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**The Role of Hedges in Political Discourse in Connection with Lying,
Deceiving and Bullshitting**

DIPLOMA THESIS

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Prehlásenie

Týmto prehlasujem, že som diplomovú prácu na tému: „The Role of Hedges in Political Discourse in Connection with Lying, Deceiving and Bullshitting“ vypracovala samostatne pod odborným dohľadom vedúceho diplomovej práce a uviedla som všetky použité podklady a literatúru.

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Ďakujem pani Mgr. Markéte Janebové, PhD. za cenné rady a pripomienky, ktoré mi poskytla a tiež za jej ochotu a trpezlivosť.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

The following lines contain the abbreviations used throughout the thesis. The abbreviations mark specific speaker, whose utterance served as the source of examples, or the hypotheses which were tested.

- BO- Barack Obama
- DT- Donald Trump
- HC- Hilary Clinton
- MT- Mitt Romney
- H1- Hypothesis 2
- H2- Hypothesis 2
- H3- Hypothesis 3
- H4- Hypothesis 4
- H5- Hypothesis 5
- H6- Hypothesis 6

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INTRODUCTION

The first presidential debate broadcasted in the USA in 2016 set a new record in the almost 60-year history of the presidential debates, with an estimated 84 million people watching, not including the viewers who watched the show online (National Public Radio 2016). Undoubtedly, focusing on the undecided audience, presidential debates represent one of the most influential elements affecting the results of any presidential elections. The viewership record, however, is not the only reason why the presidential elections of 2016 are perceived as one of the milestones in its history.

The US presidential elections, together with Brexit, represented the two main reasons why the Oxford Dictionary team named “post-truth” the word of the year in 2016. The Oxford dictionary defines the expression “post-truth” as “an adjective, relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Oxford 2018). False statements have always been an inseparable part of politics. But the fact that we are living in the “post-truth” age suggests that the nature of lies has changed. It seems, that instead of the truth value, the speakers have started to care more about the final effect which their statements have on the audience. Thus, instead of lies, we witness rather bullshitting. In other words, it happens more and more often that politicians around the world say obvious lies creating a good impression, rather than the truth, which does not always sound that pleasant.

One of the politicians, who is often blamed for using this deceitful kind of rhetoric, is Donald Trump. In other words, he is often blamed for bullshitting. Bullshitting, which is sometimes perceived even as a vulgar expression, is, in fact, an academically defined term representing one of the many forms of misrepresentation and deception, appearing together with a speaker’s carelessness about the truth value of a statement. Carelessness represents the most typical feature of a bullshitter, which at the same time represents the characteristic distinguishing bullshitting from lying (Frankfurt 2009). The problem with bullshitting, however, is that it cannot be easily spotted in a speech and its presence cannot be easily proven. Since we cannot know what the speaker’s intentions are and whether the speaker does or does not care about the truth value, another defining feature which would suggest the presence of bullshit is needed.

This thesis therefore seeks to answer the question whether there is a possible connection between bullshitting and the linguistic features of a speech or not. One of the linguistic elements which might suggest such a connection are hedges. Hedges, inconspicuous expressions, not only represent an important part of human interaction as elements essential for successful communication (Fraser 2010), but they can, as well, serve as modifiers of the truth value and evidential status of statements (Lakoff 1972, Brown and Levinson 1987, Sweetser 1987). On the contrary, avoidance of hedges and the lack of these elements in a speech can signify the speaker's lack of interest in the truth value, or, in other words, the speaker's lack of cooperation (Brown and Levinson 1987). That is to say, these characteristics suggest carelessness on the side of the speaker, which is, at the same time, one of the main characteristics of a bullshitter.

A typical bullshitter provides the hearer with his own perception of reality, which serves to his purpose. A bullshitter also seeks to create a certain image in the eyes of the audience. Such a person is expected to push directly on the belief system of a listener and create the impression of high evidentiality status of statements. Contrary to the items which serve to avoid responsibility for statements and signal low evidentiality status of a statement, some items can serve to reinforce the commitment to the truthfulness of the statement. Therefore, these reinforcing expressions could represent other elements signaling a possible connection between bullshitting and linguistic features.

For the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the thesis examines the presence of hedges and reinforcing elements modifying the truth value and evidentiality status of the statements in speeches of four speakers engaging in political debates broadcasted in 2012 and 2016, in the United States. For the speaker's lack of interest in the truth value, bullshit often appears in a speech as a false statement. Consequently, the analysis included in this thesis also examines a possible correlation between the occurrence of hedges and the occurrence of false statements in speeches of the speakers. If the analysis proves the connection between these two variables, it would suggest that the lack of hedges and the higher occurrence of reinforcing elements in the speech might be another characteristic feature of bullshitting.

The thesis is divided into two main parts: theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part describes the key semantic and pragmatic concepts including hedges as well as the link between these concepts, false statements and lying. The literature review explains Gricean

maxims, politeness theory and approaches to the classification of hedges. This section also introduces the phenomenon of bullshitting and emphasizes the difference between bullshitting and lying. It describes the distinction between lies and non-lies in details and disproves the popular belief that every statement which is false is also a lie. (Sweetser 1987).

The practical part includes a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The first, quantitative part of the analysis examines the frequency of hedges employed by the speakers during the presidential debates in 2012 and 2016. The qualitative approach was used in the second part of the analysis. The subjects of the qualitative research were hedges, which occurred in the false statements uttered by the candidates. The analysis compares the speeches of the particular speakers and examines whether the nature of the hedges and lies changed during the period between the elections or not.

THEORETICAL PART

The theoretical framework provides essential information about the main concepts and theories concerning the concept of hedging and lying as well as the evolution of the theories over time. The theoretical part not only demonstrates the connections between these theories but it also explains the phenomenon of bullshitting and it describes its defining features. The later sections of the first part also highlight the most essential differences between lying and bullshitting. The last section of the theoretical part describes, in detail, the classification applied in the practical part, as well as the principles and theories on which the classification is based.

1. HEDGES

The term hedges refers to a large group of expressions which can take the form of particles, syntactic constructions, or they can even be realized by intonation. Hedges represent an important part of human interactions and they function as elements essential for successful communication. Even a grammatically perfect sentence can fail to achieve its aim if it lacks hedges. Presence of hedges can prevent the misunderstanding of a speaker's intentions. Fraser (2010), for example, used non-native speakers' speech to demonstrate the effect of the absence of hedges. Even if a sentence uttered by a non-native speaker is grammatically correct, the speaker can be perceived as rude, impolite or arrogant by a native speaker. Fraser uses the sentences included in (1) (a) and (1) (b) to demonstrate the cases, when hedges are used to convey a negative message. As he explains, this kind of sentences is more likely to appear in a native speaker's speech than in a speech of a non-native speaker (Fraser 2010,16).

- (1) (a) *It might be a good idea if we could move on to the next speaker.*
(b) *I must insist that you leave.*

Hedges, however, are not an essential part of human interaction only in terms of politeness. They can function as modifiers of the truth value and evidential status of uttered statements (Lakoff 1975, Brown and Levinson 1987, Sweetser 1987). The following paragraphs describe the role and importance of hedges from different perspectives and demonstrate the fact that hedging is not only a semantic but also pragmatic phenomenon.

The first serious discussions and analyses of hedges which influenced contemporary theorists emerged during the 1970s with the publication of Lakoff's papers. He focused on

predicate adjectives or predicate nominals in declarative sentences and described hedges as predicates affecting membership of element in class, which can either attenuate or reinforce the class membership of an element. He based his theory on the claim that category membership of an expression is not a black and white matter but a matter of degree (Lakoff 1975,460).

Lakoff denied the claim that sentences of natural languages are either true or false. More typically, they have “vague boundaries and fuzzy edges”, which means that sentences are more often true or false only in some respects and only to some extent. Lakoff used the sentence '*John is tall*' to demonstrate that the truth value of a statement is relevant and subjective. John might be considered tall among common American men but not among basketball players. While one could consider John tall, another person might find his height average (Lakoff 1975,458). Thus, it can be assumed that the truth value is context dependent.

Lakoff referred in his papers to Eleanor Rosch Heider (1971), a psychologist who tried to answer the question whether people perceive category membership as a clear-cut issue or a matter of degree (1975,458). Heider came with the results that people consider objects members of its category only to a certain degree. Heider used a bird hierarchy and a vegetable hierarchy to demonstrate this. It was, for example, proved that people consider robins more typical birds than chickens, penguins, pelicans or ducks. Consequently, Lakoff assumed that it is necessary to distinguish between central members of a category and its peripheral members (Lakoff 1975,459).

Taking into consideration Heider's research, Lakoff came to the conclusion that category membership is not simply a yes or no matter but a matter of degree. He claimed that membership rankings are subjective and dependent on people's beliefs or knowledge. Lakoff applies the same logic to the concept of truth value and claims that “if an X is a member of the category Y only to a certain degree, then the sentence '*An X is a Y*' should be true only to that degree, rather than being clearly true or false” (Lakoff 1975,460). He provides the following examples to demonstrate a varying degree of truth corresponding to the degree of category membership, based on Hider's bird category hierarchy:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| (2) | (a) <i>A robin is a bird.</i> | (true) |
| | (b) <i>A chicken is a bird.</i> | (less true than a) |
| | (c) <i>A penguin is a bird.</i> | (less true than b) |

- (d) *A bat is a bird.* (false, or at least very far from true)
 (e) *A cow is a bird.* (absolutely false)

Lakoff referred to Heider and used the examples of hierarchies to show that the concept of fuzzy logic can be applied to linguistics. It was described as a bipolar continuum with a curve, which can be shifted either to the left or to the right side, depending on whether we intend to make the statement less or more fuzzy. He described hedges as elements, which are capable of shifting the curve (Lakoff 1975,471). Using the same sentences as in the previous example, Lakoff explained how the truth value can be changed by adding the hedge *sort of*:

- (3) (a) *A robin is sort of a bird.* (False - it is a bird, no question, about it)
 (b) *A chicken is sort of a bird.* (True, or very close to true)
 (c) *A penguin is sort of a bird.* (True, or close to true)
 (d) *A bat is sort of a bird.* (Still pretty close to false)
 (e) *A cow is sort of a bird.* (False)

From example (3) it can be observed that the ability of hedges to modify the truth value of statements depends on the element's degree of category membership. In other words, some of the hedges can be used only with the prototype members while others can modify only marginal members of the category. For instance, *sort of* works as a deintensifier only if it is used in combination with a marginal member. This can be observed in the case of sentences (3) (b)-(d), where the statements changed and became closer to the truth. On the contrary, if a hedge modifies a prototype member of the category, such as *robin*, the statement can change from true to false (1875,471). Lakoff, in addition to this, provided examples of emphasizees which require the highest degree of category membership, such as *par excellence* or *typical* (Lakoff 1875,473).

As it was pointed out by Lakoff, degree of membership does not have to be dependent on the literal meaning but in some cases, it can be affected by connotations and pragmatic aspects of the meaning (Lakoff 1975,474). The expression *regular*, for example, can be used with the words whose membership in a category is based on connotations rather than literal definitions. The emphasizees *technically* and *strictly speaking*, on the other hand, require the

highest degree of membership based on the literal meaning. Example (4) (a) shows the case when the membership is based on connotations, as Esther is a human being who swims well and reminds us of a fish. Examples (4) (b)-(c) include the opposite case, when the whale looks like a fish but according to the definition, it is a mammal.

- (4) (a) *Esther Williams is a regular fish.*
(b) *A whale is technically a mammal.*
(c) *Strictly speaking a whale is a mammal.*

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned examples, Lakoff claimed that it needs to be distinguished between at least four types of criteria for the category membership. Firstly, he distinguishes between definitional, primary and secondary criteria, which are capable of conferring category membership to a certain degree, depending on various factors. Secondly, there are characteristic, though incidental, criteria, which are “not capable of conferring category membership to any degree but contribute to degree of category membership if some degree of membership is otherwise established” (Lakoff 1975,477).

Lakoff’s papers were influential also for another reason. His theory involved the concept of “hedged performatives”, which had been observed earlier by Robin Lakoff. He was the first who pointed out that hedges interacting with performatives can cancel the implication of a statement and modify the force of a speech act (Lakoff 1975,213). He based his arguments concerning hedged performatives on the speech act theory, first introduced by J.L Austin. The theory departs from the belief that conveying information or describing an item does not have to be the only purpose of a sentence. In other words, beyond the conventional meaning of sentences, which in terms of the speech act theory represents a locutionary act, sentences also include the speaker’s intention (illocutionary act) and the final effect of a sentence on the hearer (perlocutionary act) (Austin 1962,52). Performative words can serve as elements which indicate that an utterance is performing an action (1962,6). The concept of hedged performatives was later developed by Fraser (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

One of the linguists who developed the theory of hedging later, Quirk (1985), provided a different perspective and division of what could be called hedges. He distinguished between the expressions modifying the semantic role of modality (emphasizers) and the expressions

concerned with the semantic role of degree (intensifiers). Firstly, Quirk described emphasers, which he defines as subjuncts or disjuncts “expressing the semantic role of modality which have a reinforcing effect on the truth value”, regardless the gradeability of the constituent which they modify (Quirk et al 1985,583). He provided examples of typical emphasers divided into two main groups:

- (5) (a) *certainly, clearly, definitely, indeed, obviously, plainly, really, surely, for certain, for sure, of course*
(b) *frankly, honestly, literally, simply, fairly, just*

While the expressions in (5) (a) express the commitment of the speaker to the fact that what was being said is true, the items in (5) (b) include the expressions that convey the speaker’s assertion that what was being said is true (Quirk et al 1985,583). The words in groups (a) and (b) share their function but they differ in terms of the occurrence. The items included in the first group can occur with any verb and predication. The second group, on the other hand, contains the expressions limited in their occurrence. Quirk used the expressions *absolutely* and *fairly* to explain that they need certain degree of exaggeration in the prediction and word *honestly* to demonstrate its tendency to occur with verbs expressing attitude or cognition (1985,585-589).

The theory continues with a description of intensifiers, another category of expressions which modify the semantic category of degree. In other words, intensifiers express a point on an abstract scale of intensity. The scale is applicable to the prediction, the verb phrase or to an item in a verb phrase. Quirk emphasized the necessity to divide intensifiers into two subsets: amplifiers and downtoners. While amplifiers scale upwards from an assumed norm, downtoners scale downwards. Unlike emphasers, intensifiers require a gradable item to modify. Amplifiers can be divided into another two subcategories: maximizers and boosters. While maximizers express the upper extreme of the scale, boosters denote only a high degree on the scale. Quirk offered several examples of each subcategory. Example (6) (a) includes maximizers and example (6) (b) contains several examples of boosters (Quirk et al 1985,589-590):

- (6) (a) *absolutely, altogether, completely, entirely, extremely, fully, perfectly, quite, thoroughly, totally, utterly; in all respects; the intensifying use of most*
 (b) *badly, bitterly, deeply, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, highly, intensely, much, severely, so, strongly, terribly, violently, well; a great deal, a good deal, a lot, by far; exclamatory how; the intensifying use of more*

As it was already mentioned, expressions can also cause a lowering effect on the force of the verb or the predication. Quirk refers to these units as to downtoners and divides them into four main subcategories. The first of the categories, approximators (7) (a), cause approximation on the force of the verb, as the verb expresses more than is relevant. The second subcategory, compromisers (7) (b), comprises those expressions which have only a slight lowering effect and affect the appropriateness of the verb which they modify. The third subcategory, diminishers (7) (c), represents the expressions which could be potentially replaced by the expression '*to a small extent*'. On the other hand, the last subcategory, minimizers (7d), includes those expressions which could be possibly replaced by '*(not) to any extent*' (1985,597). The following examples offer the expressions of each category:

- (7) (a) *almost, nearly, practically, virtually, as good as, all but*
 (b) *kind of, sort of, rather enough, sufficiently, more or less*
 (c) *mildly, partially, partly, quite, slightly, somewhat; in part, in some respects, to some extent; a bit, a little, least, only, merely, simply; just, but,*
 (d) *barely, hardly, little, scarcely; in the least, in the slightest, at all, a bit*

Diminishers can be further divided into expressions which intend to express only a part of the item's force, and attitude diminishers, which imply the limitation of the force of the item. Commenting on minimizers, Quirk divides them into negatives and nonassertives. He also emphasizes the difference between approximators and the rest of the downtoners, as they represent the only category which implies the denial of the truth value. Example (8) (a) shows the case when an approximator can deny the truth value completely and the sentence (8) (b) demonstrates the case when only the version which is more strictly true is modified, not the whole truth (1985,597-600).

- (8) (a) *I almost resigned.*
(b) *I kind of like him.*

The sentences in (8) (a) and (8) (b) show that the downtoners do not differ in their nearness to the bottom of the scale but rather in the effect which they have on the truth value denoted by the verb which they premodify. In addition to the previously mentioned functions, many of the intensifiers can express quantity, duration or frequency in time. According to Quirk, these include most of the minimizers but also compromisers (*enough, sufficiently*), boosters (*much, a lot, a good deal, a great deal*) and diminishers (*a bit, a little, least, somewhat, to some extent*) (1985,602).

Some of the expressions are capable of drawing attention to a certain part of a sentence or to a single constituent in a sentence. These items appear mostly in the form of adverbs and tend to premodify adjective in a noun phrase or and auxiliary in a verb phrase. Quirk refers to these elements as to focusing expressions and divides them into restrictives and additives. Restrictives can be further divided into exclusives (9) (a), and particularizers (9) (b). While restrictives demonstrate that “the utterance is true in the respect of the part focused”, additives (9) (c) indicate that “the utterance is additionally true in respect to the part focused” (1985,604).

- (9) (a) *alone, exactly, exclusively, just, merely, only, precisely, purely, simply, solely*
(b) *chiefly, especially, largely, mainly, mostly, notably, particularly, primarily, principally, specifically; at least, in particular*
(c) *again, also, equally, even, further, likewise, neither, nor, similarly, too; as well, in addition*

To conclude, the main division described by Quirk distinguishes between the subjuncts and disjuncts expressing the semantic role of modality, which have a reinforcing effect on the truth value and the expressions modifying semantic role of degree which refer to a point on an intensity scale. Another distinction which should be highlighted is the one between the items which emphasize the truth value and a speaker’s commitment to it and the items which have the opposite effect. With respect to what was explained in the previous paragraphs, the first mentioned would include emphasers and amplifiers. Thus, the second group of expressions with the opposite effect would include all four categories of downtoners.

Quirk does not particularly refer to these elements as hedges. His definitions of emphasizeers and intensifiers, however, correspond with the definition of hedges provided by other authors. For example, while Lakoff referred to the concept of class membership and the ability of hedges to shift the curve on the bipolar continuum (1975,471), Quirk referred to intensifiers as to expressions capable of modifying the semantic category of degree on an abstract scale of intensity (1985,583). Quirk's theory agrees with Lakoff's also at the point when he describes emphasizeers as the expressions which can affect the truth value of statements (1985,583).

A different approach to hedges was proposed by Brown and Levinson (1988), who perceived hedges as "a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected" (1988,145). Unlike Quirk, they offer two main views concerning hedges. Firstly, they describe the expressions in terms of the politeness theory. Secondly, the attention was paid to their functions in terms of cooperative principle.

As they claimed, hedges tend to serve as tools of the negative politeness strategy but they can also appear as a feature of the positive politeness strategy. As an example, they mention expressions *sort of*, *kind of*, *like*, *in a way*, which may serve to hedge the speaker's opinion and make it safely vague. Expressing opinion directly, without hedging could be perceived as a face threatening act (FTA) (Brown and Levinson 1988,116). Hedges can serve to soften FTAs while suggesting, criticizing or complaining. They are capable of blurring the speaker's intention and they can help to avoid precise communication of the speaker's attitude, which could be perceived as dangerous (1988,117). Brown and Levinson refer to these hedges as to hedges on illocutionary force.

Besides the hedges on illocutionary force, Brown and Levinson discuss hedges also in relation to H. Paul Grice's theory of cooperative principle. Grice (1975) claimed that talk exchanges are not "succession of disconnected remarks and would not be rational if they did". Instead, they are rather cooperative efforts which every participant recognizes, as well as their purposes and mutually accepted direction of the conversation. The purpose or direction of the conversation may be fixed from the beginning or it can evolve during the conversation, it can

be definite or fairly indefinite. For this reason, participants of a conversation are expected to follow what Grice called cooperative principle: “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice 1975,145).

While fulfilling the cooperative principle, participants are expected to follow four main maxims and their submaxims. The first, the maxim of quantity, refers to the quantity of information provided by a speaker. The speaker is required to “make the contribution as informative as is required” and “not to make the contribution more informative than is required” (Grice 1975,145). The maxim of quality expects the speaker to follow one super maxim and two submaxims. The speaker is supposed to “make the contribution one that is true”, “not say what he believes to be false” and “not say that for which he lacks adequate evidence”. Another of the maxims, relation maxim, simply requires the speaker to be relevant. As Grice argued, the last of the maxims does not relate to what is said, but rather how it is said. The category of manner requires the speaker to be perspicuous, avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity and to be brief and orderly (1975,146).

A speaker may fail to fulfil the maxims in several ways. Firstly, a speaker can violate the maxims unostentatiously and mislead the hearer. Secondly, the speaker may opt out by indicating or allowing it to become plain that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. Thirdly, the speaker may be unable to fulfil the maxims as the maxims can clash and fulfilling one of the maxims would lead to the violation of another. The final but not least way to avoid fulfilling the maxim is to flout out a maxim. The last option represents the case when the speaker fails to fulfil a maxim blatantly, even if he is able to fulfil it. The speaker is not doing so with the goal to mislead but rather with the intention to raise a conversational implicature. As Grice explained, a maxim is being exploited and it serves to cause a different pragmatic effect (Grice 1988,149).

Brown and Levinson perceive everyday communication intentions as potential threats to cooperative interaction and they see hedges as a primary method of disarming the threats for they help to soften the commitment to the speaker’s assumptions (1988,145). Cooperative principle causes that one makes strong assumptions during the communication about cooperation, informativeness, truthfulness, relevance and clarity. These assumptions can be

softened by hedges as well. Brown and Levinson refer to these expressions as to hedges addressed to Grice's maxims. In this case, hedges "emphasize that the cooperative condition is met or serve notice that it may not have been met, or question whether it has been met" (1988,164).

With respect to Grice's maxims, Brown and Levinson distinguish between quality, quantity, relevance and manner hedges. Quality hedges, which correspond with the category of emphasize described by Quirk (1985), may either suggest that "the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance", as demonstrated in example (10) (a), or they can function in the opposite way and they can stress the speaker's commitment to the truth value of the utterance, as showed in (10) (b). Quality hedges may also serve to disclaim the listener's assertion that the speaker intends to inform, as demonstrated in (10) (c) (Brown and Levinson 1988,165).

- 10) (a) *I think/believe/assume that...*
(b) *I absolutely believe/promise/deny that...*
(c) *As you know /As is well known/ As you and I both know...*

The second group of hedges based on Grice's maxims function to "give notice that not as much or not as precise information is provided as might be expected". Brown and Levinson refer to these items as to quantity hedges (1988,166). These hedges roughly correspond with the expressions included in Quirk's category of intensifiers. Examples of quantity hedges are included in (11) (a). Next group of hedges, relevance hedges, serve to soften topic changes and they are portrayed in (11) (b) (1988,169). The last group relevant to Grice's theory includes manner hedges, which seek to verify whether the hearer is following the speaker's discourse adequately. Examples of manner hedges are included in (11) (c) (1988,171).

- (11) (a) *roughly, more or less, approximately, give or take a few, or so, I should think, I can't tell you any more than that it's..., to some extent, all in all, in short, basically, so to speak*
(b) *This may not be relevant/appropriate/timely but..., I've been wondering, it's been on my mind, By the way, Oh I know, Anyway, while I remember/ think of it*
(c) *if you see what I'm getting at/ I'm driving at/ I mean, to be succinct, in a nutshell, not to beat about the bush..., you see, what I meant was..., more clearly..., to put it more*

simply . . . Now, to be absolutely clear, yeah?, got it?, OK?, you with me?, is that clear?, see?

Many linguists have attempted to provide a clear classification of hedges. Some of the classifications overlap or differ only minimally. Prince et al. (1982), for example, divided hedges into two groups. The first class of hedges which they call approximators corresponds with what Fraser called propositional hedges. Approximators are further divided into adaptors and rounders. Adaptors correspond with the definition of hedges provided by Lakoff, since they modify the class membership of a word (12) (a). This class includes expressions such as *somewhat*, *sort of*, or *almost*. The second subclass, rounders, serve to define a range (12) (b). Typical for this group are expressions as *about*, *approximately*, *something* or *around* (Prince et al 1982,85).

- (12) (a) *She noticed that he was a little bit blue.*
(b) *His weight was approximately 3.2 kilograms.*

The second main class defined by Prince et al., shields, corresponds with Fraser's speech act hedges. Similarly to approximators, they also include two subcategories. The first of them, plausibility shields, function to signal doubt, such as in (13) (a). Plausibility shields include expression as *I think*, *I believe*, or *probably*. The second subclass, attribution shields, serve to suggest that some person other than the speaker is responsible for the message contained in the statement, as shown in (13) (b). Expressions as *according to*, *presumably* or *at least to my knowledge* belong to this group of hedges. (Prince et al 1982,87)

- (13) (a) *As far as I can tell, you don't have anything to lose by taking that path.*
(b) *There was no reason to worry, as far as anyone knew.*

Hübler (1983) also provided the division of hedges which consisted of two main groups. His division resembles the one provided by Prince et.al, since the first group which he defines, understatement, agrees with the definition of approximators and the second group, which she calls hedges, corresponds with the shields. Caffi (1999, 2007), on the other hand, distinguished between shields, hedges and bushes, when she provided a classification of mitigating mechanisms. She defined bushes as expressions reducing commitment to the

propositional content, hedges as lexical expressions attenuating the force of an utterance by reducing the speaker's commitment and shields as elements which serve to shift responsibility for the message (Caffi 1999,12).

Fraser (2010), in his more recent work, distinguished hedges according to their function and according to the form which they take. Firstly, he defined propositional hedges, which mark the membership of expressions in a class. Propositional hedges are employed to demonstrate lack of commitment to the semantic membership (Fraser 2010,22). Hedges of this kind are demonstrated in examples (3)a) and (3) b). Secondly, Fraser described speech act hedges, which serve to express commitment to the speech act conveyed by an expression. Examples of speech act hedges are included in (3) (c) and (3) (d). On the contrary, Fraser excluded reinforcement, which was previously considered a part of hedging, by authors as Lakoff (1973) or Brown and Levinson (1987). While some authors consider the notion of reinforcement a part of hedging, Fraser believes that reinforcement should represent its own separated concept and he does not perceive hedging as a symmetrical notion. Therefore, in terms of Fraser's theory, examples in (3) (e) and (3)(f) cannot be considered hedges (Fraser 2010,22).

- (14) (a) *He's a real geek.*
(b) *He's kind of a geek*
(c) *Come over here, can you?*
(d) *I guess I should leave now.*
(e) *I certainly do insist that you sit down.*
(f) *He is extremely tall.*

Hedges can influence the surrounding discourse in several ways. Fraser listed four main discourse effects which can occur in a text: vagueness, evasion, politeness and equivocation, although he claims that the last mentioned cannot be created only by hedges. Equivocation is defined as a non-straightforward communication or an intentional misleading by using a word with more than one meaning, which cannot be created neither by propositional hedges, nor by speech act hedges. (Fraser 2010,28)

On the other hand, Fraser agrees with Brown and Levinson when he describes the relevance of hedges to politeness (2010,29). Another of the discourse effects, Vagueness, can be defined as a lack of precision which can appear in a discourse intentionally or

unintentionally. Intentional vagueness is employed, for example, to avoid directness which can offend the addressee. It can also occur when a speaker does not know the details or when the details are not important. Hedges are employed to make a statement vaguer in order to make the situation more informal, to signal loss of memory or to signal incomplete knowledge.

While propositional hedges can create vagueness, it is not a characteristic of speech act hedges. It is essential to point out that not all of the hedges can cause vagueness and vagueness does not always come from hedging (2010,26). Hedges can also serve to evade. Evasion tends to appear in a discourse when the information provided by a speaker does not meet the addressee's expectations. Fraser argues that evasion is an illocutionary act since it is dependable on the hearer's interpretation. Evasion can arise from vagueness caused by propositional hedges. Contrary to vagueness, evasion can be reached also by speech act hedging. As in the previous case, not all hedges can be employed to evade and not all evasion is always caused by hedges (2010,27).

2.LYING

The previous paragraphs illustrate the connections between hedges and the truth value of utterances. The fact that they can modify the truth value and evidential status of a statement, makes them undeniably relevant to lying. Firstly, it is essential to define lying, which is not as simple as it might seem. In the field of linguistics, numerous definitions of lying can be found. One of the first, traditional definitions refers to lying as to a process of "making a statement believed to be false, with the intention of getting another to accept it as true" (Primoratz 1984,54).

Coleman and Kay define lies and at the same time challenge the traditional checklist theories. According to the traditional theories, a semantically complex word can be clearly defined by a set of features. If a word fulfils several conditions, it can be considered an instance of a category. The checklist theories presume that applicability of a label to a thing is a yes or no matter. In other words, if an object satisfies the necessary conditions, it is a member of the category. Coleman and Kay, similarly to Lakoff, claim that labeling objects is not a "yes or no concept" but rather a "more or less concept" (Coleman and Kay1981,26).

Coleman and Kay use the word lie and its definition to challenge the checklist theories. Instead of the traditional one, they provide a prototype definition. They base their prototype theory on the premise that semantic categories have blurry edges and consequently, membership can be a matter of degree. They argue that the prototype theory does not have to be applied only to tangible physical objects but also to abstract, less concrete things, such as lies. The prototype theory presumes existence of semantic prototypes which “associate a word or a phrase with a cognitive schema or image...and that speakers are equipped with the ability to judge the degree to which the object matches this prototype schema or object” (Coleman and Kay1981,27).

With respect to what was explained in the preceding paragraphs, Coleman and Kay try to form a prototype definition of lying. Since a lie cannot be defined by a single condition, they provide three conditions typical for lies. Firstly, the proposition should be false in fact. Secondly, the speaker should believe that the proposition is a lie. Thirdly, the speaker uttering the proposition should intend to deceive the addressee. In other words, a prototypical lie should contain false information which is provided deliberately and with the intention to deceive. In terms of the prototype theory, an utterance which fulfils all of the conditions can be called a full-fledged lie. An utterance which lacks one or more of the mentioned qualities, however, could still be called a lie (Coleman and Kay1981,28).

Coleman and Kay provided several examples of utterances which do not satisfy some of the three conditions. Social lies, for example may not be uttered with the intention to deceive. The speaker, however, does not believe that the information is true and the statement may be false in fact such as in (15) (a). In this case it is unclear whether the statement is or is not a lie. On the contrary, it is also possible to provide true information with intention to deceive as in (15) (b). Again, it is difficult to decide whether the utterance can be classified as lying or not. Utterances which do not satisfy the conditions are traditionally not classified as lies when they appear in the form of honest mistakes, innocent misrepresentations, metaphors, hyperboles or sarcasm (Coleman and Kay 1981,29).

(15) (a) *What a lovely party.*

(b) *Where are you going? – To the store. (Mary leaving the house with intention to by*

(a) present for John, implying that she is going to a grocery store)

In conclusion, the definition of a lie proves that a word does not have to satisfy all the necessary conditions to be a member of the category denoted by the word but it should rather correspond, at least to some degree, with the prototype image in the addressee's mind. It can be also assumed that three prototype features of lying are factual falsity, intention to provide false information and intention to deceive, despite the fact that an utterance does not need to fulfill all of them to be classified as a lie.

One of the authors who built on the theories of G. Lakoff and Coleman and Kay is Sweetser. She also argued that the traditional check-lists theories must be replaced by a new theory which could include the fuzzy membership of words. Referring also to Filmore (1977), who emphasized the effect of the social world on the meaning, she claims that our understanding of a lie is a prototypical schema gained by determined human experience (Sweetser 1987,44)

Sweetser argues that truth-conditional semantics are based on the premise that we always know what the factual truth is, which we do not (1987,45). She pointed out that how we understand lies and the truth is determined by our cultural knowledge. She, however, emphasizes the necessity to distinguish between factual knowledge and belief. Knowledge can be either socially based or it can be based on plain facts. Since the factual truth cannot be always proved, we are forced to base our knowledge on previous experience or culturally accepted truths (Sweetser 1987,46).

Since it would be either impossible or extremely time consuming to proof check every statement, we tend to make deductions and assumptions based on our observations of the world. Thus, knowledge can be often replaced by our belief. Consequently, the distinction between truth and lies can be more often based on our belief rather than our knowledge. The terms knowledge and belief are closely linked. In our cultural understanding, if a belief is justified, it can be perceived as knowledge. Consequently, if a statement lacks sufficient evidence and is hard to believe, it is considered untrue. On the contrary, if our belief seems to be justified, we tend to consider the statement as the truth (Sweetser 1987,46).

Sweetser reviewed Coleman and Kay's prototypical definition of a lie. She argued that factual falsity and the intention to deceive, two of the conditions included in the definition proposed by Coleman and Kay, are not features of lies that are as important as the speaker's

belief that the statement is false. Sweetser explained that factual falsity and the intention to deceive is important only in an ideal, informational setting, where the truth is relevant and informativeness is the main goal of the interaction. If a false statement appears outside the prototypical speech setting, falsehood and the speaker's intention to deceive are not necessarily conditions for lying (Sweetser 1987,50).

Sweetser also revises another feature proposed by Thomason (1983), who claimed that unjustifiability of a statement can be considered a characteristic of a lie as well. This claim, however, can be disproved. Even a true, sincere statement which is impossible to justify, could be in this case considered a lie to some extent (1987,51). Sweetser stressed the importance of setting and context, rather than the fulfillment of the conditions contained in the definition. She emphasized the necessity to consider context and setting and she provided several examples of the situations, when the definition cannot be applied due to the deviation from the prototypical, informational setting. She demonstrated the cases when informativeness and truth are not the most important goals of interaction (Sweetser 1987,52).

As already mentioned, a statement cannot be considered a lie if the truth is not relevant. For example, when humor becomes the goal of an interaction, we refer to the false statements as jokes, kidding or leg-pulling, rather than lies. In this case, the conversation moves outside from the informational model. The same can be assumed in the situation, when the informative goal is replaced by artistic entertainment. In this case, we can refer to the statements as telling tales, fiction or fantasy (Sweetser 1987,52).

Sweetser also described the situation when the entailment of belief and truth breaks down. As in the previous case, there is a deviation from the simplified, informational world, but the deviation is unknown. In this situation, we could refer to the false statements as to honest mistakes. It is thus a moral choice what distinguishes honest mistakes from lies. When, however, the entailment breaks between belief and evidence, we can talk about carelessness on the side of the speaker, as the speaker is the one who is responsible for evaluating the available evidence. The standards for justification of the speaker's belief should be relative to the consequences caused by uttering a false statement. Intentional distortions, however, do not have to be necessarily morally wrong. Distortions such as exaggeration, oversimplifications or

understatements, which convey false information may intent to express an honest personal reaction and thus, become true on a different level.

White lies or social lies represent another of the cases when the setting affects our perception of lies, as they are uttered in the setting in which the truth would be harmful. Politeness and harmfulness, again, become more important than informativeness. It can be assumed, that consequences represent an essential factor in evaluating a statement. This is true also for fibs, which are perceived as small lies, but since they do not harm anyone, they are not usually perceived as offensive (Sweetser 1987,53-54).

Because of the cooperative principle, a statement can push on the hearer's belief system. Since the hearer is expected to cooperate and believe the information provided by the speaker, the speaker possesses considerable power and ability to influence the hearer's belief system. As Sweetser explained, power equals knowledge. This connection is reflected by the hedges which modify the evidential status of statements. In a prototypical setting, a hearer expects a speaker to only provide information which is justified. Consequently, it can be assumed that it is the speaker who is responsible for the evaluation of the evidence for the statements (Sweetser 1987,56).

If, however, the speaker considers the evidence insufficient or finds himself unable to judge the evidence correctly, evidentiality hedges enable him to shift the responsibility, or at least a part of the responsibility to the hearer. Thus, evidentiality hedges help to "avoid potential charges of carelessness or irresponsibility by not allowing the hearer to over- or undervalue the evidence supporting the assertion" (Sweetser 1987,56). Sweetser provides several examples of evidentiality hedges:

- (16) *to the best of my knowledge, so far as I know, if I'm not mistaken, as far as I can tell, for all I know, as I understand it, my best guess is, speaking conservatively, at a conservative estimate, to put it mildly, beyond question, to our current knowledge, so far as I know, can be judged from work to date, current consensus in the field,*

The hedges listed above can modify the evidentiality status and also modify the degree of responsibility for the truthfulness of the statement. Statements which do not contain any

evidentiality hedge which would qualify their evidentiality status carry a default level of responsibility. The right to push on the belief system varies in accordance with social authority. A person pushing on the belief system of a listener with a higher social status has not only informational, but also social motivation to hedge the statement.

Evidentiality hedges, however, do not have to always shift the responsibility for the evaluation of the evidence and they may function in the opposite way as well. Hedges can push on the belief system, mark an unreasonable belief request and strengthen the speaker's assertion or authority (Sweetser 1987,58). The following example includes the expressions which can be used for this purpose:

(17) *(please) believe me..., I don't expect anyone to believe this, but..., I can't expect you to believe me, but...*

To conclude, evidentiality hedges can hedge both, informational and social authority. Sweetser distinguished two kinds of authority which can be hedged by hedges: informational and social authority. She perceives lying, as well as deceiving, as a way of abusing informational authority. (Sweetser 1987,57).

3. BULSHITTING

As it was already mentioned, avoidance of hedges and lack of hedges in speech can mean the speaker's lack of interest in the truth value, or in other words, the speaker's lack of cooperation. There are visible parallels between this assumption and the definition of bullshitting provided by Frankfurt. He was the first who defined bullshitting in his article (1986), and later also in his book, *On Bullshit* (2009). Frankfurt provided theoretical definition of a bullshitter, emphasizing the difference between bullshitting and lying.

According to Frankfurt, bullshitting represents one of the many forms of misrepresenting and deception. The most important defining feature of bullshit is carelessness on the side of the speaker uttering the statement. In other words, the speaker is not concerned with the fact that the statement is true or false. While bullshitting, the speaker does not even have to know what the truth is. The truth value of the statement is not in the interest of the speaker since the speaker does not even attempt to find out about the true state of the things

(Frankfurt 1986, 89). Bullshit often occurs in the sphere of public relations, advertisements and politics. Despite the fact that a person uttering bullshit is not concerned with the truth value of the statement, the information provided by a bullshitter does not have to be necessarily false (1986,92). Pretentiousness may be one of the characteristics of bullshitting, but it is not always a condition (1986,86). The following chapter demonstrates the reasons why bullshitting and lying cannot be considered the same thing, even if their definitions overlap in some respects.

3.1. BULLSHITTING VS. LYING

What bullshitting and lying have in common is that they both try to lead the hearer away from the correct understanding off reality. Both of them can be therefore perceived as a mode of deceiving (Frankfurt 1986,93). Although lying and bullshitting share some of their characteristics, they cannot be considered the same.

The most significant aspect in which lying and bullshitting differ is their content. A liar is providing false information about the state of affairs or about what he believes is the state of affairs. He is concerned with the truth value and he attempts to mislead the hearer by making a statement which is opposite to it (Frankfurt 1986,93). On the contrary, a bullshitter is not concerned with the truth value or with the real state of affairs. Instead, he provides the hearer with his perception of reality which serves to his purpose. Therefore, it can be assumed that unlike a liar, a bullshitter provides wrong information or a false impression about his intentions and goals (1986,93). A liar attempts to mislead the hearer with what he believes is false information, whereas a bullshitter tries to hide his carelessness about the truth value. In addition to this, Frankfurt claims that bullshitting involves a sort of a bluff, therefore, it is closer to bluffing than lying. A bullshitter shapes the beliefs and attitudes of his listeners in a certain way and modifies the facts and reality to serve his purpose. Consequently, it is fakery, not falsity what matters (Frankfurt 1986,94).

As Frankfurt claims, people generally find lying morally worse than bullshitting. Lying is more demanding than bullshitting. This is caused by the speaker's concern with the truth value. When lying, a speaker takes into consideration the truth, which serves as a ground for building a lie. Consequently, lying involves more plotting and planning on the side of the speaker, which can be the reason why people believe that lying is more immoral than

bullshitting (Frankfurt 1986,93). In addition to this, majority of people believe in their own ability to recognize and avoid bullshitting more than in their ability to recognize a lie (Frankfurt1986,81).

Unlike a liar, a bullshitter is not restricted by the truth and fakes also context. Consequently, he has greater freedom while making the statement. Contrary to the general opinion, Frankfurt believes that bullshitting is more dangerous to our society than lying. He argues that consequences of lying tend to be less serious than the consequences of bullshitting. This can be caused partly by the fact that there is a tendency in society to tolerate bullshitting, but not lying (Frankfurt 1986,96).

3.2.DONALD TRUMP AND BULLSHITTING

The current president of The United States, Donald Trump is often accused of bullshitting by media and by the public. Frankfurt, himself, suggested in his article (Time 2016) that Donald Trump is a genuine example of a bullshitter. Due to the fact that Trump's intentions cannot be proved and it cannot be certainly said whether he believes or not in what he is saying, it is impossible to distinguish which of his statements are lies and which of them are examples of bullshitting. In some cases, however, it is highly probable that he is bullshitting.

Frankfurt argued that the reason for the high number of false statements produced by Trump is not because of his intelligence or lack of relevant information, but rather his carelessness about the truth. With regards to the fact that he is the president of The United States, he is expected to possess both, intelligence and relevant information about the subjects of conversations. Frankfurt mentioned several examples which are more likely to be bullshit than lies. He included, for example, his contradictory statements or the statements which can be easily proved to be false, but also his assertions which cannot be proved or disproved. As an example of the last case, Frankfurt's article included the statement uttered by Donald Trump that he "has the best memory in the world". Despite the fact that this statement cannot be proved, it is evident that it is a lie. It is highly improbable that Trump possess a better memory than any winner of the world memory championship and an average listener is expected to assume this even without fact-checking. Donald Trump is believed to use similar types of bullshit as this

one to create certain impression in the eyes of his listeners. Frankfurt also expressed the concern about the fact that society accepts his bullshitting and lying.

Frankfurt is not the only one who accused Donald Trump of bullshitting. Jeet Heer for instance, referred to Trump as “a bullshitting campaigner who has become the bullshitting president” in his article *Worse Than a Liar* (New Republic 2018). Heer based his belief on Trump’s conversation with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, when they discussed the U.S.-Canada trade balance. Trump disagreed with Trudeau at one point and provided him with false information. As Trump later claimed, he “had no idea” if what he said was true and he “just said it”. Heer’s accusations seem to be justified, since Trump obviously lacked any interest in the truth value, which is one of the essential characteristics of bullshitting. (Frankfurt 1986,88)

Similarly to Heer, also Eldar Sarajlic called Trump a bullshitter in his article *Donald Trump’s reign of bullsh*t: He’s not lying to us, he’s just completely full of it* (Salon 2016). Sarajlic believes that Trump is not hiding the truth, since he is not aware of what the truth is. He used Trump’s statement that thousands of Muslims were celebrating 9/11 as an example of his bullshitting. As it is suggested in the article, Trump’s production of bullshit serves to attract the attention of the media and potential voters.

In the same vein, Fareed Zakaria called Donald Trump a “bullshit artist” on a CNN television program and later also in his article *The unbearable stench of Trump’s B.S.* (The Washington Post 2016), Zakaria did so after Trump’s statement that he “was in Russia...in Moscow” where he „spoke, indirectly and directly, with president Putin, who could not have been nicer.” The truth is, however, that Trump had not spoken with Putin at all. The “conversation” which Trump referred to, was aired on television and consisted of two separate prerecorded interviews which took place in Moscow and New York. Zakaria described Trump’s behavior as a loss of connection with reality and he argued that Trump paid no attention to the truth.

Zakaria, Heer and Sarajlic referred in their articles to the previously mentioned Harry Frankfurt’s articles. Not only articles, but also websites such as *www.donaldtrumpbullshit.com* suggest that Donald Trump is perceived by society as a bullshitter. Accusations of this kind can

hardly be found in connection with Trump's political opponent Hillary Clinton, or any other American politician running for president in the past.

3. THE POST-TRUTH AGE, THE AGE OF BULLSHITTING

The beginning of the post-truth age can be tracked back to 2016, when The Oxford dictionary team announced that the word "post-truth" is the new word of the year. The connection between the terms bullshitting and post-truth is undeniable, since The Oxford Dictionary defines the expression "post-truth" as "an adjective relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". In both cases, the facts are ignored and left out (The Oxford Dictionary 2018).

Even though the expression itself has existed for at least a decade longer, The Oxford Dictionary team decided to emphasize the importance of *post-truth* in 2016 for several reasons. One of them was the fact that the frequency of the word increased in 2016 as never before. As the team claimed, this was caused mainly by Brexit and the presidential elections which took place in the United States the same year. The political events of 2016 demonstrated the extreme danger which can be generated by fake news, which seem to be an essential part of the post-truth age. Fake news can be understood as misinformation, which is spread intentionally. It is perceived as alternative facts, which serve as a tool in informational war (Khaldarova and Pantti 2016). Even though they are more typical for alternative media, they seem to appear more and more often also in the mainstream media (Himma-Kadakas 2017).

After 2016, there have been efforts of not only governments but also some private subjects, such as technological companies, to fight this dangerous phenomenon. The government of The Czech Republic, for instance, decided to set up an "anti-fake news" unit in 2016, which was supposed to minimize the fake news regarding migrants, spreading especially by the websites supported by Russia. The unit is called Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats. The Czech government decided to take action before the upcoming presidential elections (Guardian 2016).

The Czech Republic is not the only country trying to eliminate fake news. The German government, for example, demands social media, especially *facebook*, to provide tools which would help to remove hate speech or fake news from social media. The German government

even passed the law which demands social media to take steps against fake news in 2017. Strong government action is one of the solutions proposed by some sociologists, professors or philosophers. For example, Nayef Al-Rodhan, a Saudi philosopher and writer, mentioned this option among several other options which could serve to fight fake news. Al Rodhan, at the same time emphasized the necessity to do so without infringing upon civil liberties and proposed two other steps essential in dealing with the phenomenon of post-truth. He continued with the necessity of greater public presence for scientists and dialogue with the scientific community. The final but not least step proposed by Al-Rodhan is an improvement of the technological tools used for fact-checking (Global Policy Journal 2017).

Fake news has been affecting politics to such an extent, especially since 2016, that fact-checking has become an inseparable part of politics. It has become such a common practice that politicians themselves often refer to it during debates. Considering the debates analysed in this thesis, this is true especially for Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama:

- (18) *a) At some point, we need to do some fact-checking here.*
(H.C., October 9, 2016)
- b) That's a -- that's -- go to the -- please, fact checkers, get to work.*
(H.C., September 26, 2016)
- c) Well, I hope the fact-checkers are turning up the volume and really working hard.*
(H.C., September 26, 2016)
- d) Nothing Governor Romney just said is true, starting with this notion of me apologizing. This has been probably the biggest whopper that's been told during the course of this campaign. And every fact checker and every reporter who's looked at it, Governor, has said this is not true.*
(B.O., October 22, 2012)

Several fact-checking websites had been operating before 2016 but their number increased radically after this year. During the presidential debates in 2016, Hilary Clinton even provided live fact-checking of the debate on her own website. Many of the websites, such as *politifact.com* or *factcheck.org*, were created only to verify the statements produced by politicians, but fact-checking is also often provided by media whose primary goal is not fact-checking, such as The Washington Post or The Guardian.

In order to study the connection between false statements and hedges which appeared during the debates in the practical part, three fact-checking websites were used to decide, which of the statements were true and which were false. The first of them, *politifact.com* was created by the Tampa Bay Times, a Florida newspaper, in 2007. In 2018, the website was acquired by the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit school for journalists. The second mentioned site, *factcheck.org* is a non-profit website supported by foundations and public individuals. To guarantee its independence and objectivity, the website discloses the identity of any individual donor giving \$1,000 or more. Fact-checking does not belong to the primary activities of The Washington Post, but it is related to the topics which often appear on this website, since it focuses mostly on national politics and the federal government (The Washington Post 2018).

Each of the fact-checking websites provides a different classification of the false statements, but their approach and purpose remain the same. Some of the websites provide only a basic distinction between true and false statements, other offer a more detailed classification. This is true also for three main sources used in the practical part of the thesis: *factcheck.org*, *politifact.com* and *washingtonpost.com*. While *factcheck* distinguishes only between *accurate* and *inaccurate* statements (the latter is in some cases marked as “false” or “not true”), *politifact* classifies the statements into several categories: *true*, *mostly true*, *half true*, *mostly false* and *pants on fire*. The statements which belong to the last category are defined as a “ridiculous claim” and thus, is the closest one to bullshitting. The *Washington post*, on the contrary, used no fixed ranking and the expressions vary, but the statements are usually marked *true*, *false* or *misleading*. Unlike false statements, misleading represents the case when a speaker is not giving false information directly but he is rather provided with a wrong idea or impression that leads the hearer to the false information (Oxford Dictionaries 2018).

Despite the obvious differences in classification, the websites agree in their principles and methodology. All of the sites provide fact-checking of every statement uttered by politicians during debates, regardless of the topic discussed. Each of the websites also provides the rating of the statements based on the information known at the time when it was produced, not the information which appeared later. The sites provide explanations and primary sources for each of the statements, whether they are rated as accurate or inaccurate. The sites look at the statements from various points of views. Firstly, they try to decide whether the statement is

literally true or not. Secondly, they consider all possible interpretations of the statements. The process continues with verification of the evidence provided by the speakers or other available evidence. Since it is not always possible to prove or disprove the statement, context and probability must be taken into consideration as well (Politifact 2018, Factcheck 2018, The Washington Post 2018).

As it was explained in the previous chapters, the speakers are responsible for uttering the statements and the listeners, on the other hand, for their verification. We are living in the “post-truth age” and the responsibility on the side on the listener has never been so necessary. Consequently, the sites as those mentioned in the previous paragraphs can represent an invaluable source of information.

4. PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES IN THE USA

The tradition of presidential debates in The United States already in 1960. It was John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon who met for the first time to discuss the controversial issues of that time in front of the cameras. Even though the style and also the rules of debates have changed since then, the debate broadcasted in 1960 still remains one of the most watched programs in the history of the USA, taking into consideration the percentage of U.S. homes equipped with TVs (CNN Money 2016).

The very first debate was watched by approximately 66 million viewers out of a population of 179 million. The first presidential debate of 2016 set a new record in the almost 60-year history of presidential debates with an estimated 84 million people watching. The debate broke the record held by Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, whose only debate was watched by 80.6 million, back in 1980 (National Public Radio 2016). The most watched presidential debate of 2012 was the first one, with 67.2 million people watching (Ad week 2016).

Presidential debates in the USA usually take place in September and October, prior to election day, which is in November. Traditionally, the candidates represent one of two major parties. The debates have indisputable power to influence the results of the elections and they are targeted on the undecided audience, the people who do not incline to any of the main political parties. Consequently, strict rules have been set to maintain their objectivity. For

instance, each of the candidates can answer the questions asked by the audience or by the moderators in two minutes and the opponent has another minute to react to the answers of the first candidate. The debates usually include the closing speech and rarely also the opening speech. Conventionally, during the first two debates the candidates answer questions asked by the moderator and the third debate includes a discussion with the audience.

The topics of the discussions are generally selected and announced beforehand by a moderator or they are agreed on by both candidates. In 2012, for example, the agreed topic of the first debate was about the domestic policy and the foreign policy was discussed during the last of the debates. Unlike in 2012, the topics varied during each of the debates in 2016. Despite the fact that the topics discussed during the elections change after time, foreign and domestic policy represent the most common topics of the discussions.

Since false statements and politics have always gone hand in hand, a lot of false information, and even more accusations of lying also appear during the debates. Taking into consideration the viewership of the debates and the power of rhetoric skills of the speakers, political debates can represent one of the most influential and at the same time one of the most dangerous aspects of any election.

HYPOTHESES

The theoretical part of the thesis describes the main theories and classifications regarding hedges. Some of the definitions and classes overlapped and some of them differed. Some of the authors did not even call the expressions hedges at all. Since it is fundamental for the analysis to provide a consistent classification and criteria, the following paragraphs describe the principles and logic according to which the expressions were classified.

As already explained in chapter 3, the main and most typical feature of bullshitting is carelessness on the side of the speaker. In other words, the speaker does not care whether the information provided is precise or not and whether the amount of information is sufficient. Consequently, it is probable that Grice's maxim of quantity is not met. In addition to this, a bullshitter shows no interest in the truth value of a statement. If a bullshitter lacks the necessary evidence for his statement, it is also probable that he does not try to shift the responsibility for the statement to the speaker. Therefore, Grice's maxim of quality is not satisfied as well. In other words, a bullshitter shows less effort to be cooperative than a speaker who is not bullshitting. For these reasons, the classification will be made with respect to Brown and Levinson's categorization of hedges which they based on Grice's cooperative principle.

The first class covers the expressions which serve to shift the responsibility for the truth value of a statement to a speaker. They may signal that the evidence is not sufficient and the evidentiality status of the statement is low (*I believe/assume/guess...*) or denote the fact that the purpose of the statement is not to inform (*as you/we know, as is known...*). These expressions relate to the maxim of quality and in the practical part, they will be classified as quality hedges. The second group of hedges includes the items which signal that not as much or less than precise information is provided as required (*roughly, approximately, more or less...*). These expressions relate to the maxim of quantity and thus, in the practical part they will be classified as quantity hedges.

Contrary to the items which serve to avoid responsibility for statements, some items can serve to reinforce the commitment to the truthfulness of a statement or they can be used to signal its high evidentiality status (*I absolutely believe, I am absolutely sure/certain...*). Exactly as their opposites, these elements relate to the maxim of quality. Since they correspond with Quirk's definition of emphasizees, these elements will be classified in the practical part as

quality emphasizeers. Such as quality hedges, also quantity hedges have their opposites. Thus, another category includes the expressions which take the ability to make statements less fuzzy and signal that the information provided is precise (*regular, true, real ...*). They do not push on the belief system directly but they signal membership of a word in its category. These expressions correspond with Quirk's intensifier's and therefore, they will be classified as quantity intensifiers.

Taking into consideration that a bullshitter does not try to be cooperative, it can be assumed that a bullshitter does not try to avoid or shift the responsibility for the truth value of statements. A bullshitter is not expected to signal low evidentiality status or the fact that the information provided is imprecise. Thus, it is expected that a bullshitter employs a lower number of hedges than other speakers. Consequently, a connection might exist between the frequency of hedges in the speech and the frequency of bullshitting. As it was previously explained, Donald Trump has been accused of bullshitting several times. There are not, however, any accusations of this kind concerning his opponent Hilary Clinton, or his predecessors Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Thus, the question which arises is, whether the frequency of hedges in Donald Trump's speech is the same, or similar, as the frequency of hedges in the speech of the other candidates. For these reasons, the first hypothesis is formed as it follows:

H1: The number of quality and quantity hedges in Donald Trump's speech was lower than the number of hedges in Hilary Clinton's speech.

As explained in chapter 3, a bullshitter provides the hearer with his own perception of reality, which serves to his purpose. A bullshitter seeks to create a certain image in the eyes of the audience. For this reason, a bullshitter is expected to push directly on the belief system of a listener and create the impression of a high evidentiality status of statements. Therefore, the second hypothesis is formed as follows:

H2: The number of quality emphasizeers and quantity intensifiers was higher in Donald Trump's speech than in Hilary Clinton's speech.

Frankfurt believes, that there is no way how the presence of bullshit can be proved or disproved. Proving H1 and H2, however, would suggest that the absence of hedges and the increased occurrence of reinforcing elements might be one of the defining features of bullshitting. Frankfurt in his article (1986) and also in his book (2009) claims, that the phenomenon of bullshitting is increasing and it occurs more and more often. He based his belief on two main premises. Firstly, a person tends to bullshit if his obligations and opportunities exceed the speaker's knowledge about the topic of the conversation or if is the person required to speak about a topic which is out of his interest. According to Frankfurt, there is a general opinion nowadays that a citizen of a democratic country should be able to express his attitude to "everything", especially to the country's affairs, which provides the space for more bullshitting (1986, 96). Secondly, Frankfurt believes that there is growing skepticism and belief that the available sources of information do not provide information necessary to decide what is the true state of affairs and what is false (1986, 96). Consequently, instead of looking for the relevant information, an individual tends to modify the fact in the way they suit his beliefs.

Based on the Frankfurt's theory and the claim that we are living in the "post-truth age", the analysis seeks to answer the question whether the candidates running for the president in 2012 used during the presidential debates more hedges than the candidates running for the president in 2016. The third and fourth hypothesis are therefore formulated as it follows:

H3: The number of quality and quantity hedges in the speech of the candidates running for the president in 2012 was higher than the number in the speech of the candidates running for president in 2016.

H4: The number of quality emphasizeers and quantity intensifiers in the speech of the candidates running for the president in 2012 was lower than the number in the speech of the candidates running for president in 2016.

Proving H3 and H4 would support Frankfurt's belief that bullshitting occurs in political discourse more often than in the past. The last hypothesis stems from the fact that despite the differences between lying and bullshitting, these two concepts share some of the properties. Since a bullshitter does not even try to provide true information, it is probable that the person

who produces more bullshits, produces also more false statements. Therefore, the analysis also answers the question whether there is a correlation between the frequency of hedges, reinforcing elements and the frequency of false statements. The speakers producing more false statements are expected to use less hedges. Low number of hedges, together with the higher number of false statements in the speech of the same candidate may suggest that the person is bullshitting. With respect to these assumptions, the last two hypotheses were formed as it follows:

H5: Higher numbers of quality and quantity hedges correlate with higher numbers of false statements.

H6: Higher numbers of quality emphasizeers and quantity intensifiers correlate with higher numbers of false statements.

Results of the analysis proving these hypotheses would mean the connection between hedges and lying and they would also imply that the lack of hedges in a speech might be one of the characteristics suggesting carelessness of the speaker about the truth value. Consequently, lack of hedges could be one of the features helping to distinguish bullshitting from lying.

PRACTICAL PART

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information about the design of the research, describes the methods used to carry out the analysis and it explains their relevance to this thesis. The following paragraphs provide more details about the sources of the data which were analyzed, the principles according to which the data was processed, as well as the techniques which were used to process the data.

The data analyzed included transcriptions of six political presidential debates. The text subjected to the analysis was produced by four speakers: Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. The political debates served as an ideal subject for the study, since the conditions under which they were produced were the same. Each of the speakers was allowed to speak approximately for the same time and the speakers were required to answer questions relating to the same subjects. The following table summarizes the place and time of the debates, as well as the names of the speakers involved in the debates and the number of tokens uttered during the debates.

PLACE	TIME	PARTICIPANTS	TOKENS
University of Denver	October 3, 2012	Obama, Romney	16309
Hofstra University	October 16, 2012	Obama, Romney	17943
Lynn University	October 22, 2012	Obama, Romney	16694
Hofstra University	September 26, 2016	Clinton, Trump	16621
Washington University	October 9, 2016	Clinton, Trump	15324
University of Nevada	October 19, 2016	Clinton, Trump	15993

Figure1: Presidential Debates

To secure objectivity, a list of examined expressions was formed prior to the analysis of the debates. The list was created with respect to the cooperative principle and the classifications provided by Brown and Levinson (1982) and Quirk (1985). The classification, as well as the reasons for the classification used in the practical part was explained in more detail in the previous chapter. Despite the fact that Lakoff (1972), Fraser (1975), and Sweetser (1987) did not provide their own classification of hedges, to enlarge the number of examined elements, the hedges described by these authors were included in the list as well. Figure1

includes all of the expressions which were counted and analyzed, divided according to the principles explained in the previous chapter.

In order to avoid any inaccurate results, the expressions from the list which occurred in the text, had to be processed manually. The words from the list do not have to necessarily function as hedges or reinforcing elements, therefore, manual processing was the only possible option. If a word functioned as a hedge in the text, it was classified according to the definitions which are provided in the theoretical part. The following examples demonstrate, how the same word can appear in the text as a hedge or as a non-hedge. Example (19) (a) includes the expression which serves as a hedge, while example (19) (b) demonstrates the case in which the expressions were omitted, as they do not belong to any of these categories. They do not modify the truth value, evidential status or fuzziness of the statement and they do not shift responsibility for the statement.

- (19) (a) *I personally believe that the steps that President Obama took saved the economy. (HC., October 19, 2016)*
(b) *I believe in self-reliance and individual initiative and risk takers being rewarded. (B.O., October 16, 2012)*

The utterances were consistently rated as false with the fact-checking provided by the following websites: *www.politifact.com*, *www.factcheck.org* and *thewashingtonpost.com*. The statements marked as false consisted of false information, misleading utterances or the speakers' attempts to strain the facts. The statements which were marked by the websites as "not the whole truth" or "half-truth" were not counted or analyzed.

The websites did not judge only the statement itself, but also the effect which the statement had on the listeners and context. For example, some of the statements which would be without any further context considered only partially false or true, were judged as false, if they were only a continuation of the speaker's previous statement on the topic, which said the opposite. The statement included in example (20) (a) refers to the case, when Trump made a statement contradictory to his previous statements (this claim was described in more details in section 3.1). Example (20) (b), on the other hand, represents the case when the hedge *about* was used to soften the statement and thus making the statement fuzzier. The hedge, however, did

not affect the truth value to such an extent, that the statement would be considered true, and it was counted as a lie. Due to the significance of the difference between the numbers, the statement remains false even if it is softened by the quantity hedge *about*. Again, the final effect on the audience was taken into consideration.

- (20) (a) *I don't know Putin*
- (b) *That creates about 4 million jobs.*

As the final step, the number of hedges and reinforcing elements were compared with the number of false statements to find out whether there was a correlation between these two variables or not. Figure 2 lists only those hedges which were described by at least one of the authors included in the theoretical part. Firstly, the figure lists the elements classified as quantity and quality hedges by Brown and Levinson (1988). The rest of the expressions were taken from the texts written by Sweetser (1987), Lakoff (1975) or Fraser (2010). The expressions described by Quirk (1985) served mostly as a source for the category of quality emphasizeers and quantity intensifiers.

Quality Hedges	As far as/ for all I know, our current knowledge, according to, as can be judged from, as far as I can tell, As I remember it, as I understand it, as is well known, As you/we know, estimated, don't you agree, I assume, I (don't) believe, I can't tell you any more than ...,I shouldn't /wouldn't be surprised, I suppose, I (don't) think, if I'm not mistaken, I/my guess (is), as I/is understand/tood, it seems (to me), my (best) recollection, not aware of, I presume /presumably, probably, speaking conservatively, there is an agreement, to my knowledge, to put it mildly, to my knowledge
Quantity Hedges	a bit, a little, actually, all in all, almost, approximately, around, as it were, basically, details aside, exceptionally, for the most part, give or take a few, in a manner of speaking, in a way, in a/one sense, in all probability, in essence, in fact, in part, in short, in some respect, kind of, largely, merely, mildly, more or less, mostly, nearly, often, on the tall/fat side, or so, partially, partly, practically pretty (much), principally, quite, rather, relatively, roughly, slightly, so to say/speak, somewhat, sort of, technically, some/large extent, typical(ly), virtually
Quality Emphasizers	believe me, beyond question, certainly, I (absolutely) deny, I (absolutely) promise, I absolutely believe, I can say that, I know, I'm sure, sincerely, trust me

Quantity Intensifiers	Absolutely, a good/great (deal), a regular, absolutely, altogether, at least, (so) badly, bitterly, by far, chiefly, completely, deeply, essentially, exceptionally, enormously, entirely, especially, exactly, exclusively, extremely, far, fully, greatly, heartily, highly, in all respects, in particular, intensely, largely, literally, Mainly, mostly, (so) much, notably, particularly, perfect(ly), precisely, primarily, principally, purely, really/ a real, so much, solely, specifically, strictly speaking, strongly, severely, sufficiently, terribly, thoroughly, totally, true, utterly, very, violently, well
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Figure2: Classification of hedges and reinforcing elements

ANALYSIS

This chapter contains an analysis of the expressions which occurred in the speech of the candidate and it presents the results of the analysis. The results are divided into sections according to the classification provided in the theoretical part. The graphs and the tables in this section provide detailed information about the type and frequency of the hedges used by the speakers during the debates. The chapter includes commentary on the results of the analysis, anomalies found within them and it also describes the differences between expected and obtained results.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE FALSE STATEMENTS

Figure 3 and figure 4 comprise the statements which were rated as either *inaccurate*, *incorrect*, *false* or *not true* by *factcheck.org* and *thewashingtonpost.com* or the statements rated as *false*, *mostly false* or *pants on fire* by *politifact.com*. Since the length of the sentences does not always correspond with the length of the false statements, the false statements are in bold. The rest of the sentence is not omitted in order to provide further context in which they were uttered.

Figure 3 comprises the false statements uttered by Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump during the presidential debates in 2016. The debates were held in New York, Missouri and Nevada. The candidates disagreed mainly on the immigration policy, abortions, the gun policy or the situation in Iraq and both speakers made several unsupported accusations. Trump, for example, accused Clinton of losing 6\$ billion. On the other hand, Clinton also made several wrong accusations during the debates, for instance, she accused Trump of deporting foreign workers working on the Trump Tower, without any evidence. The speakers had to defend themselves when they were confronted with the accusations made by the media or the public. While Clinton had to explain the situation with the deleted e-mails, Trump had a hard time explaining the accusations of sexual assault. The table below sums up all the false statements which occurred during the debates in 2016.

SPEAKER	FALSE STATEMENT
D.T.	"...because they're (China) using our country as a piggy bank to rebuild China, and <u>many</u> other countries are doing the same thing"
D.T.	"...my father gave me a <u>very small loan in 1975</u> , and I built it into a company that's worth many, many billions of dollars..."
D.T.	"I did not. I did not. I do not say that." ... "I do not say that." (that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese)
D.T.	"But you will learn more about Donald Trump by going down to the federal elections, where I filed a 104-page <u>essentially financial statement of sorts, the forms that they have.</u> "
H.C.	"...he's paid <u>nothing in federal taxes</u> , because the only years that anybody's ever seen were a couple of years when he had to turn them over to state authorities when he was trying to get a casino license, and <u>they showed he didn't pay any federal income tax.</u> "
D.T.	"They were <u>pressing it</u> (birther movement stories) <u>very hard</u> . She failed to get the birth certificate."
H.C.	"I was so shocked <u>when Donald publicly invited Putin to hack into Americans</u> . That is just unacceptable."
D.T.	"But I said they have to focus on terror, also. And they're going to do that. <u>And that was, believe me</u> , I'm sure I'm not going to get credit for it -- <u>but that was largely because of what I was saying and my criticism of NATO.</u>
D.T.	"I did not support the war in Iraq"
D.T.	"We defend Japan, we defend Germany, we defend South Korea, we defend Saudi Arabia, we defend countries. <u>They do not pay us.</u> "
D.T.	"China is <u>totally powerful as it relates to North Korea.</u> "
D.T.	(the Obama administration's payment to Iran) " <u>was one of the great giveaways of all time, including \$400 million in cash. Nobody's ever seen that before. That turned out to be wrong.</u> "
H.C.	"you know, we are now for the first time ever energy-independent. We are not dependent upon the Middle East. <u>But the Middle East still controls a lot of the prices.</u> "
D.T.	"No, there wasn't check out a sex tape. It was just take a look at the person that she built up to be this wonderful Girl Scout who <u>was no Girl Scout.</u> "
D.T.	"But I will tell you what isn't fictionalized are her e-mails, where she destroyed 33,000 e-mails criminally, criminally, after getting a subpoena from the United States Congress."
D.T.	"...I think the one that you should really be apologizing for and the thing that you should be apologizing for are the <u>33,000 e-mails that you deleted, and that you acid washed</u> "
D.T.	"Her client she represented got him off, and <u>she's seen laughing on two separate occasions, laughing at the girl who was raped.</u> "
D.T.	"But <u>she is raising everybody's taxes massively.</u> "
H.C.	"And, indeed, the way that he talks about his tax cuts would end up raising taxes on middle-class families, millions of middle-class families."
H.C.	"No, I wasn't (in the office when there was a red line against Syria). <u>I was gone.</u> "
D.T.	"...it's the Iran deal that you're so in love with, where <u>we gave them \$150 billion back...it's the Iran deal...</u> it's a one-sided transaction where we're giving back \$150 billion to a terrorist state, really, the number one terror state, we've made them a strong country from really a very weak country just three years ago
D.T.	"No, there wasn't check out a sex tape. It was just take a look at the person that she built up to be this wonderful Girl Scout who <u>was no Girl Scout.</u> "
D.T.	"Also, the Second Amendment, which is <u>totally under siege by people like Hillary Clinton.</u> "
D.T.	"...but the Second Amendment, which is under absolute siege. <u>I believe if my opponent should win this race</u> , which I truly don't think will happen, we will have a Second Amendment which will be a very, very small replica of what it is right now."
D.T.	"Hillary wants to give amnesty. She wants to have open borders."
D.T.	"I don't know Putin"
D.T.	"Her plan is going to raise taxes and even double your taxes."
H.C.	"He used undocumented labor to build the Trump Tower. <u>He underpaid undocumented workers, and when they complained, he basically said what a lot of employers do: "You complain, I'll get you deported."</u> "
H.C.	"I disagreed with the way the court applied the Second Amendment in that case, <u>because what the District of Columbia was trying to do was to protect toddlers from guns</u> and so they wanted people with guns to safely store them."

D.T.	"Just like when you ran the State Department, \$6 billion was missing. ... You ran the State Department, \$6 billion was either stolen. They don't know. It's gone, \$6 billion. "
D.T.	"She gave us ISIS, because her and Obama created this huge vacuum, and a small group came out of that huge vacuum because when -- we should never have been in Iraq, but once we were there, we should have never got out the way they wanted to get out. She gave us ISIS as sure as you are sitting there. "
D.T.	"Well, first of all, those stories have been largely debunked "
D.T.	" Wrong " (denying the statement that he mocked and mimicked the disabled reporter on national television)
D.T.	" Buffett took hundreds of millions of dollars, Soros, George Soros, took hundreds of millions of dollars...Most of her donors have done the same thing as I do. "
D.T.	" This is coming from Pew report and other places -- millions of people that are registered to vote that shouldn't be registered to vote. "
D.T.	" Wrong. "
D.T.	" We gave them \$150 billion back. "
D.T.	" We take care of illegal immigrants, people that come into the country illegally, better than we take care of our vets. "

Figure3: False Statements- 2016

Figure 4 provides a summary of the false statements uttered by the 2012 speakers and highlights the hedges and boosters which were part of them. The debates took place in New York, St. Louis and Nevada. As in 2016, the presidential debates which were held in 2012 offered plenty of space for disagreement between the speakers. One of the discussed topics was adequacy of the government's intervention in creating jobs. Other topics discussed during the debates included, for example, foreign policy, Obamacare or gun control.

The candidates were in very different positions during the debates. While Obama had to defend the actions taken during the years which he spent in office, Romney had to persuade the audience about his competence for the position. Obama was blamed mostly for the economic decline in the past years, Romney, on the other hand, was accused of flip-flopping on foreign policy and important international issues. The table below summarizes all the false statements uttered by these two candidates during the presidential debates.

SPEAKER	FALSE STATEMENTS
B.O.	" Look, Governor Romney's called for \$5 trillion of tax cuts that he says he's going to pay for by closing deductions. "
M.R.	" My number-one principal is, there will be no tax cut that adds to the deficit. I want to underline that: no tax cut that adds to the deficit. "
M.R.	" There are six other studies that looked at the study you describe and say it's completely wrong. I saw a study that came out today that said you're going to raise taxes by \$3,000 to \$4,000 on middle-income families. "
B.O.	" And over the last two years, health care premiums have gone up -- it's true -- but they've gone up slower than any time in the last 50 years. "
M.R.	" Number three, it puts in place an unelected board that's going to tell people ultimately what kind of treatments they can have. "
B.O.	" Over the last 30 months, we've seen 5 million jobs in the private sector created. "

M.R.	"The president said he'd cut the deficit in half. Unfortunately, he doubled it. Trillion-dollar deficits for the last four years. The president's put it in place as much public debt -- almost as much debt held by the public as al prior presidents combined. "
B.O.	"But I have said that for incomes over \$250,000 a year, that we should go back to the rates that we had when Bill Clinton was president, when we created 23 million new jobs, went from deficit to surplus, and created a whole lot of millionaires to boot. "
M.R.	"Under the president's policies, middle-income Americans have been buried. They're just being crushed. Middle-income Americans have seen their income come down by \$4,300. This is a -- this is a tax in and of itself. I'll call it the economy tax. It's been crushing. "
B.O.	"...I've put forward a specific \$4 trillion deficit reduction plan. It's on a website.
M.R.	"Right now, the CBO says up to 20 million people will lose their insurance as Obamacare goes into effect next year."
M.R.	"And it's not working. And the proof of that is 23 million people out of work."
M.R.	"The proof of that is that 50 percent of college graduates this year can't find work."
M.R.	"If the president were to be reelected you're going to see a \$716 billion cut to Medicare. You'll have 4 million people who will lose Medicare Advantage... I'll restore that \$716 billion to Medicare."
B.O.	"Governor Romney says he wasn't referring to Arizona as a model for the nation. His top adviser on immigration is the guy who designed the Arizona law, the entirety of it..."
B.O.	"So, for example, on wind energy, when Governor Romney says these are imaginary jobs, when you've got thousands of people right now in Iowa, right now in Colorado, who are working, creating wind power ..."
M.R.	"I am not going to have people at the high end pay less than they're paying now."
M.R.	"A recent study has shown the people in the middle-class will see \$4,000.00 per year in higher taxes as a result of the spending and borrowing of this administration. "
M.R.	"in the last years, women have lost 580,000 jobs. That's the net of what's happened in the last four years. We're still down 580,000 jobs."
M.R.	"But I have said that for incomes over \$250,000 a year, that we should go back to the rates that we had when Bill Clinton was president, when we created 23 million new jobs, went from deficit to surplus, and created a whole lot of millionaires to boot. "
M.R.	"I want to make sure we keep our Pell grant program growing."
M.R.	"...incomes go down \$4,300 a family, even as gasoline prices have gone up \$2,000. "
M.R.	"...he would cut the deficit in half. Instead, he's doubled it. "
M.R.	"How in the world the president said no to that pipeline?"
M.R.	" He hasn't done that either. In fact, he doubled it. He said that by now middle-income families would have a reduction in their health insurance premiums by \$2,500 a year. It's gone up by \$2,500 a year. And if Obamacare is passed or implemented -- it's already been passed -- if it's implemented fully, it'll be another \$2,500 on top. "
M.R.	"He said that by now we'd have unemployment at 5.4 percent."
B.O.	"And you said we should ask Pakistan for permission."
B.O.	"That's not true. ... [W]hat I would not have done is left 10,000 troops in Iraq that would tie us down."
M.R.	"Our Navy is old, excuse me, our Navy is smaller now than at any time since 1917. "
B.O.	"Governor Romney, that's not what you said. ... Governor Romney, you did not... You did not say that you would provide government help. Let's check the record... Governor, the people in Detroit don't forget... The fact of the matter is.. No, I am not wrong. I am not wrong."
M.R.	"The president's policies throughout the Middle East began with an apology tour and -- and -- and pursue a strategy of leading from behind, and this strategy is unraveling before our very eyes."
M.R.	"While I was governor, I was proud that our fourth graders came out number one of all 50 states in English, and then also in math. And our eighth graders number one in English and also in math. First time one state had been number one in all four measures."

B.O.	“Governor Romney, I’m glad that you recognize that al Qaeda’s a threat because a few months ago when you were asked, what’s the biggest geopolitical threat facing America, you said Russia — not al Qaeda, you said Russia.”
M.R.	“They look at the fact that we owe 'em a trillion dollars and owe other people \$16 trillion in total, including that.”
M.R.	“In the 2000 debates, there was no mention of terrorism, for instance. And a year later, 9/11 happened.”

Figure4: False Statements-2012

As can be concluded from figure 5, the candidates uttered a different number of false statements in 2012 and also in 2016. The sharpest difference can be observed between Clinton and Trump. The difference between Obama and Romney, however, stands out as well. As can be observed from the table, the highest number was reached by Trump while the lowest number of false statements appeared in the case of his opponent Clinton.

Speaker	HC	DT	BO	MR
False Statements	7	31	11	24

Figure5: False statements – 2012/2016

Looking at the false statements and their rating provided by the websites, one difference can be spotted between the speakers, especially between Trump and the other candidates. Some of the false statements which appeared in Trump’s speech could be called obvious lies. In other words, his speech included several statements, which could be considered false without any further fact-checking. Website *politifact.com* even rated some of these statements as “pants on fire”. Trump was the only speaker whose statements were labeled like this. The statements, for example, included his lie about the Trump’s well-known tweet, which included the sentence “check out the sex tape”. During the second presidential debate, Trump claimed that “there wasn’t check out a sex tape. It was just take a look at the person that she built up to be this wonderful Girl Scout who was no Girl Scout.”

Politifact.com rated another two statements uttered by Trump which appeared during the debates as “pants on fire”. It was when he claimed that his opponent Clinton lost 6\$ billion and the claim that millions of registered voters in the USA are not supposed to vote. In addition to this, the last presidential debate included Trump’s claim, that he does not know Putin. This statement was rated by the website as “full flop”, since Trump, himself, claimed in the past that

they “do have a relationship” (2013), that he "spoke, indirectly and directly, with President Putin" (2014) and that he "got to know him very well" (2015).

Considering these statements, it can be assumed that Donald Trump is careless about the truth value and the fact that his statements can be easily detected as false. Consequently, what Trump was doing can be perceived as bullshitting, since carelessness represents the most important characteristic of bullshitting. As the list of the false statements shows, no statements similar to those uttered by Trump can be spotted in the speech of the other candidates.

6. QUALITY HEDGES

This chapter comments on the occurrence of quality hedges which were uttered by the speakers during the debates. Figure 5 contains the expressions uttered to signal that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truthfulness of the statement. The expressions listed in the table eliminate or shift the responsibility of the speaker for the truthfulness of the statement.

Quality hedges	HC	DT	BO	MR	Quality hedge	HC	DT	BO	MR
As far as/ for all I know	0	0	0	0	I suppose	0	0	0	0
(our) current knowledge	0	0	0	0	I (don't) think	99	77	49	47
according to	0	2	0	0	if I'm not mistaken	0	0	0	0
as can be judged from	0	0	0	0	I/my guess (is)	1	2	0	0
as far as I can tell	1	0	0	0	As I/is understand/tood	0	0	2	2
As I remember it	0	0	0	0	it seems (to me)	2	0	3	5
as I understand it	0	0	0	0	My (best) recollection	0	0	0	0
As is well known	0	0	0	0	not aware of	0	0	0	0
As you/we know	2	5	0	1	I presume /presumably	0	0	0	1
Estimated	1	0	5	0	probably	2	12	6	4
don't you agree	0	0	0	0	speaking conservatively	0	0	0	0

I assume	2	2	0	1	there is an agreement	0	0	0	0
I (don't) believe¹	10	10	15	19	to my knowledge	0	0	0	0
I can't tell you any more than	0	0	0	0	to put it mildly	0	0	0	0
I shouldn't /wouldn't be surprised	0	0	0	0	to my knowledge	0	0	0	0

Figure6: Quality Hedges

It is apparent that what stands out in this table is the expression *I (don't) think*. A sharp difference can be observed mainly between Clinton and the 2012 speakers, as its occurrence in Clinton's speech is almost 100% higher than its occurrence in the speech of her predecessors. A difference is, however, also visible and considerable between Clinton and Trump. The inspection of the data also reveals the difference in Trump's speech. As it can be seen, he favored the hedge *probably* more than his opponent Clinton and also Obama and Romney. The 2012 speakers, on the other hand, showed the tendency to use the expression *I (don't) believe* more often than the 2016 speakers.

Quality Hedges							
Clinton	120	Trump	110	Obama	80	Romney	80

Figure7: Quality Hedges-Summary

Overall, the analysis of quality hedges brought the results which are in opposition to the expected results. As can be concluded from Figure 7 which summarized the analysis of quality hedges, the results did not support H3, as the expressions were employed more often by the 2016 speakers than their predecessors in 2008. The results support H1, the difference between Clinton and Trump, however, is not significant. From the analysis it is also apparent that there is no correlation between the lower number of quality hedges and the higher number of false statements.

¹ The expression *believe* is included in both, quality hedges (*I believe, believe it or not*) and quality emphasizees (*I absolutely believe*), as it can also function as a reinforcing element.

7. QUANTITY HEDGES

The following paragraphs comment on the occurrence of the items classified as quantity hedges. The table below provides detailed information about the expressions with function to signal that not as precise information or not as much information is provided as might be expected. In other words, the table comprises the elements which can make statements fuzzier.

Quantity Hedges	HC	DT	BO	MR		HC	DT	BO	MR
a bit	1	0	1	0	mildly	0	0	0	0
a little	1	5	7	2	more or less	0	0	0	0
Actually	17	17	23	17	mostly	1	0	0	0
all in all	0	0	0	0	nearly	3	0	0	0
Almost	1	16	0	5	often	2	1	4	0
Approximately	0	2	0	0	on the tall/fat side	0	0	0	0
Around	0	1	0	1	or so	0	0	0	0
as it were	0	0	0	0	partially	0	0	0	0
Basically	4	3	3	0	partly	0	0	0	0
details aside	0	0	0	0	practically	0	1	0	0
exceptionally²	0	0	0	0	pretty (much)	4	3	2	4
for the most part	0	0	0	0	principally	0	0	0	0
give or take a few	0	0	0	0	quite	3	2	1	3
in a manner of speaking	0	0	0	0	rather	0	0	0	0
in a way	1	1	2	1	relatively	0	1	0	1
in a/one sense	0	0	0	0	roughly	0	0	0	0
in all probability	0	0	0	0	slightly	0	1	0	0
in essence	0	0	1	0	so to say/speak	0	0	0	0
in fact	13	6	11	6	somewhat	1	2	1	0
in part	4	1	4	5	sort of	1	0	0	0
in short	0	0	0	0	technically	0	0	0	1
in some respect	0	0	0	1	some/large extent	1	3	0	4
kind of,	10	0	2	4	typical(ly)	0	0	1	1
largely³	1	1	0	0	virtually	0	0	0	2
Merely	0	0	0	0					

Figure8: Quantity Hedges

²The expression *exceptionally* occurs in both, quantity hedges (forming an exception or a rare instance) and quantity intensifiers (extraordinary, unusually excellent, superior)

³The expression *largely* was analyzed as both, a quantity hedge (mostly, mainly) and a quantity intensifier (on the whole)

As can be observed from figure 8, the speakers most often uttered the hedge *actually*⁴. The prevalence of this hedge in the speech of the speakers is comparable, only the number reached by Obama is slightly higher. What stands out in the table is the hedge *almost*. While the other candidates did not use the hedge more than five times, Trump used the expression to hedge his statements sixteen times. We can also observe from the table that the hedge *kind of* was favored mainly by Clinton. What also attracts attention is the expression *kind of*, which was favored especially by Clinton and Obama, the speakers with a lower number of false statements.

Quantity Hedges							
Clinton	69	Trump	67	Obama	63	Romney	58

Figure9: Quantity Hedges: Summary

While the analysis of quality hedges showed differences between the 2012 and the 2016 speakers, the overall results gained by the analysis of quantity hedges showed no significant differences. Consequently, as in the previous case, H3 could not be proved. No significant difference was found between Clinton and Trump either, thus, based on the analysis of quantity hedges, H1 cannot be proved either. An inspection of the data in the table did not reveal any results suggesting a correlation between quantity hedges and false statements, as the speakers reached similar numbers of quantity hedges.

8. QUALITY EMPHASIZERS

This chapter describes the occurrence of quality emphasizees in the speech of the candidates in detail. Contrary to quality hedges, these expressions serve to reinforce the commitment of a speaker to the truthfulness of a statement. The emphasizees comprised in the table below also function to signal high evidentiality status of statements.

⁴ The expression *actually* was counted as a hedge only if it appeared in a sentence as a premodifier of an adjective, adverb or verb. The expression was not analyzed if it served as a discourse marker and, consequently, it did not affect the class membership of the following expression.

Quality Emphasizers	HC	DT	BO	MR		HC	DT	BO	MR
believe me	1	9	0	0	I can say that	0	0	0	1
beyond question	0	0	0	0	I know	10	6	4	19
Certainly	4	6	3	5	I'm sure	0	1	1	1
I (absolutely) deny	0	0	0	0	sincerely	0	0	0	0
I (absolutely) promise	0	0	0	1	trust me	0	0	0	0
I absolutely believe	0	0	0	1					

Figure10: Quality Emphasizers

From figure 10 we can observe that the speakers most often uttered the intensifiers *I know* and *certainly* reinforcing the statements in the speech, *I know* was favored especially by Romney. An interesting difference can be observed regarding the occurrence of expression *believe me* which was employed nine times by Trump but only once by Clinton and the 2008 speakers did not utter the expression at all.

Quality Emphasizers							
Clinton	15	Trump	22	Obama	18	Romney	28

Figure11: Quality Emphasizers-Summary

The analysis of quality intensifiers does not support H2, as no significant difference was found between Trump and the other speakers. The analysis does not support H4 either, as the numbers of intensifiers in the speech of the 2012 speakers and the 2016 speakers are comparable. The results, on the other hand support H6, as the numbers of the intensifiers in the speech suggest a correlation between intensifiers and false statements.

9. QUANTITY INTENSIFIERS

The following paragraphs provide a detailed description of the quantity intensifiers which were uttered during the debates. Quantity intensifiers do not push on the belief system of a speaker directly but they can modify membership of a word in its category.

Quantity Intensifiers	HC	DT	BO	MR		HC	DT	BO	MR
Absolutely	6	7	13	10	largely	1	2	0	0
a good/great (deal)	1	0	0	3	literally	2	0	0	0

a regular	0	0	0	1	mainly	0	0	0	0
Absolutely	6	10	7	13	mostly	1	0	0	0
Altogether	0	0	0	0	(so) much	7	26	4	8
at least	1	0	0	2	notably	0	0	0	0
(so) badly	0	5	0	0	particularly	2	0	2	8
Bitterly	0	0	0	0	perfect(ly)	1	1	0	0
by far	0	2	0	1	precisely	0	0	2	4
Chiefly	0	0	0	0	primarily	0	0	0	0
Completely	0	0	0	6	principally	0	0	0	0
Deeply	5	0	0	1	purely	0	0	0	0
Essentially	2	7	2	0	really/ a real	37	35	4	5
Enormously	0	0	0	0	solely	0	0	0	0
Entirely	0	0	0	2	specifically	0	0	0	0
Especially	1	2	3	0	strictly speaking	0	0	0	0
Exactly	6	3	17	2	strongly	5	12	0	0
Exceptionally	0	0	0	0	severely	0	0	0	0
Exclusively	0	0	0	0	sufficiently	0	0	0	0
Extremely	1	5	0	0	terribly	1	0	0	0
Far	0	3	0	0	thoroughly	0	0	0	1
Fully	0	0	0	3	totally	0	10	0	2
Greatly	0	0	0	0	true	6	7	7	5
Heartily	0	0	0	0	utterly	0	0	0	0
Highly	2	1	2	1	very	44	87	25	37
in all respects	0	0	0	0	violently	0	1	0	0
in particular	1	1	1	1	well	13	9	13	23
Intensely	0	0	0	0					

Figure12: Quantity Intensifiers

Figure 12 showed several interesting differences. Firstly, the table illustrates the different usage of intensifiers by the 2012 speakers and the 2016 speakers. A surprisingly sharp difference can be spotted especially in case of the expressions *a real/really*, which were favored by the 2016 speakers but the 2012 speakers used the emphasize only sporadically. Secondly, the results show several differences between Trump's speech and the speech of other candidates. A striking difference is visible in the case of the intensifier *very*, which he used reinforcing his statements altogether 87 times. To compare, the numbers the other candidates used this particular intensifier ranged from 25 to 44. The numbers reached by Trump were also higher in the cases of *totally*, *strongly*, *(so) much*, *essentially*, *extremely* or *badly*. An interesting

difference can also be observed in Obama’s speech, who used *exactly* considerably more than the other candidates.

Quantity Intensifiers							
Clinton	152	Trump	236	Obama	102	Romney	139

Figure13: Quantity Intensifiers- Summary

From figure 13 we can conclude that the analysis of quantity emphasizees supports H2, as the number of the emphasizees was not only higher than the number of intensifiers used by Clinton, but Trump used the highest number of all the candidates. The numbers also support H4 as the number of quantity hedges uttered by the 2016 speakers is higher than the number of the intensifiers uttered by the 2012 speakers. It needs to be noted, however, that there is only a slight difference between Clinton and Romney. As figure 12 shows, the analysis also supports H6, since the intensifiers were employed more often by the speakers who uttered more false statements.

10. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The previous chapters provided details about the particular expressions hedging or reinforcing the statements uttered by the speakers. The following paragraphs, on the other hand, summarize and evaluate the results of the analysis. They also test the differences between the results by applying significance tests.

	HC	DT	BO	MR
Quality Hedges	120	110	80	80
Quantity Hedges	69	67	63	58
	189	177	143	138
False Statements	7	31	11	24

Figure14: Hedges and False Statements- Summary

Figure 14 demonstrates the number of quality and quantity hedges and it also includes the numbers of false statements uttered by the speakers. As the table illustrates, the results support H1, since Clinton uttered more hedges than her opponent Trump. The difference

between Clinton and Trump can be perceived as significant with the p-value lower than .05, as shown in figure 15.

Tokens	Hedges	Tokens	Row Totals
Hilary Clinton	189	18256	18445
Donald Trump	177	21688	21865
Column Totals	366	39944	40310 (Grand Total)

Figure15: Chi-squared Significance test- Hedges

The chi-square statistic is 5.1477. The p-value is .023278. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

The results showed in figure 14 also suggest that the speakers uttering a lower number of false statements use more hedges than the speakers uttering a higher number of false statements. The correlation test contained in figure 16 shows, however, that the correlation is not strong enough to be considered significant. The correlation coefficient r measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. In this case, the variables are represented by hedges and false statements. The value of r is always between +1 and -1. While +1 indicates a strong positive relationship, -1 indicates a strong negative relationship. The values higher than 0,70 and lower than - 0,70 represent significant correlation. In this case, r is -0.13 and therefore, H_5 cannot be proved.

	Hedges	False Statements
Hilary Clinton	189	7
Donald Trump	177	31
Barack Obama	143	11
Mitt Romney	138	24
Correlation (r)	-0.1339456	1

Figure 16: Correlation between Hedges and False Statements

Figure 16 displays a number of reinforcing elements uttered by the speakers. It is apparent from the table that in comparison to Clinton, Trump reached significantly higher numbers of reinforcing elements and thus, it can be concluded that the results met the expectations. The

significance test included in figure 18 shows that the p-value is lower than .05. and consequently, H2 can be proved.

	HC	DT	BO	MR
Quality Emphasizers	15	22	8	28
Quantity Intensifiers	152	236	102	139
	167	258	110	167
False Statements	7	31	11	24

Figure17: Reinforcing elements and False Statements- Summary

	Reinforcing Elements	Tokens	Row Totals
Hilary Clinton	167	18256	18423
Donald Trump	258	21688	21946
Column Totals	425	39944	40369 (Grand Total)

Figure18: Chi-squared Significance test- Reinforcing elements

The chi-square statistic is 6.9642. The p-value is .008316. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

H4 expected the 2016 speakers to utter more emphasizees and intensifiers than the 2012 speakers. As it can be observed from figure 17, this is true only for quantity intensifiers. Thus, H4 cannot be proved. On the other hand, as the data showed, the occurrence of the reinforcing elements is higher in the case of the speakers who uttered more false statements. As figure 19 demonstrates, there is a strong correlation between the reinforcing elements and the false statements. The correlation can be also observed from a graph, such as in figure 20. For these reasons, it can be assumed that H6 was proved.

	Reinforcing elements	False Statements
Hilary Clinton	167	7
Donald Trump	258	31
Barack Obama	110	11
Mitt Romney	166	24
Correlation (r)	0.7666434	1

Figure19: Correlation test -Reinforcing Elements and False Statements

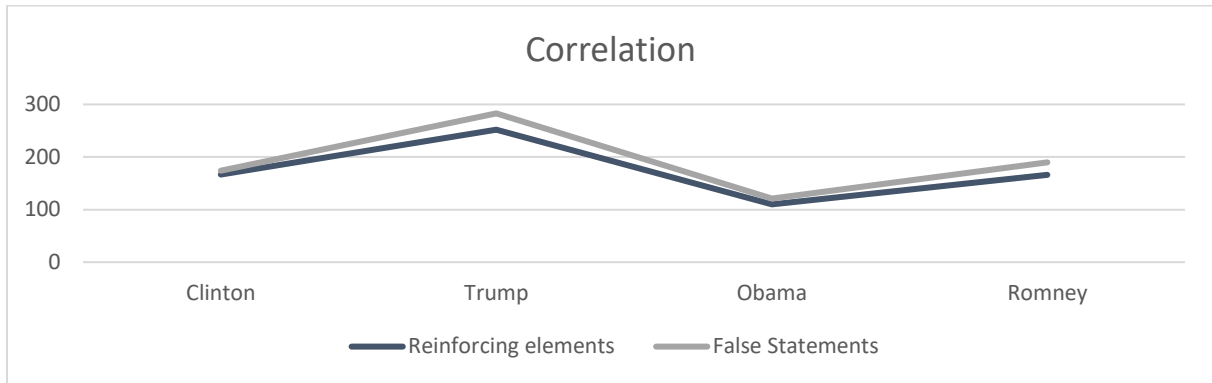


Figure20: Graph- Correlation between Reinforcing Elements and False Statements

As the previous paragraphs explain, only H1, H2 and H6 can be proved. The rest of the hypotheses was either in opposition to the results or, as the significance tests showed, the differences were not significant enough to prove the hypothesis. In conclusion, the analysis demonstrated that the reinforcing elements might play more important role in defining bullshitting than their opposites, hedges. The results of the analysis suggest that the examined elements might be useful while defining bullshitting.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first, theoretical part of the thesis provided an overview of the literature commenting on the cooperative principle, lying, deceiving and bullshitting. The chapters included in the first part described the importance of hedges and reinforcing elements in speech and it explained the connections between these elements and bullshitting. The later chapters of the theoretical part portrayed the connection between the examined elements, bullshitting and “post-truth age”. This part emphasized the danger which both, bullshitting and fake news can represent and they described possible solutions and steps which could be implemented to fight these phenomena. The literature included in the theoretical part served as a base for the classification of the examined expressions, used later in the analysis.

The aim of the practical part of the thesis was to examine the possibility of connection and correlation between the expressions described in the theoretical part and bullshitting. The analysis proved three of the hypotheses. In general, it can be assumed that the analysis of reinforcing elements brought more significant results than the analysis of hedges. Firstly, the analysis showed a higher occurrence of the examined hedges in Hilary Clinton’s speech than in Donald Trump’s speech. The significance tests, however, demonstrated that the difference was sharper in the case of reinforcing elements, which, as expected, appeared more often in Donald Trump’s speech. The fact that H1 and H2 were proved suggests Trump’s carelessness about the truth value, his effort to create a certain image in the eyes of the audience and attempt to increase credibility of his statements.

While the correlation between hedges and the lower number of false statements was not strong enough to be considered significant, the data showed a strong correlation between the higher number of false statements and reinforcing elements. As the data showed, the speakers who uttered a higher number of false statements tended to use more reinforcing elements. Again, the data suggest that when bullshitting, reinforcing elements might play a more important role than their opposites, hedges.

On the contrary, from the diachronic point of view, the analysis did not show the expected changes in occurrence of the examined expressions. The numbers either did not differ significantly or they were in opposition to the expected results. It is necessary to point out, however, that the examined period was relatively short and an examination of a longer time

period might bring more valuable results. The upcoming elections which will take place in 2020 might serve as a valuable source of data.

The results of the analysis support the claim that Donald Trump is a bullshitter. The lower occurrence of the examined hedges suggests carelessness about the truth value of his statements. The higher occurrence of the reinforcing elements, on the other hand, suggests his effort to increase credibility of his statements. Thus, it can be concluded that the absence of hedges in a speech and the increased number of reinforcing elements in a speech might belong to defining features of bullshitting.

The analysis was to a considerable extent limited by the length of the time period which was examined. Firstly, as explained in the theoretical part, the thesis focused on the period known as post-truth age, which is believed to have started in 2016. In other words, we could witness only one presidential election in the United States since 2016. Secondly, the research could not go further into the past and study the presidential debates prior 2012, as the fact-checking, in the form as it appears nowadays, was not available at that time. None of the sites used for the analysis provides fact-checking of the debates older than 2012. An analysis of a longer time period might bring more valuable results.

As can be noticed, Hilary Clinton not only uttered a higher number of hedges than her opponent Trump but she employed the highest number of hedges of all speakers. The question arises, if the occurrence of hedges in political discourse can depend on the gender of the speaker. In this case, again, an examination of a longer time period might bring more answers. The upcoming elections which will take place in 2020 could serve as an ideal source of data for further research. The fact that Donald Trump has already started to raise money for his 2020 presidential campaign suggests that he could be a part of the presidential debates again (Federal Election Commission April 31, 2019). Despite the fact that the analysis was limited by the quantity of data, the theses seems to be a good starting point for another research, as it showed that the expressions examined in this thesis could be worth of closer examination.

As it was demonstrated in the previous chapters, bullshitting and fake news represent one of the most dangerous elements influencing decision making in society. The power of political debates, which are regularly viewed by an audience consisting of millions of people, is unquestionable. A detailed definition of bullshitting, which would help to distinguish

between this phenomenon and lies, could, together with fact-checking of debates, serve as one of the tools in the fight that many countries are leading against fake news and post-truth.

RESUMÉ

Prvá, teoretická časť tejto práce poskytla súhrn literatúry, ktorá sa zaoberá kooperačným princípom, klamstvom či bullshittingom a taktiež súhrn teórií, ktoré opisujú funkcie hedžov a zosilujúcich výrazov. Prvá časť tiež vysvetľuje spojitosť medzi spomínanými javmi. V druhej polovici pojednáva teoretická časť o spojitosti medzi hedžmi, bullshittingom a takzvanou post-truth dobou. Táto časť kladie dôraz aj na nebezpečenstvo, ktoré so sebou prinášajú bullshitting a fake news a vysvetľuje možné riešenia, ktoré by sa dali implementovať a ktoré by mohli byť nápomocné v boji proti týmto javom.

Literatúra použitá v teoretickej časti poslúžila ako základ pre klasifikáciu skúmaných výrazov, na ktorej bola založená analýza. Praktická časť mala za úlohu zistiť, či je možné, že medzi skúmanými výrazmi v reči a bullshittingom existuje spojitosť alebo korelácia. Analýza podporuje tvrdenie, že existuje spojitosť medzi výskytom zosilňujúcich výrazov a výskytom nepravdivých výrokov v politickom diskurze. Zvýšený výskyt zosilňujúcich výrazov v prejave Donalda Trumpa počas prezidentských debát v roku 2016 taktiež naznačuje možnú spojitosť medzi týmito výrazmi a bullshittingom.

Detailnejší výskum týchto výrazov, ktorý by ale vyžadoval, aby bolo skúmané dlhšie časové obdobie, by mohol zodpovedať otázku, či práve zvýšený výskyt zosilňujúcich výrazov v reči, môže byť jednou z typických vlastností bullshittingu. Výsledky analýzy, ktorá bola súčasťou praktickej časti síce potvrdzujú túto hypotézu, no na to, aby mohla byť definitívne potvrdená, by bolo potrebné väčšie množstvo dát.

Výsledky analýzy sú v súlade s teóriou, že žijeme v post-truth dobe. Inými slovami, v dobe, v ktorej bullshitting a fake news patria medzi najnebezpečnejšie aspekty, ktoré ovplyvňujú rozhodovanie spoločnosti. Moc, ktorú so sebou prinášajú prezidentské debaty s pravidelnou sledovanosťou miliónmi divákov, je nepopierateľná. Podrobnejšia definícia, ktorá by pomohla rozlíšiť bullshitting od klamstva by mohla spoločne s fact-checkingom slúžiť ako prostriedok v boji proti fake news, ktorý vedú mnohé krajiny po celom svete.

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Title of the Thesis: The Role of Hedges in Political Discourse in Connection with Lying, Deceiving and Bullshitting

Supervisor: Mgr. Markéta Janebová, Ph.D.

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The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the literature covering cooperative principle, lying, deceiving and bullshitting, as well as the literature describing functions and importance of hedges and reinforcing elements. The theoretical part also explains the connections between these terms. The practical part is based on the classification of the examined expressions, which was made in accordance with the literature used in the theoretical part. The thesis seeks to answer the question, whether hedges and reinforcing elements can belong to defining features of bullshitting or not. The thesis demonstrates why bullshitting is believed to be an essential part of the “post-truth age”, which supposedly started in 2016.

Key words:

cooperative principle, lying, deceiving, bullshitting, hedge, reinforcing expressions, „post-truth“

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Cieľom teoretickej časti práce bolo poskytnúť súhrn literatúry, ktorá sa zaoberá kooperačným princípom, klamstvom či bullshittingom a taktiež popísať najvýznamnejšie teórie, ktoré sa zaoberajú funkciami „hedžov“ či zosilňujúcich výrazov. Prvá, teoretická časť, tiež vysvetľuje spojitosť medzi spomínanými javmi. Praktická časť práce, ktorá je založená na klasifikácii skúmaných výrazov vypracovanej v súlade s literatúrou použitou v teoretickej časti, obsahuje analýzu „hedžov“ a zosilňujúcich výrazov v politickom diskurze. Analýza sa zameriava na výskyt spomínaných výrazov v prezidentských debatách so zameraním na nepravdivé výroky. Práca skúma nielen výskyt a typológiu skúmaných výrazov, ale aj charakter nepravdivých výrokov a ich zmenu z diachronického hľadiska. Práca sa snaží zodpovedať otázku, či existuje spojitosť medzi „hedžmi“, zosilňujúcimi výrazmi a bullshittingom a či výskyt v reči môže predznamenávať snahu o bullshitting zo strany rečníka. Práca tiež vysvetľuje, prečo je bullshitting považovaný za fenomén takzvanej „post-truth doby“, v ktorej sa podľa mnohých žijeme od roku 2016 .

Kľúčové slová:

kooperačný princíp, klamstvo, lož, nepravdivý výrok, bullshitting, „hedž“, zosilňujúce výrazy“, „post-truth“

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APENDIX

1CD- PDF document- Transcription of The Presidential Debates