too. But I'm not going to -- I'm not going to keep on spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for. That's number one.*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

The other types of interruptions of these short interruptions were the short comments on how the other candidate would work or how they see the ongoing subject. There were very few of these, but both candidates did use them.

ROMNEY: ... to oil, to tax breaks, then companies going overseas. So let's go through them one by one.

First of all, the Department of Energy has said the tax break for oil companies is \$2.8 billion a year. And it's actually an accounting treatment, as you know, that's been in place for a hundred years. Now []

OBAMA: [It's time to end it.]

ROMNEY: And in one year, you provided \$90 billion in breaks to the green energy world. ...

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

OBAMA: First of all, I think it's important for Governor Romney to present this plan that he says will only affect folks in the future.

And the essence of the plan is that you would turn Medicare into a voucher program. It's called premium support, but it's understood to be a voucher program. His running mate []

LEHRER: [And you don't support that?]

OBAMA: I don't. And let me explain why.[]

ROMNEY: [Again, that's for future []]

OBAMA: [I understand]

ROMNEY: people, right, not for current retirees.

OBAMA: For -- so if you're -- if you're 54 or 55, you might want to listen 'cause this -- this will affect you. The idea, which was originally presented by Congressman Ryan, your running mate, is that we would give a voucher to seniors and they could go out in the private marketplace and buy their own health insurance. The problem is that because the voucher wouldn't necessarily keep up with health care inflation, it was estimated that this would cost the average senior about \$6,000 a year.

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

Such interruptions could be seen as similar to the ones Mr. Trump used to do in his campaign, but in this debate there were so few, that the connection does seem slightly difficult to accomplish. There is, however, some features that are, if not as frequent, at least very similar to the 2016 elections. Both candidates also interrupt the other in order to defend themselves or to hold on to their rights as a debater. These interruptions are in the content control category.

OBAMA: ... No. The reason is, is because, when we reform Wall Street, when we tackle the problem of pre-existing conditions, then, you know, these are tough problems and we've got to make choices. And the choices we've made have been ones that ultimately are benefiting middle-class families all across the country. []

LEHRER: [We're going to move to []]

ROMNEY: [No. I -- I have to respond to that].

LEHRER: [No, but...]

ROMNEY: [Which is -- which is my] experience as a governor is if I come in and -- and lay down a piece of legislation and say, "It's my way or the highway," I don't get a lot done ...

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

ROMNEY: I have my own plan. It's not the same as Simpson- Bowles. But in my view, the president should have grabbed it. If you wanted to make some adjustments to it, take it, go to Congress, fight for it. []

OBAMA: [That's what we've done], made some adjustments to it, and we're putting it forward before Congress right now, a \$4 trillion plan []

ROMNEY: [But you've been -- but you've been president four years]

(Commission on Presidential Debates 1 2012, n. pag.)

Overlapping is the most common form of interruption in the debate, as there are plenty of interruptions that take place in the so called “no man’s land”, the grey area in which the current speaker is done and their last word is still in the air when the next speaker grabs the turn and starts speaking. All of the participants in this debate took turns in this manner, but they are not marked to the transcription in any specific manner, so I will not add an example. When counted, in the first debate between Obama and Romney there were 61 content control interruptions. The amount of process control interruptions was very low as the final count was 18. Next will be the second debate from October 16 2012.

6.6 The second debate between Obama and Romney

As in the earlier debate, also this one had plenty of crosstalking. Some were between Obama and Romney alone, but some included also the moderator Candy Crowley. Crosstalking appeared mainly in situations in which the candidates were both trying to make a point and insisted on not giving up, but also in situations in which moderator Crowley tried to put things forward and move on with the debate. In a situation where three participants are all trying to have their turn, all the interruptions are in the content control category.

***ROMNEY:** And then we have his own record, which is we have four consecutive years where he said when he was running for office, he would cut the deficit in half. Instead he's doubled it. We've gone from \$10 trillion of national debt, to \$16 trillion of national debt. If the president were reelected, we'd go to almost \$20 trillion of national debt. This puts us on a road to Greece. I know what it takes to balance budgets. I've done it my entire life. So for instance when he says, "Yours is a \$5 trillion cut." Well, no it's not. Because I'm offsetting some of the reductions with holding down some of the deductions.*

And []

***CROWLEY:** [Governor, I've gotta -- gotta -- actually, I need to have you both (inaudible).]*

(CROSSTALK)

CROWLEY: *[I understand the stakes here. I understand both of you. But I -- I will get run out of town if I don't...]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[And I just described -- I just described to you, Mr. President -- I just described to you precisely how I'd do it which is with a single number that people can put --] and they can put they're -- they're deductions and credits...*

(CROSSTALK)

CROWLEY: *[Mr. President, we're keeping track, I promise you. And Mr. President, the next question is [] for you, so stay standing.]*

OBAMA: *[Great. Looking forward to it.]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

The phenomenon, where the candidates hold on to their rights and ask the moderator to be fair and equal for both, still existed in the second debate, as well. The reason for these complaints appeared to be the turns that were given and whether they were shared in a similar manner. There were several occasions for this, here are some:

CROWLEY: *... And, Mr. Romney -- Governor Romney -- there'll be plenty of chances here to go on, but I want to []*

ROMNEY: *[That -- that Detroit -- that Detroit answer]*

CROWLEY: *[We have all these folks].*

ROMNEY: *[that Detroit answer..]*

CROWLEY: *[I will let you absolutely...]*

ROMNEY: *[and the rest of the answer, way off the mark.]*

CROWLEY: *[OK. Will -- will --] you certainly will have lots of time here coming up.[...]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

CROWLEY: *I got to -- I got to move you on -- []*

ROMNEY: *[He gets the first --]*

CROWLEY: *[-- and the next question --]*

ROMNEY: *[He actually got --]*

CROWLEY: *[-- for you --]*

ROMNEY: *[He actually got the first question. So I get the last question -- last answer --]*

CROWLEY: *[(Inaudible) in the follow up, it doesn't quite work like that.] But I'm going to give you a chance here. I promise you, I'm going to...*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

In this debate there was a slightly similar feature to the 2016 debates. Trump acquired a habit of repeating himself while trying to show Clinton was wrong and this method is utilized by Obama as well. The difference in the two was that where Trump was satisfied with the mere interruption, Obama does continue with a proof of what he is trying to put through. These are both process control and content control interruptions, as the aim is at both having a turn and controlling the subject.

ROMNEY: *But that's not what you've done in the last four years. That's the problem. In the last four years, you cut permits and licenses on federal land and federal waters in half. []*

OBAMA: *[Not true, Governor Romney.]*

ROMNEY: *So how much did you cut [] (inaudible)?*

OBAMA: *[Not true.]*

ROMNEY: *How much did you cut them by, then?*

OBAMA: *Governor, we have actually produced more oil -- []*

ROMNEY: *[No, no. How much did you cut licenses and permits on federal land and federal [] waters?]*

OBAMA: *[Governor Romney, here's what we did. There were a whole bunch of oil companies.]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

In the first debate there were questions that were expected to be answered by the other candidate, but not really gone deeply into. In the second debate the question-asking is still there but this time it appears to be more difficult to maintain the appropriate line and to not let the situation slip into insisting and arguing. The situations take too long and severely disrupt the rhythm of the debate. The question itself does not apply as an actual interruption, but the situations usually lead to a point, where interruptions are made and the audience's ability to follow is compromised.

ROMNEY: *Just going to make a point. Any investments I have over the last eight years have been managed by a blind trust. And I understand they do include investments outside the United States, including in -- in Chinese companies.*

Mr. President, have you looked at your pension? Have you looked at your pension?

OBAMA: *I've got to say []*

ROMNEY: *[Mr. President, have you looked at your pension?]*

OBAMA: *You know, I -- I don't look at my pension. It's not as big as yours so it [] doesn't take as long.*

ROMNEY: *[Well, let me give you some advice.]*

OBAMA: *[I don't check it that often.]*

ROMNEY: *[Let me give you some advice]. Look at your pension. You also have investments in Chinese companies. You also have investments outside the United States. You also have investments through a Cayman's trust.*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

In the same category belongs the “interrupting of the oppressive questions”, that was not seen in the former debate. Obama interrupts Romney, who is making a seemingly unnecessary question as the answer could have been reached through research. This form of interrupting acts as a hurrying effect to move things forward.

ROMNEY: *You said in the Rose Garden the day after the attack, it was an act of terror.*

It was not a spontaneous demonstration, Is [] that what you're saying?

OBAMA: *[Please proceed governor].*

ROMNEY: *I want to make sure we get that for the record because it took the president 14 days before he called the attack in Benghazi an act of terror.*

OBAMA: *Get the transcript.*

CROWLEY: *It -- it -- it -- he did in fact, sir. So let me -- let me call it an act of terror []*

OBAMA: *[Can you say that a little louder, Candy?]*

CROWLEY: *He -- he did call it an act of terror. It did as well take -- it did as well take two weeks or so for the whole idea there being a riot out there about this tape to come out. You are correct [] about that.*

ROMNEY: *[This -- the administration] -- the administration indicated this was a reaction to a video and was a spontaneous reaction.*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

In this debate there were also more self-instructing moments as interruptions. Many times one of the candidates questioned the other’s comments as they may not have been relevant or when they moved too far from the original subject. This may have been done as an attempt to dodge a subject that was not too pleasant or it could just be a natural consequence of such subjects. The moderator usually does this, but often the candidates got ahead in the situations. This can be seen as a

typical example of process control, as the interrupting participant does not aim to have a turn but merely tries to steer the conversation.

CROWLEY: *We're way off topic here, Governor Romney.*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[I thought we were talking about immigration.]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[I do want to make sure that...]*

CROWLEY: *[If I could have you sit down, Governor Romney. Thank you.]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 2 2012, n. pag.)

In the second debate the amount of interruptions was in a slight increase but the relation of content control and process control interruptions remained similar. There were 67 situations of content control and 23 of process control. Hence the debate worked as a proper image of the mid-season overview to the debates. Next, and lastly, I will move on to the third and final debate that was held October 22 2012.

6.7 The third debate between Obama and Romney

In the debate there appeared to be a large amount of overlapping, as it did in the earlier debates, too. Usually moderator Bob Schieffer used overlapping when he was giving away turns to the candidates, but often also in managing the chaos, trying to get the candidates to remain in the subject that was given.

One of the biggest differences in the third debate was the amount of crosstalking. It could be seen in the very early stages of the debate, where in the earlier debates it was something that occurred once the subjects were more emotion provoking and needed to be attended with more enthusiasm. Also the level of aggressiveness was somewhat surprising as the former crosstalking had been, if enthusiastic, still respectful. In the third debate the candidates were mainly unforgiving and did not allow anything to get through their web. This resulted in half-sentences and raising of one's voice, which as a form of interrupting is very distracting for both the audience and the candidates themselves. In these situations both candidates were trying to have a turn in the conversation and the interruptions were in the content control category.

ROMNEY: *I'm sorry, you actually -- there was a -- there was an effort on the part of the president to have a status of forces agreement, and I concurred in that, and said that we should have some number of troops that stayed on. That was something I concurred with...*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[Governor...]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[.that your posture. That was my posture as well. You thought it should have been 5,000 troops...*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[Governor?]*

ROMNEY: *[I thought there should have been more troops, but you know what? The answer was we got...]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[no troops through whatsoever.]*

OBAMA: *[This was just a few weeks ago that you indicated that we should still have troops in Iraq].*

ROMNEY: *[No, I..].*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[...I'm sorry that's a...]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[You -- you..]*

ROMNEY: *[...that's a -- I indicated...]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[...major speech.]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[...I indicated that you failed to put in place a status...]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[Governor?]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[...of forces agreement at the end of the conflict that existed.]*

OBAMA: *[Governor -- here -- here's -- here's one thing...]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[...here's one thing I've learned as commander in chief.]*

(CROSSTALK)

SCHIEFFER: *[Let him answer...]*

OBAMA: *You've got to be clear, both to our allies and our enemies, about where you stand and what you mean*

...

ROMNEY: *How did we do that? Well, Republicans and Democrats came together on a bipartisan basis to put in place education principles that focused on having great teachers in the classroom .[]*

OBAMA: *[Ten years earlier...]*

ROMNEY: *And that was -- that was -- that was what allowed us to become the number one state in the nation.*

OBAMA: *[But that was 10 years before you took office.]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[And then you cut education spending when you came into office.]*

ROMNEY: *[The first -- the first -- the first -- and we kept our schools number one in the nation. They're still number one today.]*

SCHIEFFER: *[All right.]*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 3 2012, n. pag.)

An interesting feature in this bundle of interruptions is the fact that Schieffer allows the situation to continue quite a while before he interrupts the candidates to give turns. This is also quite unusual for a moderator, as the earlier debates have showed. Crosstalking is an unexpectedly common phenomenon in the debate in question, as it could be seen in nearly every turn that was taken, which evokes the question of why. That, however, should be discussed separately.

As seen also in the earlier debates, the insisting has been strongly present in these debates, as it is in the very last one as well. The phenomenon has developed to a point, where one of the candidates gets stuck with their argument of few words and the other candidate decides to start arguing with a similar sentence. In such situations there typically are both content control and process control interruptions.

OBAMA: *The -- look, I think anybody out there can check the record. Governor Romney, you keep on trying to, you know airbrush history here. You were very clear that you*

would not provide, government assistance to the U.S. auto companies, even if they went through bankruptcy. You said that they could get it in the private marketplace. That wasn't true. They would have gone through a []

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[You're wrong...]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[...they would have gone through a..].*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[...you're wrong.]*

(CROSSTALK)

OBAMA: *[No, I am not wrong. I am not [] wrong.]*

(CROSSTALK)

ROMNEY: *[People can look it up, you're [] right.]*

OBAMA: *[People will] look it [] up.*

ROMNEY: *[Good.]*

OBAMA: *But more importantly it is true that in order for us to be competitive, we're going to have to make some smart choices right now. Cutting our education budget, that's not a smart choice. That will not help us compete with China.*

(Commission on Presidential Debates 3 2012, n. pag.)

The final debate appeared to be the most monotonous with not so many forms of interruptions. The debate provided mostly crosstalking in situations where the candidates wanted to make their point during the other candidate's turn. Moderator Schieffer seemed to have more work in keeping the order as expected and to maintain the rhythm in the debate, than the moderators in the earlier debates. The amount of interruptions however shows that despite the fact that there were several situations in which the candidates were even interrupting each

other's interruptions, there were only 76 content control interruptions and 3 process control ones. Based on the results the hypothesis "power-oriented interrupting was more prevalent in the 2016 presidential debates compared to the 2012 debates" was proven to be true. This is despite the fact that categorizing some of the interruptions turned out to be somewhat challenging, which I will discuss in the next section.

7. Discussion

In all of the six debates competitive overlapping was the most frequent type of overlaps, even though there were interruptions that were difficult to categorize.. For example President Obama's comment "I like it" during Governor Romney's turn could be seen as a cooperative overlapping as it did not attempt to turn the attention to the listener but merely conformed the current speaker, but also as a process control interruption, as they tend to have similar features.

The most difficult interruptions to categorize were the turns the moderators took. They often did interrupt the speakers, which would be drawing attention away from the speaker, they did attempt to affect the subject and the direction to which the speaker's turn was heading, but they often did not continue with their turn themselves, but immediately returned the turn either to the current speaker or to the next. This makes it quite difficult to actually recognize the category in which each of these interruptions should go.

The transition-relevance place was often ignored and replaced with the use of interruptions and overlapping, but in the situations it was used, it was utilized to its core. This became evident when turns were taken during a break that was hardly audible. The listener had been paying attention and reading the signs that may indicate a change of turn and immediately utilized the transition-relevance place.

The motives for the interruptions were very varied, but some conclusions could be made. The most common reason for interrupting the current speaker was to make a point clearer or to correct claims with facts. Trump seems to

have introduced a new level of insisting and interrupting for the mere joy of it, which then was a large part of the 2016 elections. It will be interesting to find out whether the success of President Trump will affect the future campaigns and debates.

The common feature in both 2012 and 2016 elections was the appearance of competitive overlaps, but in many cases that is left to be one of the few things the two elections have in common. The last debates of both rounds offered the second feature that could be seen as mutual thing. The situations of crosstalking increased greatly in the third debates in 2012 and in 2016.

In 2016 this occurred when Clinton, despite her effort of following the rules of good behavior decided to follow the same path as Trump had been following for all of the debates. In 2012 the reason for this was not too clear. The possible reasons could have been the development of chemistry between the candidates or just the fact that the third debate was the last time to be heard as such and both candidates decided to take their turns whenever possible.

The differences had mostly to do with the categorizing of the interruptions. Obama and Romney had competitive and cooperative overlaps as well as power- and rapport-oriented overlapping in their debates, and the most common reason for interrupting or overlapping was, as mentioned earlier, correcting claims the other candidate had made. There was very little insisting and no personal insults. However, the debates did have some interruptions which seemed to have the motive of proclaiming one's superiority as a leader or as a person.

Trump and Clinton had mostly competitive overlaps and power-oriented interruptions in their debates as usually the motive was to have their voice heard and to claim one's turn. However, Trump's behavior caused difficulties in the categorizing as it was very difficult, if not impossible to categorize every interruption he made. Some were merely yelled on top of Clinton's speech with no intention to actually take the turn or no valid content what so ever.

The other difference to Obama and Romney's debates was the phenomenon in which Trump immediately and quite violently interrupted the current speaker if the subject was less pleasant for him. He started with

interruptions which did not have a proper function, but as he was also forced to hear things he could not reset with a simple phrase like “Wrong.”, he resorted to stronger weapons and started insulting the speaker personally.

This happened, for example, when the Social Security Trust Fund was discussed and Clinton claimed Trump will make a good result as well if he doesn't find his way out of the matter. There Trump was unable to say Clinton was wrong, because she had just said Trump would do a good job, so he got very confused and decided to go for the big blow. *“Such a nasty woman”* was the answer of the current president of the United States of America.

8. Conclusion

In the study the focus was in the amount of interruptions in the presidential debates of the United States in 2012 and 2016 elections. The aim was to observe power-oriented interruptions and whether they would vary in number between the two elections. As mentioned in the analysis, the amounts of power-oriented interruptions were varied with each debate. In 2012 the first debate between Obama and Romney included 79 interruptions whereas Clinton and Trump's first debate was consisted of 123 interruptions. The second debate in 2012 had 90 power-oriented interruptions, while 2016 there were 126. The last debate in 2016 sealed the difference to 2012 as Clinton and Trump made 203 power-oriented interruptions in their third debate while Obama and Romney reached the amount of 79. This proves the hypothesis "power-oriented interrupting was more prevalent in the 2016 presidential debates compared to the 2012 debates" to be true, as in 2016 there were 452 power-oriented interruptions altogether and in 2012 there were 248.

The main findings in the study show that interruptions and overlaps are an important part of the presidential debates. They provide a possibility for the candidates to immediately correct or stick to what their opponent is claiming. There were a number of situations in which interruptions or overlaps took place both in 2012 and in 2016, but it did seem like Mr. Trump with his special behavior took the phenomenon to a new level.

According to the study the main motive or reason for interrupting or overlapping in the 2012 debates appeared to be correcting the claims an opposing candidate had made. In 2016 this could be seen as one of the reasons for interrupting, but Trump also seemed to have a motive of merely interrupting and overlapping because of the disturbance it caused making Clinton's message more vague and made it more difficult for the audience to follow the discussion.

Some of the limitations of the study have been mentioned already earlier in the paper, but one of the main problems was my personal bias that had to do with the candidates and their agendas. This is something that was carefully kept out of the analysis section, so that the result could be viewed as an unbiased one.

The other limitation that the study had was the fact that the transcriptions can be seen as merely lists of words. They are not especially detailed about the timing or the exact places of interruptions, so this had to be made separately, which may potentially cause problems with the interpretation of the debates. With a more detailed material it might be possible to conduct a more elaborate study.

Keeping later research in mind, this study succeeded in providing information in the vast quantity of interruptions in the material and the situations and moments in which it could be located. There is still room for plenty more research and especially interesting could be to conduct a study on the future presidential debates and whether they now have a new direction as President Trump has paved the road that he took. Does the future of the presidential debates look more aggressive and careless about the common rules of respective communication?

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Keskeyttäminen ja päällekkäisyys Yhdysvaltain presidentinvaaleissa

Johdanto

Tutkimus toteutettiin tutkimalla Yhdysvaltain presidentinvaalien vaaliväittelytilaisuuksista koostettuja transkriptioita. Tutkittavat vaalikaudet olivat 2012, jolloin ehdokkaina olivat kuvernööri Mitt Romney Yhdysvaltain republikaanisesta puolueesta ja presidentti Barack Obama Yhdysvaltain demokraattisesta puolueesta sekä kausi 2016, jolloin ehdokkaina olivat Donald Trump republikaanisesta puolueesta ja ulkoministeri Hillary Clinton demokraattisesta puolueesta.

Vaaliväittelyitä tarkkailtiin etsien tilanteita, joissa esiintyy keskeytyksiä. Tämän jälkeen keskeytystilanteita tutkittiin mm. Harvey Sacksin, Emanuel A. Schegloffin sekä Gail Jeffersonin (1974) kehittämän vuoronottamisteorian avulla. Kyseisestä teoriasta keskityttiin erityisesti osioihin keskeytyksistä ja päällekkäisyyksistä. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin myös Julia A. Goldbergin (1990) teoriaa erityyppisistä, kuten esimerkiksi yhteisymmärrykseen pyrkivistä, sekä keskustelun sisältöön tai suuntaan vaikuttavista keskeytyksistä.

Tutkimuksen pääpyrkimys oli tarjota lisäinformaatiota vaaliväittelyiden piirteistä. Vuoden 2016 vaalien voidaan katsoa olleen historialliset monella tapaa, sillä presidentiksi valittiin henkilö, jolla ei ollut minkäänlaista poliittista taustaa ja väittelymetodit usein poikkeuksellisia. Tutkimus tarttui näihin piirteisiin ja tarkasteli kuinka niiden osa-alueet ja esimerkiksi esiintymistiheys poikkesi vuoden 2012 vaaleista, joissa vastakkain olivat kaksi poliittisesti kokenutta tekijää.

Aihe on erityisen kiinnostava myös ajankuva-näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksessa pohditaan myös mahdollisuutta siihen, vaikuttavatko siinä todetut piirteet tuleviin presidentinvaaleihin ja niissä olevien ehdokkaiden toimiin. Viihdyttävyyden ja helppolukuisuuden kulttuuri saattaa vahvistua entisestään, jonka voidaan olettaa vaikuttavan siihen, minkälaisella toiminnalla saavutetaan suurin äänestäjäkanta. Nk. viihdyttäjän rooli saattaa lisätä keskeytysten ja päällekkäisyyksien esiintymistiheyttä.

Tutkimuksen päätavoitteena oli tarjota monipuolinen kuva keskeytysten ja päällekkäisyyksien käytöstä Yhdysvaltain presidentinvaaleissa. Tutkimus tarjoaa esimerkkejä myös siitä, kuinka keskeyttäminen ja päälle puhuminen voivat toimia myös valtakinona esimerkiksi miehen ja naisen välillä sekä siitä, minkälaisia keinoja on ohjata keskustelu itselleen mielekkääseen suuntaan. Tavoitteena on myös todistaa että viimeisimmissä vaaleissa keskeytysten määrä on kasvanut ja keskustella siitä, merkitseekö tämä uuden aikakauden alkua vaaliväittelyissä ja ehdokkaiden julkisuuskuvissa. Tutkimuksen hypoteesi on ”valtaorientoituneet keskeytykset ovat lisääntyneet vuoden 2016 vaaliväittelyissä verrattuna vuoden 2012 vaaliväittelyihin.”

Teoriatausta

Kuten johdannossa mainittiin, tutkimuksen teoriapohjana toimivat Harvey Sacksin (1974) ja Julia A. Goldbergin (1990) teoria erityyppisistä keskeytyksistä. Vuoronottamisteoria on osa laajempaa yleisemmällä tasolla toimivaa teoreettista keskusteluanalyysia. Harvey Sacks kyseenalaisti keskusteluanalyysin tarkkuuden ja kehitti teorian vuoron ottamisesta, jonka avulla on mahdollista tutkia vuoronvaihtumiseen liittyvää laajaa keinovariaatiota. Vuoronottamisen ja vuorojen vaihtumisesta huolehtimisen sanotaan tuovan järjestyttä kommunikatiivisiin tilanteisiin.

Tutkimuksen kannalta tärkeimmäksi osaksi vuoronottamista nousi termi, joka kuvastaa vuoronvaihtumisen kohtaa keskustelussa. Termi voidaan suomentaa relevantin vaihdoksen paikaksi ja se viittaa niihin hetkiin sosiaalisissa tilanteissa, joissa puhuja vaihtuu. Vaihtaminen tapahtuu useimmiten tilanteen osapuolten toimesta kohdassa, jossa se koetaan luonnolliseksi. Relevantin vaihdoksen kohdassa sen hetkinen puhuja voi antaa puheenvuoron seuraavalle tai sen voi ottaa ilman puhujan kehotusta, kun hetki on oikea. Mikäli kukaan ei ota puhujan paikkaa, saattaa sen hetkinen puhuja jatkaa omaa vuoroaan.

Päällekkäin puhuminen voidaan Khiet P. Truongin (2013) mukaan jakaa kahteen kategoriaan: kilpailu- ja yhteistyöhaluinen. Kilpailuhaluinen päälle puhuminen keskeyttää puheen, jolloin puhuja joutuu lopettamaan vuoronsa kesken. Täten tilanteen voidaan katsoa olevan tunkeileva ja kilpailullinen. Yhteistyöhaluinen päälle puhuminen pyrkii jatkamaan puhujan vuoroa ja säilyttämään keskustelun tahdin. Puhuja ei koe tilannetta tunkeilevana ja pystyy jatkamaan omaa vuoroaan.

Tutkimuksessa pääteorian toimi Julia A. Goldbergin (1990) teoria yhteisymmärrykseen pyrkivistä, sekä keskustelun sisältöön tai suuntaan vaikuttavista keskeytyksistä. Keskustelun sisältöön ja suuntaan vaikuttavat keskeytykset koetaan useimmiten aggressiivisina ja yhteisestä linjasta poikkeavina, joissa uhattuna on puhuja ja sen hetkinen keskustelu. Keskustelun sisältöön vaikuttavat keskeytykset koostuvat metodeista, jotka eivät liity sillä hetkellä käytävään keskusteluun. Tämänkaltaiset keskeytykset häiritsevät keskustelua ja usein katkaisevat sen kokonaan. Suuntaan vaikuttavat keskeytykset koetaan vähemmän uhkaavana, sillä niiden tarkoituksena on palauttaa kontrolli puhujalle, vaikka niiden avulla usein pyritään aiheenvaihdokseen. Yhteisymmärrykseen pyrkivät keskeytykset toimivat keskusteluun osallistajina ja niitä käytetään jotta yhteinen tavoite saavutetaan. Tämänkaltaiset keskusteluun osallistumiset koetaan usein solidaarisina ja empaattisina.

Aineisto

Aineiston transkriptiot ovat Washington Postin, New York Timesin ja The commission of Presidential debatesin kokoonpanemia. Näistä lähteistä the Commission of Presidential debatesin voidaan katsoa olevan puolueettomin, sillä sen rahoittajina toimii sekä liberaali- että konservatiiviosapuolia. Washington Post ja New York Times ovat jonkin verran liberaalin näkemyksen suuntaan kallistuneita. Puolueellisuuden ei kuitenkaan tulisi olla ongelma, sillä transkriptiot tarkistettiin vaaliväittelyiden videoiduista versioista.

Vuonna 2012 vaaliväittelyt Obaman ja Romneyn välillä toteutettiin seuraavanlaisesti:

1. väittely
3.10.2012
1h 31min, moderaattorina Jim Lehrer (PBS)

2. väittely
16.10.2012
1h 37min, moderaattorina Candy Crowley (CNN)

3. väittely
22.10.2012
1h 36min, moderaattorina Bob Schieffer (CBS)

Vuonna 2016 vaaliväittelyt Trumpin ja Clintonin välillä toteutettiin seuraavanlaisesti:

1. väittely
26.9.2016
1h 35min, moderaattorina Lester Holt (NBC)

2. väittely
9.10.2016
1h 32min, moderaattoreina Martha Raddatz (ABC) ja Anderson Cooper (CNN)

3. väittely
19.10.2016
1h 34min, moderaattorina Chris Wallace (FOX)

Tulokset ja pohdinta

Keskustelun sisältöön tai suuntaan vaikuttavien keskeytysten määrä vaihteli väittelystä toiseen. Tulokset kertoivat, että ensimmäisessä Obaman ja Romneyn välillä pidetyssä väittelyssä esiintyi 79 edellä mainitun kaltaista keskeytystä, kun taas Clintonin ja Trumpin ensimmäisessä väittelyssä ilmeni 123 keskeytystä. Obaman ja Romneyn toisessa väittelyssä keskeytyksiä oli 90, vuonna 2016 niitä esiintyi 126. Vuoden 2012 kolmannessa väittelyssä oli 79 keskeytystä, kun taas Clinton ja Trump nostivat lukunsa 203:n. Vaikka määrä vaihteli, vaalien suhde keskenään pysyi samankaltaisena; Trumpin ja Clintonin väittelyissä oli säännöllisesti enemmän sisältöön ja suuntaan vaikuttavia keskeytyksiä.

Päälöydökset osoittavat että keskeytykset ja päällekkäisyydet ovat oleellinen osa vaaliväittelyitä. Ne tarjoavat ehdokkaille mahdollisuuden osoittaa kantansa selkeästi ja korjata vääriä väitteitä välittömästi. Vuosien 2012 ja 2016 vaalien välillä myös keskeytysten laadussa tapahtui muutoksia. Obaman ja Romneyn välisissä keskusteluissa ei juuri tapahtunut keskeytyksiä, jotka olisivat vaikuttaneet pelkiltä yrityksiltä häiritä toista ehdokasta, kun taas vuonna 2016 tämänkaltaisia keskeytyksiä oli nähtävissä.

Tutkimuksen rajoitukset ja ongelmat kohdistuivat eniten henkilökohtaiseen puolueellisuuteeni sekä ehdokkaiden että heidän agendojensa suhteen, vaikka nämä näkemykset onnistuttiinkin pitämään huolellisesti erossa tutkimuksesta. Toinen mahdollisesti rajoittava tekijä oli transkriptioiden vajavuus. Tarjotut transkriptiot olivat vain kuvaus siitä, mitä väittelyissä sanottiin, jolloin ajoitukset ym. jäivät huomaamatta. Nämä tekijät ovat myöhemmin lisätty esimerkkeihin, mutta muut osat transkriptioista ovat edelleen vajaita.

Suurimmat tavoitteet tutkimuksen suhteen liittyvät tuleviin tutkimuksiin, jotka jatkavat aihetta mahdollisesti pidemmälle. Myös tulevaisuusaspekti on mahdollinen suuntaus, sillä vuoden 2016 vaalit vaikuttivat olevan omalta osaltaan melko erilaiset verrattuna aiempien vuosien vaaleihin ja niiden väittelyihin. Nyt tutkimuksen kohteena voisi olla esimerkiksi se, vaikuttiko vuoden 2016 vaalit ratkaisevasti siihen, millaisia tulevaisuuden presidentinvaalit Yhdysvalloissa ovat.