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RHETORICAL QUESTION STRATEGIES IN ELECTORAL DEBATES:
AN ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES AND HONG KONG
POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Rhetorical Question Strategies in Electoral Debates: An Analysis of United States and Hong Kong Political Discourse

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Wong Ming Chiu

Abstract

Televised debates are a particularly important part of election campaigns since they give voters an opportunity to compare the candidates by evaluating their performance in a more spontaneous manner as they discuss issues and respond to questions on the same topics as they interact with their political opponents (Benoit & Hansen, 2004).

Given the wide coverage of televised election debates, candidates pay attention to establishing a positive relationship with the general public and make efforts to project an image of themselves as serious and reliable leaders, not only through their appearance but also their style of speaking (Allan 1998; Coupland 2001). In the debates, candidates often do more than promote themselves and their policies, and they often engage in face-threatening acts by challenging or criticizing their political rivals.

A frequently used strategy, which has received considerable attention in the studies of political discourse, is the rhetorical question. It is described as one of the most substantial rhetorical means in terms of "rhetoric and demagogy" (Ephratt, 2007:1922), and performs in a way that may be difficult for others to attribute only one clear communicative intention to its act (Brown & Levinson, 1987: pp. 211).

Taking cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspectives, this study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of electoral debates belonging to two different locations – the 2012 and 2016 US Presidential debates, and 2012 and 2017 HK Chief Executive Election debates. The goal is to elucidate the interplay between politicians' use of rhetorical questions and the different contextual factors stemming from different electoral systems. Through these analyses, we will also see how politicians often strategize and compete against each other through the use of rhetorical questions to enhance the persuasiveness of their political messages and criticize their political rivals using demagogic rhetoric as they seek to win the general public's favour.

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List of Tables

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I first summarize the major studies on rhetorical questions (RhQs), focusing on the development of RhQ analysis from the syntactic to pragmatic levels, as well as the various scope of investigations. I then indicate the methodological and theoretical gaps and propose a specific research question for each research gap. At the end of this chapter, I outline the organization of this study and elaborate on my potential methodological, theoretical and cultural contributions.

1.1 Problems in defining and examining rhetorical questions

The definition and characteristics of rhetorical questions (RhQs) have been in dispute in the literature due to the differences in (i) analytical levels and theoretical approaches, and (ii) research focuses and the scope of investigations.

At the syntactic and semantic level, indicators of the rhetorical reading provided by linguists and grammarians (e.g. Poutsma, 1931; Sadock, 1971, 1974) cannot adequately distinguish RhQs from genuine questions, given the fact that many RhQs are similar or even identical to other standard questions in terms of their linguistic structure (e.g. Spago, 2016). Pragmaticians and discourse analysts extended their identification and analysis of RhQs by taking into account their pragmatic functions and different contextual factors. However, these definitions and criteria are not compatible with each other and have been questioned from both theoretical and empirical perspectives (e.g. Ilie, 1994; Kleinke, 2012).

In terms of the research focuses and the scope of investigations, previous studies mainly examined the usages of questions and rhetorical questions in political debates in terms of (i) an argumentation plane, or (ii) an interactional plane (e.g. Bilmes, 1999, 2001; Arroyo, 2013). However, these two perspectives have not been taken into consideration in a clearly-defined and compatible manner.

To compensate for the limitations identified in previous studies, I have developed my working definition and distinctive characteristics of rhetorical questions in the genre of political debates based on the following two methods:

(i)   extending the analytical levels of identifying RhQs, which includes syntactic, pragmatic, and contextual levels;

(ii)   applying both discourse and conversation analytical tools to cater to both the argumentative and interactional aspects for RhQ use in political debates.

1.2 Influence of contextual factors on politicians' use of RhQs

It has been widely accepted in the literature that the definition, features and functions of RhQs are highly contextualised and characterized by different genres, in terms of their overall contextual configuration, such as the relation between the addresser and the addressee, participants' mutual knowledge and beliefs, and the specific roles assumed and the goals pursued by them (e.g. Frank, 1990; Ilie, 1994). However, considering election debates as a specific genre, to what extent a candidate's use of RhQs is influenced by the election-specific factors in the literature remains unclear.

More specifically, despite providing an overall understanding of how different contextual factors influence candidates' construction of political messages (e.g. Maier & Jansen, 2017; Hinck et al., 2013; Carlin et al. 2001), existing debate studies have not provided an in-depth contextual analysis that is necessary for understanding the functions and implications of candidates' use of RhQs. Benoit (2006), for example, in the identification procedures of his functional approach, (rhetorical) questions were often excluded from his analytical themes as 'attack', 'acclaim', or 'defense', since Benoit assumed that questions were limited to the use of prompting a candidate's own statement or the opponent's statement. However, considering the following example, "In the State of the Union, the president promised another $1 trillion tax cut. Where does he think he's going to get the money on top of the $500 billion deficit?" (Attack)

(Benoit, 2006, pp. 16)

It is clear that the assertion of the question "Where does he…" had a significant role in framing the utterances as an attack compared to its preceding declarative statement, but the role of RhQs has yet to be considered.

As will be further elaborated in Section 2.2, previous literature has identified (i) *candidates' standing in the polls*, (ii) *candidates' political and personal background*, and (iii) *debate formats* as the determinants of candidates' communication strategies in political debates. I will, therefore, examine the influence of these three contextual factors on politicians' use of RhQs by considering each U.S. and H.K. electoral candidate's role as 'prime' and 'non-prime' politicians,[1] and how their use of RhQs varied across different debate formats. Specifically, I will first address the research question "Is there a frequency difference between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?" in the U.S. and H.K. corpus respectively.[2]

1.3 Syntactic structure of RhQs in political debates

Previous studies have not examined the syntactic patterns of question type, sentence structure, and pronouns use in politicians' RhQs in electoral debates.

Previous studies have identified how the linguistic differences in *question types* can be manipulated by politicians to accomplish their goals in different political genres, such as interviews (e.g. Gnisci, 2008) and speeches (e.g. Wong & Yap, 2015).

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[1] In this study, 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates were defined in reference with their standing in the polls. Specifically, in the U.S. corpus, 'prime' candidates had an average lead over the 'non-prime' candidates in the polls. In the H.K. corpus, 'prime' candidates included those who were at the first and second place in the polls, while the 'non-prime' candidate was in the last place.

[2] As will be elaborated in Section 1.5.3, comparing between the U.S. and H.K. debates in terms of their different democratic tradition and electoral systems provides us with more in-depth understanding of candidates' strategies of argument and rhetorical practice

However, there has been a lack of comprehensive quantitative and in-depth qualitative studies to investigate the proportions of different question types and their corresponding functions in the particular genre of political debates.

Regarding *sentence structure*, previous studies have examined the relationship between candidates' composition of arguments, the complexity of vocabulary, and sentence length, etc. and their communication strategies, such as interpersonal relationship building with the public, framing strategy, and the audience perception (e.g. Rowland, 1986; Levasseur & Dean, 1996; Cienki and Giansante, 2014; Savoy, 2018). None, however, have looked at these issues in terms of RhQs.

In addition, these studies often take a speaker-centered perspective (i.e. focusing on the relationship that the candidates intend to establish with the audience) and rarely consider the simultaneous interactions among candidates as well as their impact on each other, which is an important aspect that distinguishes political debates from other political genres (e.g. Dailey, Hinck, & Hinck, 2008).

Previous studies in *pronouns* have shed light on how politicians may use personal pronouns to manage interpersonal relationship and face work, in terms of (i) different grouping of referents and (ii) affiliative and disaffiliative strategies (e.g. Goffman, 1974; Proctor & Su, 2011; Boyd, 2013). Previous studies have also examined candidates' use of pronouns in political debates in combination with different rhetorical strategies, such as evasive replies in the 2017 H.K. chief executive debates (Wai & Yap, 2018) and conceptual metaphors in the 2008 U.S. presidential debates (Boyd, 2013). However, the extent to which candidates' use of pronouns facilitates their rhetorical questions remains uninvestigated.

In consideration of the theoretical gaps in the RhQ syntactic patterns (i.e. question type, sentence structure, and pronouns) in political debates, I will address the research question "What syntactic patterns do 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime'

candidates prefer when using RhQs?" in the U.S. and H.K. corpus respectively.

1.4 Pragmatic features of RhQs in political debates

Previous politeness and impoliteness studies have taken a divergent view on interpreting politicians' face-threatening behaviours in political debates. Specifically, from the politeness perspectives, candidates frequently rely on a variety of verbal indirectness strategies to maintain a delicate balance between constructing positive identities for themselves (e.g. attracting public attention, self-praising, etc.) and constructing negative identities for their opponents (e.g. engaging in rival talk, others-denigrating etc) (e.g. Goffman, 1974, 1981; García, 2014).

In contrast, research from the impoliteness perspectives have considered political debates as primarily an adversarial discourse (e.g. Bull & Wells, 2011) and argued that candidates might not have the intent to mitigate the face-threats, but to amplify the face-threats to cause intentional face-damages towards their opponents (e.g. Bousfied, 2008; Culpeper, 2010).

Such conflicting views between politeness studies and impoliteness studies lead to the question of to what extent rhetorical questions (RhQs) function as politeness or impoliteness strategies in political debates, since RhQs have been described as a useful linguistic strategy to mitigate or amplify face threats in politicians' utterances (Ilie, 1994; Ephratt, 2008).

It is also worth conducting, given the current lack of understanding the complex participant relationship in political discourse (e.g. Murphy, 2014), an in-depth contextual analysis of how politicians use rhetorical questions to manage face work in electoral debates.

In consideration of the theoretical gaps in the RhQ pragmatic features (i.e. (im)politeness, face threats, and participant relationship) in political debates. I will address the research question "What pragmatic features do 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?" in the U.S. and H.K. corpus respectively.

1.5 Organization of the study

To provide a theoretical background of this study, Chapter 2 reviews, as identified in previous literature, the use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political discourse. It illustrates the necessary extension of identifying rhetorical questions (RhQs) from the syntactic level to the pragmatic and contextual levels. Chapter 2 then reviews the determining contextual factors (i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate formats, and candidates' political and personal background) that may influence politicians' communication strategies in debates. Chapter 2 then reviews significant linguistic cues (i.e. question type, syntactic structure and pronouns) and pragmatic features (i.e. politeness, face threats and participant relationships) and how they may accomplish candidates' political and communicative goals in debates.

Chapter 3 describes the first selected corpus of this study, which includes six U.S. Presidential election debates in 2012 and 2016, regarding the political background and different debate formats of each selected election. Chapter 3 also explains the data collection, analytical procedures, and criteria for identifying rhetorical questions in English and their face-threatening functions.

Chapter 4 addresses the following overarching research question and three sub-research questions:

Overarching RQ1: How do U.S. politicians use RhQs in political debates?

RQ1: Is there a frequency difference between U.S. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?

RQ2: What syntactic patterns do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

RQ3: What pragmatic features do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

Specifically, Chapter 4 first compares the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'prime' candidates (i.e. Romney in 2012 and Trump in 2016) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016) in the presidential debates (RQ1).[3] Chapter 4 then examines 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type (RQ2). Finally, Chapter 4 examined 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type and (ii) face threats (RQ3).

Following Chapter 4, Chapter 5 summarizes the major findings in the U.S. corpus.

Chapter 6 describes the second selected corpus of this study, which includes four H.K. chief executive debates in 2012 and 2017, regarding the political background and different debate formats of each selected election. Chapter 6 also explains the data collection, analytical procedures, and criteria of rhetorical questions in Cantonese and their face-threatening functions.

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[3] In this study, 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates were defined in reference with their standing in the polls. Specifically, in the U.S. corpus, 'prime' candidates had an average lead over the 'non-prime' candidates in the polls.

Chapter 7 addresses the following overarching research question and three sub-research questions:

Overarching RQ2: How do H.K. politicians use RhQs in political debates?

RQ4: Is there a frequency difference between H.K. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?

RQ5: What syntactic patterns do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

RQ6: What pragmatic features do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

Specifically, Chapter 7 first compares the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'prime' candidates (i.e. CY Leung and Henry Tang in 2012, Carrie Lam and John Tsang in 2017) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Albert Ho in 2012 and Judge Woo in 2017) in the chief executive debates (RQ4).[4] Chapter 4 then examines 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type (RQ5). Finally, Chapter 4 examined 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type and (ii) face threats (RQ6).

Chapter 8 summarizes the major findings in the H.K. corpus and further elaborates on the theoretical findings in the two corpora.

Finally, to address the research question "How do U.S. politicians use RhQs compared to H.K. politicians?" Chapter 9 compares the major findings between the U.S. and H.K. corpus and reiterates the significance and implications of this study.

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[4] In the H.K. corpus, 'prime' candidates included those who were at the first and second place in the polls, while the 'non-prime' candidate was at the last place.

Chapter 9 also discusses the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research in RhQs in political discourse.

1.5.1 Methodological contributions

This study aims to provide a clear framework and criteria to analyze candidates' use of RhQs, which consists of:

(i) definition of RhQs, including clear procedures of identifying RhQs in debates,

(ii) identification of the determining contextual factors in political debates, which may influence candidates' use of RhQs,

(iii) identification of the significant syntactic and pragmatic resources, which may influence candidates' use of RhQs.

1.5.2 Theoretical contributions

This study aims to examine: (i) the influence of different contextual factors on politicians' use of RhQs, (ii) politicians' syntactic patterns of RhQs, and (iii) politicians' pragmatic features of RhQs, with an added focus of the realization of politeness and impoliteness through their RhQs.

1.5.3 Cultural contributions

As previous studies mainly focused on the American political debates, we do not have a sufficient understanding of (i) to what extent the election-specific factors, as identified in the literature influence candidates' communication strategies in different places, and (ii) candidates' rhetorical question strategies in different places, particularly in an Asian context. To address these issues, this study examines candidates' use of rhetorical questions across election campaigns in the United States and Hong Kong, while also taking consideration the different democracy tradition and electoral systems among candidates in these two places.

More specifically, the U.S. Presidential Elections is of long democracy tradition, where there is a more equally contested match between Democrat and Republican candidates. It contrasts noticeably with the short democracy tradition of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Elections, where there is 'non-partisanship' match among candidates. Also, in terms of the electoral system, the U.S. Presidential Elections adopt the Electoral College process, where a winning candidate gets the majority of electoral votes across the country. In contrast, the winning candidate of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Elections has to secure the majority of the votes from the Election Committee, which was formed by 1200 representatives from different sectors in Hong Kong.

2. Literature review

This chapter reviews, as identified in previous literature, the use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political discourse. Section 2.1 discusses the limitations of previous RhQ studies and illustrates the necessary extension of identifying rhetorical questions (RhQs) from the syntactic level to the pragmatic and contextual levels.

Section 2.2 provides an overview of the genre of political debates and outlines, as identified in the literature, the determining contextual factors influencing candidates' communication strategies in the political debates.

Section 2.3 reviews the syntactic patterns of RhQs, including question types in English and Cantonese, sentence structure and pronouns, and how they may accomplish candidates' political and communicative goals in debates.

Section 2.4 reviews the notion of politeness and impoliteness in political debates, as well as the existing pragmatic descriptions of RhQs in political discourse. Section 2.4 also elaborates on the need for (i) more concrete syntactic and pragmatic criteria for interpreting the face-threatening functions of RhQs, and (ii) considering the complex participant relationships in political debates.

2.1 Problems in defining and examining rhetorical questions

The definition and characteristics of rhetorical questions (RhQs) have been in dispute in the literature due to the differences in (i) analytical levels and theoretical approaches, and (ii) research focuses and the scope of investigations.

In the following subsections, I will review relevant studies and discuss their insufficiencies to adequately describe politicians' use of RhQs in the specific genre of election debates. After that, I will elaborate on how the working definition and distinctive characteristics of RhQs in this study can compensate for these limitations.

2.1.1 Analytical levels and theoretical approaches

The syntactic and semantic distinction between rhetorical questions (RhQs) and genuine questions was first exemplified by linguists and grammarians in the early 20th century. Poutsma (1931), for example, suggests that there is a polarity-shift between the form of an RhQ and its implied answer. Focusing on the transformational aspect between interrogatives and their declarative counterpart, Sadock (1971, 1974) distinguishes RhQs from genuine questions by comparing the illocutionary force with the value of assertion. Sadock also identifies certain linguistic expressions that can set rhetorical questions apart from information questions, such as "after all" and "yet". Taking a cross-cultural perspective, Brown and Levinson (1987) also identified the linguistic particle, i.e., *-taan* ('exactly so'), which is similar to English *just* in the way it can make rhetorical questions syntactically marked in Tamil (1987: pp. 225).

The syntactic and semantic parameters, however, are far from defining the RhQ, given the fact that many RhQs are similar or even identical to other standard questions in terms of their linguistic structure. For example, examining over 1200 examples of RhQs in a British and American written corpus, Spago (2016) found that only 15% of RhQs in the data have specific syntactic or semantic indicators, while the remaining 85% are identical to standard questions and can only be interpreted from the context.[5]

Through understanding the highly contextualised nature of RhQs and the limitations in previous syntactic and semantic studies, pragmaticians and discourse analysts have extended their identification and analysis of RhQs by taking into account their pragmatic functions and different contextual factors. However, their extended definitions and descriptions of rhetorical questions are not essentially

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[5] The syntactic indicators include polarity items, lexical item incompatible with information seeking, auto-responsive interrogative sequence, etc. (2016:106-112). The semantic indicators mainly deal with the inclusion of mutually exclusive concepts in the addressers' use of RhQs (2016:111-112).

compatible with each other. Brown and Levinson (1987), for example, consider the

RhQ as a politeness strategy for the speaker to mitigate face threats. In contrast,

Anzilotti (1982) presumes that RhQs are used by the speaker to strengthen

propositions, or as a conversational strategy to encourage two-way interaction.

To reconcile these two divergent views (i.e., to serve as a marker of politeness or

strength), Frank (1990) applies the discourse analytical approach to interpret the

purpose and nature of RhQs in a mixed conversational and institutional corpus and

discusses the possibility of RQs being used as both a politeness strategy and

persuasion strategy. Considering RhQs as essentially pragmatic units, Ilie (1994)

attempts to propose a universal framework of identifying and categorising RhQs, with

its primary consideration of the addresser's intention and its possible effect on the

addressee. She writes,

> "A rhetorical question is a question used as a challenging statement to
> convey the addresser's commitment to its implicit answer, in order to
> induce the addressee's mental recognition of its obviousness and the
> acceptance, verbalized or non-verbalized, of its validity" (Ilie: 1994: pp.
> 128).

Along with her own definition, Ilie (1994) also proposes five distinctive features

and claims that they are "shared by practically all rhetorical questions" in her corpus

(pp. 45).[6]

However, the universality of Ilie's framework and criteria has been questioned

from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. For example, taking a conversation

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[6] (1) The discrepancy between the interrogative form of the rhetorical question and its communicative
function as a statement (Ilie, 1994: pp. 46-51; 2012: pp. 177); (2) The polarity shift between the
rhetorical question and its implied statement (Ilie, 1994: pp. 51-52; 2012: pp. 177-178); (3) The
implicitness and exclusiveness of answers to rhetorical questions (1994: pp. 53-55; 2012: pp. 184-185);
(4) The addresser's commitment to the implicit answer (1994: pp. 55-59); and (5) The
multi-functionality of the rhetorical question (1994: pp. 59-60).

analytical perspective, Koshik (2005) considers those questions with much simpler structure "rhetorical" as compared to Ilie (1994)'s. Schaffer (2005) pointed out Ilie's lack of examining RhQs in conversational genres both in her 1994 work and in her latter investigation into talk-shows (Ilie, 1999). More specifically, Schaffer claims that although Ilie (1999) describes the genre of talk-shows as both "institutional" and "conversational" (Ilie, 1999: pp. 976), she neglected the RhQs which occur in natural conversational context with non-argumentative functions (Schaffer, 2005: pp. 435). Basing her examination of the RhQs and responses in online English and German discussion boards on Ilie (1994)'s framework, Kleinke (2012) found that many of the RhQ tokens in her corpus did not necessarily meet Ilie's five distinctive features. For example, the potential lack of polarity shift in alternative questions, declarative questions and tag questions (2012: pp. 177-178), as well as the lack of the speaker's intention to convince the addressee (2012: pp. 178) were not considered in Ilie (1994)'s work.

2.1.2 Research focuses and the scope of investigations

The above-mentioned analytical differences also lead to a problem in defining rhetorical questions, in terms of the different research focuses and the scope of this investigation. More specifically, considering election debates as a "hybrid genre" which mixes aspects of both institutional and naturally occurring talk (e.g. Cap and Okulska, 2013; Halmari, 2008), previous studies in political discourse mainly examined the usages of questions and rhetorical questions in terms of (i) argumentation plane, or (ii) interactional plane.[7] However, when it comes to the identification and classification of RhQs, the two perspectives have not been

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[7] A similar distinction in previous RhQ studies in election debates, for example, was drawn in Bilmes (1999, 2001)'s "oratorical" vs. "interactional" style, Arroyo (2013)'s "argumentative plane" vs. "inquisitive acts", etc.

considered together in a clearly-defined and compatible manner.

Using a conversation analytical approach to examine the use of questions between Quayle and Gore during the 1992 U.S. vice-presidential election debates, Bilmes (1999; 2001) classifies candidates' utterances as "oratorical styles" and "interactional styles". In his view, oratorical styles refer to the more carefully-planned sentences that candidates speak to the audience; for example, statements with a more complex sentence structure than ordinary utterances in conversation (2001: pp. 161). Interactional styles are an election candidate's skill of (i) obtaining and holding the floor through strategic placements and formatting of question-delivery, and (ii) how they initiate direct interactional engagement with other participants.

Bilmes (1999; 2001), however, only focuses on the utterances in interactional contexts, which makes sense of preceding, current or following exchanges among candidates (1999: pp. 214). As stated clearly by Bilmes, questions that appeared to be rhetorical in candidates' oratorical speech were excluded from Bilmes (1999)'s analysis.

> "Certain utterances in the debate that look like questions are not of present interest, such as when, in closing his opening statement, Quayle says to the audience and the camera, "Can you really trust Bill Clinton?" (1999: pp. 155)

Neglecting such an important portion of RhQs weakens the generalization of Bilmes (1999; 2001) revealing the underlying reasons for Quayle and Gore's question strategy.[8] However, his in-depth sequential analysis, rooted in conversation analysis,

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[8] Bilmes's findings suggested that Gore attempted to generate a high interactivity with Quayle through the use of questions for the following two underlying factors: (i) Gore's belief that such an interactional speaking style would grant him the impression of being a more competent candidate, and (ii) Gore's strategy to highlight Quayle's ultra-conservative position on controversial topics, which would offend the majority of voters (1999, pp. 213-232).

provides useful insights and analytical tools to our analysis of RhQs.

Extending the scope of investigations, Arroyo (2013) adopts a "mainly functional criterion" to examine: (i) questions, (ii) rhetorical questions and (iii) border-lined questions and RhQs in Spanish presidential debates between the years of 1993 and 2009 (pp. 192-194). As a progressive step in investigating the influence of election-specific factors in politicians' use of questions regarding their forms and functions, Arroyo's definition of the three types of questions, however, lacks clear and consistent criteria.

More specifically, consider Arroyo's definitions as follows:

(i) *Questions*: those "conceived to collect factual data from the interlocutor (which generally goes against his or her interests)";

(ii) *Rhetorical questions*: those "don't require an explicit answer (since one is already contained within the question itself)";

(iii) *Border-lined questions*: those "do not seek the interlocutor's collaboration but… satisfy the informational requirements of standard questions"
(2013: pp. 192)

Certain inconsistencies and ambiguities can be found under each question type. For example, in (i), if the candidate managed to elicit an answer from the rival often, it is evident to interpret that the question was asked "rhetorically", regardless of whether the answer concerns factual data. Also, in (ii), the candidate can still require a confirmation from the rivals by claiming the question has not been answered, even if the question itself already contains an explicit answer (c.f. Bilmes, 1999).

Without a clear understanding of the speaker's intention and the context, but instead narrowing down the interpretation of the rhetorical reading of questions to the sequential level (i.e. answerhood and simultaneous exchanges among candidates),

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In contrast, Quayle seldom initiates and directs questions at Gore and often used questions "responsively" even when he was "conversationally engaged", which was perceived as a strategy to avoid declaring or defending his position (1999, pp. 161).

Arroyo (2013) still fails to provide us with an adequately comprehensive definition of and criteria for RhQs in election debates.

Based on the relevant RhQ studies and their partial applicability (and limitations) to the specific genre of election debates, I have identified the following two methodological needs:

    (i)   extending the analytical levels of identifying RhQs, which includes syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, sequential, and contextual levels, with an added focus of interpreting the speaker's intention in their use of RhQs;

    (ii)   applying both discourse and conversation analytical tools to cater to both the argumentative and interactional aspects for RhQs.

In the following section, I will further extend the literature review of RhQs to the contextual levels by looking at the overall contextual configuration of the genre of political debates, as well as the major contextual factors that influence candidates' communication strategies.

2.2 Understanding the genre of electoral debates and the determining contextual factors

Given the highly-contextualized nature of rhetorical questions (RhQs), it is necessary to extend the understanding of RhQs from the syntactic and pragmatic levels to the context level. In this section, I will provide an overview of the genre of political debates and outline, as identified in the literature, the three main factors influencing candidates' communication strategies in the political debates, namely, (i) candidates' standing in the polls, (ii) debate formats, and (iii) candidates' political and personal background.

2.2.1 Overview of political debates

Among democratic countries, the major role of election campaign events is to create legitimacy for an eventual political leader (Lucaites, 1989) as these events enable a candidate to demonstrate his or her "presidential character" under public scrutiny. This mainly consists of the following correlated but distinct indicators: competence, leadership, and integrity. These enable voters to consider whether a candidate can effectively enact the presidency (Kinder, 1996, pp. 253; Hinck, 1993).

The electoral discourse of televised debates provides voters with a unique opportunity to compare different candidates in the situation where there are no campaign handlers. Therefore, how candidates interact with each other on the same stage will be of great interest to the voters, as it reveals their leadership potential, communicative competence, habits of mind, and manipulative tendencies (Hinck, 1993; Siepmann, 1962). Similar to other genres of election campaign events, candidates in election debates rely on different communication and rhetorical strategies (as determined by a variety of ideological considerations) to construct positive political identities for themselves, and negative political identities for their

opponents (Boyd, 2013; van Dijk, 2001; Yap et al., 2017).

According to McKinney and Carlin (2004)'s review, there have been five major branches of literature of theoretical approaches related to the study of televised campaign debates, including: (i) democratic theory (e.g. Miller & Mackuen, 1979; Kraus & Davis, 1981; Joslyn, 1990), (ii) agenda-setting theory (e.g. Katz & Feldman, 1962; Kaid et al., 2000), (iii) studies in uses and gratifications (e.g. Chaffee, 1978; Katz, Gurevitch, & Hass, 1973), (iv) argumentation and debate theory (e.g. Carlin, Morris, & Smith, 2001; Benoit & Wells, 1996), and (v) miscellaneous theoretical approaches (e.g. politeness theories). Consider the relevance to this study, a more detailed review of studies on argumentation and debate theory and politeness theories will be given below.

Applying Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness framework to the genre of political debates, Hinck (1993) draws a distinction between a candidate's handling of the 'positive political face' and 'negative political face'. For positive political face (i.e. the desire to be seen as capable of leading), candidates often adopt the following three strategies: (i) to gain positive face by promoting themselves and their policies, (ii) to defend positive face through mitigating the face threats caused by the attack and criticism of others, and (iii) to perform face-threatening acts to opponents' positive face by challenging or criticizing them.

Also, candidates value the 'negative political face' (i.e. freedom from imposition), which appears to be more vulnerable, particularly during televised debates. More concretely, although there are rules protecting candidates from direct address and interruptions during the debates, candidates often violate them (to control each other) and have to react to them skilfully, depending on their strategies and concerns.

2.2.2 Influence of contextual factors in candidates' communication strategies

Previous literature has identified *candidates' standing in the polls, debate formats,* and *candidates' political and personal background* as determinants of candidates' communication strategies in political debates. In each of the following subsections, I will give a summary of the determinant regarding its definition, characteristics and results found in the literature, which may also vary with political debates across different format types and countries.

Candidates' standing in the polls

In this subsection, I will show that previous literature argues that *candidates' standing in the polls* impacts communication strategies (Maier and Jansen, 2017; Hinck et al., 2013).

First, using a multivariate and content analysis of 46 German televised debates at both national and state levels from 1997 to 2015, Maier and Jansen (2017) examined if different variables, including candidates' profile, debate format, and strategic context, impacted candidates' use of attacks against their opponents. Their findings revealed that regarding the strategic context, candidates tend to attack their opponents more frequently if they were behind in the polls (pp. 554-555).

In a second study, Hinck et al. (2013) used a politeness perspective to examine if there was a relationship between candidates' politeness activities and different election-specific factors in nine Republican primary debates in 2012. More specifically, Hinck adopted a five-level schema of face attacks (i.e. candidates' attempt to threaten the other's face) and supports (i.e. candidates' attempt to support or approve the other's face) to evaluate and categorized the degree of face-threats in a candidate's political messages (see Appendix 1 for details of the Politeness schema). Findings revealed that *candidates' standing in the polls* correlated with candidates'

face-threating activities, as well as whether candidates were targeted by the others

using face-threatening activities (2013: 269).

Maier and Jansen (2017) and Hinck et al. (2013) have demonstrated the

importance of candidates' *standing in the polls* to understanding communication

strategies. In the next subsection, I will review the literature that argues that *debate*

format is also a crucial factor in communication strategies.

Debate format

In this subsection, I will review the studies of Beck (1996), Carlin et al. (2001), and

Morris and Johnson (2011), who argue that different types of *debate format* impact

communication strategies.

First, using a discourse analytical approach, Beck (1996) demonstrated the

influence of debate format, particularly the free-flowing discussion section, in Gore

and Quayle the two candidates' argument strategies in the 1992 vice presidential

debate.

Second, Carlin et al. (2001) adopted a content analytical scheme to examine if

there was a relationship between *debate formats* and candidates' clash and non-clash

strategies in the three presidential debates between Gore and Bush in 2000. The

notion of "clash" was decided if the message delivered by a candidate was a

comparative statement to suggest he or she is a better candidate (Carlin, 2001: pp.

2201). The scheme, as described by Carlin (2001), was based on how a candidate

defines or defends his or her policies, contrasts with the other opponents, and answers

questions raised by the moderator (pp. 2199).

Findings of Carlin et al. (2001) reveal that among the different factors, such as

questions asked by the moderator or the studio audience, debate format was one of the

factors that may influence candidates' clash and non-clash strategies (pp. 2216). For example, Carlin et al. (2001) suggested that the more conversational format of debates has received the least overall level of clash, compared to the more formal podium format which has received the most amount of clash (pp. 2210).

Third, based on Morris (2004)'s modified coding scheme of Carlin et al. (2001) with an added pragma-dialectic perspective, Morris and Johnson (2011) examined the clash strategies used by McCain and Obama in the 2008 presidential debates. Findings revealed that the two candidates' use of clash and non-clash strategies varied across different types of debate formats.

In this subsection, I looked at the studies of Beck (1996), Carlin et al. (2001), and Morris and Johnson (2011), which demonstrated the importance of the *debate format* for understanding communication strategies.

2.2.3 Candidates' political and personal background

In this subsection, I will review the studies of Benoit and Henson (2007), Dailey, Hinck, and Hinck (2008), Maier and Jansen (2017), and Elmelund-Præstekær (2010), which show that *candidates' personal and political background* impacts communication strategies. Specifically, previous research suggested the following two determinants, i.e. candidates' role as an incumbent or a challenger, and candidates' political affiliation in different political systems.

Incumbency

Benoit and Henson (2007) adopted a functional approach to examine candidates'

political campaign messages in the four Canadian prime minister debates in 2006 and

the Australian prime minister debate in 200.[9] Their study revealed that incumbent

candidates were more likely to acclaim than to attack compared to the challengers (pp.

43). Also, while incumbents were more likely to acclaim their policy by referring to

past deeds, challengers tended to refer to incumbents' past deeds but in a critical way

(pp. 44).

Dailey, Hinck, and Hinck (2008) took a different approach by using a politeness

framework to examine the relationship between determinants (e.g. incumbent vs.

challenger candidates, debate format including "panel", "town hall", "single

moderator", and "conversation") and candidates' face work in the U.S. presidential

debates from 1948 to 2000. Their findings revealed the following: (i) challengers

tended to be more aggressive than incumbents, but the eventual winning challengers

used more indirect face-threatening strategies than the direct ones (pp. 156);[10] (ii) no

differences for the format-effect on the use of face-relevant thought units were found

among the challengers, but the incumbent candidates used a greater amount of

face-attacking units in the single-moderator format (pp. 116).

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[9] According to the approach, candidates seek to appear preferable to other opponents in order to win the elections (Benoit and Henson, 2007: pp. 38; see also: Benoit, Blaney, and Pier, 1998, pp. 4). To accomplish such a lofty political goal, candidates may deliver three different types of functional messages, namely, (i) acclaims, (ii) attacks, and (iii) defenses, when addressing "policy statements" and "character statements".

[10] Dailey, Hinck, and Hinck (2008) also related the findings to Benoit (2003)'s functional analysis of candidates' political campaign messages in the U.S. presidential debates from 1948 to 2000. More specifically, while Benoit (2003)'s findings suggested that candidates who win the election tended to address "policy statements" more frequent than "character statements", Dailey, Hinck, and Hinck (2008) associated candidates' policy statements with indirect face-threats and candidates' character statements with direct face-threats.

Candidates' political affiliation

Using multivariate and content analysis of 46 German televised debates at both national and state levels from 1997 to 2015, Maier and Jansen (2017) examined if different variables impact candidates' use of attacks against their opponents. Their findings revealed that candidates who were not from the government tended to adopt negativity campaign strategies more frequently than those who were members of the government (2017: 556).

To examine the political debates with candidates from different political parties, Elmelund-Præstekær (2010) examined the Danish national election debates in 1994, 1998 and 2001. Their findings revealed that candidates representing the left-wing parties attacked more often than the right-wing candidates in these debates.

In this subsection, I looked at the studies of Benoit and Henson (2007), Dailey, Hinck, and Hinck (2008), Benoit (2003), Maier and Jasen (2017), and Elmelund-Præstekær (2010), which demonstrated the importance of *candidates' personal and political background* to understanding communication strategies.

In sum, existing debate studies inform us about the influence of different contextual factors (i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' political and personal background) in candidates' overall communication style, for example, tendencies to attack (Maier & Jansen, 2017; Elmelund-Præstekær, 2010), association with face-threatening activities (Hinck et al., 2013), and argument strategies (Beck, 1996), etc. However, their reliance on the more "macro" category-count approach could not show us clearly: (i) what specific rhetorical strategies were used by candidates to achieve their political goals in the debates, and (ii) to what extent these rhetorical strategies were influenced by these discourse factors.

2.2.4 Working definition and characteristics of RhQs

After reviewing the previous RhQ studies in Section 2.1 and the overall contextual configuration of the genre of political debates in Section 2.2, I have developed the following working definition:

> "Rhetorical questions (RhQs) are the questions that the addresser has no intent to elicit a genuine answer from the addressee(s), who are physically present or absent, but instead to influence their recognition regarding the point that the addresser attempts to make during the election debates."

The working definition caters to the fact that when using RhQs, an election candidate has no intent to elicit a genuine answer from the addressee(s), who can be the 'physically present' opponents, the studio audience, or the moderators (see also: Ilie, 1994; Arroyo, 2013) or by extension, the 'physically absent' general public (see also: Hinck, 1993; Kinder, 1996). Instead, candidates use RhQs to influence the addressee's recognition, for example, stressing the obligation of the opponents to answer the question (see also: Bilmes 1999; 2001) and facilitating the recognition of the audience regarding the assertion in the RhQs (see also: Ilie, 1994).

Along with this definition, there are four distinctive features of RhQs as follows, which enable RhQs to be identified at a more comprehensive manner, including the syntactic and semantic, pragmatic and contextual analytical levels:

(i)   the addresser indicates that he or she already knows the answer to the RhQ, and is making an assertion through the RhQ instead of seeking information (see also: Frank, 1990; Ilie, 1994);

(ii)   the addresser did not indicate whether he or she knows the answer to the RhQ, but is signalling their commitment to the implicit answer of the RhQ (see also: Anzilotti, 1982; Ilie, 1994);

(iii) the speaker uses RhQs as a mean to facilitate his or her argument or current line of talk (see also: Arroyo, 2013);

(iv)   the speaker uses RhQs to arouse the audience's attention to a point he or she is making (see also: Ilie, 1994; Koshik, 2005).

In the following sections, I will further review, as identified in previous literature, the structure and features of RhQs from the syntactic and pragmatic perspectives.

2.3 Previous studies on the syntactic structure of RhQs

To identify the different syntactic forms that rhetorical questions (RhQs) may occur in, Section 2.3.1 and Section 2.3.2 explore the five question types, namely, yes/no, *wh-*, alternative, declarative, and tag interrogatives in English and Cantonese respectively. Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.2 also discuss in general the relationship between the speaker's intention, the implied answers, and the implications of different syntactic types of RhQs. Section 2.3.3 elaborates practically on how politicians may manipulate different question types (e.g. with different degrees of explicitness) to accomplish their goals in political communications. Section 2.3.4 and Section 2.3.5 review how the linguistic cues of sentence structure and pronouns may influence candidates' construction of messages in political debates, respectively.

2.3.1 Question types of RhQs in English

(Rhetorical) yes/ no questions

The answer to a *yes/no* question mainly requires an "acceptance or a denial" of the addressee's presupposition (often a simple "yes" or "no" answer) (Wong & Yap, 2015, pp. 645). The rhetorical *yes/no* interrogative structure enables the speaker to impose detailed information, or use the question as a strong assertion. More specifically, as Han (1998) puts it, a rhetorical question can be interpreted as an assertion of the "opposite polarity" (pp. 202), which indicates the speaker's expectations towards the answer. In the following example, the speaker's assertion can be interpreted as "I did not tell you that writing a dissertation was easy", an answer with reversed polarity to the rhetorical question "Did I tell you that writing a dissertation was easy?" (Han, 1998, pp. 202; see also: Wong & Yap, 2015, pp. 645).

(Rhetorical) wh-questions

A rhetorical *wh*-question also functions as an assertion. For example, Bolinger (1957) and Quirk et al. (1985) note the ability of rhetorical *wh*-questions to convey the epistemic stance of the questioner, functioning as a negative assertion.

Bolinger (1957) describes the following two functions of *wh*-questions: first, they are 'uttered in a context which cancels certain otherwise possible answers', e.g. *"Who else?"* in response to *"Look, it's John who just came in."* (pp. 157); second, they may contain expressions to indicate the speaker's unique preference, which make the question conducive (i.e. rhetorical *wh*-questions display an expectation for a certain answer) (Bolinger, 1957, pp. 158):

> (1) *"When has he ever said a word against his mother?"*
> (2) *"Who would lift a finger for you?"*
> (Horn, 1978, pp. 151)
> ("never" and "no one" to (1) and (2) respectively, as indicated by Horn (1978, pp. 151), "the stance expressed by the questioner is clearly that of the corresponding negatives")

(Rhetorical) alternative questions

In terms of its linguistic format, the alternative question is to provide alternative responses in a "not always neutral" manner in regard to the addresser's expectation (Van Rooy & Šafářová, 2003, pp. 304). For example, considering the rhetorical question *"Will you marry me or not?"* asked by the lover as a request, the speaker already had the desired response (Van Rooy & Šafářová, 2003, pp. 304) from the listener to be more committed to their relationship.

(Rhetorical) declarative questions

In rhetorical declarative questions, the speaker often seeks to emphasize the truthfulness of a fact (Balogun, 2011). Declarative questions are identical to declarative statements except for their final rising intonation. For example, in the rhetorical question "You realize what the risks are?" the speaker's disbelief is amplified rather than an attempt to gather information (British National Corpus FRS 2738; see also: Lam, 2005, pp. 9).

(Rhetorical) tag questions

A tag is a short interrogative clause that attaches to an anchor. It may be positive or negative. In terms of the polarity, it can serve as a "reversed polarity tag" (with different polarity with the anchor), or as a "constant polarity tag" (with the same polarity with the anchor) (Huddleston, Rodney, and Pullum, 2002, pp. 787, 922).

   (1) *"He is ill, is he?"* (constant polarity tag)

   (2) *"He is ill, isn't he?"* (reversed polarity tag)

   (Huddleston, Rodney, and Pullum, 2002, pp. 892)

   From the grammatical perspective, the form of a tag is usually based on the main clause. As can be seen in Examples (1) and (2) above, it follows the order of auxiliary as the predicator and personal pronoun as the subject (with reversed or constant polarity). However, the form of a tag may also be based on subordinate clauses. In the following example "I think it's legal, isn't it?", the tag "isn't it" is based on the subordinate clause "it's legal" instead of the main clause "I think it's legal", because of the primary communicative meaning embedded in the subordinate clause (Huddleston, Rodney, and Pullum, 2002, pp. 893).

2.3.2 Question types of RhQs in Cantonese

(Rhetorical) yes/ no questions

In Cantonese, yes/no questions can be realized as the form of (i) A-not-A

constructions or (ii) particle questions. A-not-A constructions of *yes/no* interrogatives

contain the juxtaposition of the verbs or adjectives with the negative marker 唔 *m4*

'not' (e.g. 係唔係 *hai6-m4-hai6* 'be-not-be', 好唔好 *hou2-m4-hou2* 'good-not-good')

(Matthews & Yip, 1994).

Cantonese *yes/no* questions can also be constructed as particle questions, with

the simplest format formed by adding a particle to a declarative statement. For

example, the *yes/no* question below requires only the use of 啊 *aa4* as the

interrogative final particle (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 310).

你	下	個	禮拜	放假	啊？
nei5	haa5	go3	lai5baai1	fong3gaa2	aa4?
you	next	CL	week	take-leave	PRT

'You're going on leave next week?'

This type of question, however, does not always aim to seek information but is more frequently involved in expressing a rhetorical reading (e.g. the speaker's stance to denote surprise or check validity). Matthews and Yip (1994) also relate particular question particles (e.g. 咩 *me1*) to the construction of rhetorical *yes/no* questions. For example, the following *yes/no* question indicates the speaker's strong preference of electing an answer of *no* from the listener.

仲	使	你	講	咩？
zung6	sai2	nei5	gong2	me1?
still	need	you	say	PRT

'As if need you to tell me?'

(Rhetorical) wh-questions

Wh-questions in Cantonese can be constructed as (i) subject question or (ii) object question (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 323). While the former type is identical to the English wh-question in terms of the word order, the latter type does not position the wh-interrogative markers as the subject of the question. Consider the following example.

你	揾	邊個	啊？
nei5	wan2	bin1 go3	aa3?
you	seek	who	PRT

'Who are you looking for?'

Despite the potential difference in word-order from wh-questions in English, Cantonese wh-questions share a similar set of wh-interrogative markers, which are equivalent to English, as shown in Table 2.[11]

Table 2. Wh-interrogative markers in English and Cantonese

English	Cantonese	Examples
What	乜 mat1, 乜野 mat1yeh5	食　　啲　　乜野　　　好　　　啊？ sik6　di1　mat1yeh5　hou2　aa3 eat　CL　what　　good　PRT 'What shall we eat?'
Where	邊 bin1, 邊度 bin1dou6, 邊處 bin1syu3	你　　覺得　　　似　　邊度　　　呢？ nei5　gok3 dak1　ci5　bin1 dou6　ne1 you　think　　　like　where　　PRT 'Where do you think it looks like?'
Who	邊個 bin1go3, 邊位 bin1wai2	你　　係　　　邊個？ nei5　hai6　bin1 go3 you　be　　who 'Who are you?'

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[11] Examples in Cantonese were mainly drawn from the following corpora: (i) A Linguistic Corpus of Mid-20th Century Hong Kong Cantonese, (ii) The Hong Kong Cantonese Corpus (HKCanCor), and (iii) The PolyU Corpus of Spoken Cantonese.

Which	邊 bin1+classifier	你　　喺　　屯門　　邊間　　中學　　教　　　啊？ nei5　hai2　tyun4　bin1　zung1　gaau3　aa3 　　　　　　mun4　gaan1　hok6 you　COP　Tuen　which　seconda　teach　PRT 　　　　　Mun　-CL　ry 　　　　　　　　school 'Which secondary school in Tuen Mun do you teach?'
Why	點解 dim2gaai2, 做乜 zou6mat1	點解　　　　你　唔　入得　　去　　呀？ dim2 gaai2　　nei5　m4　jap6-dak1　heoi3　aa3 why　　　　you　not　In-POT　go　PRT 'Why can't you go in?'
When	幾時 gei2si4	佢　　　幾時　　嚟　　架？ keoi5　gei2si4　lai4　gaa3 He/she　when　come　PRT 'When did he/she come here?'
How	點 dim2, 點樣 dim2joeng2	佢　　點樣　　　失蹤　　架？ keoi5　dim2joeng2　sat1 zung1　gaa3 He/she　how　　disappear　PRT 'How did he/she get disappeared?'

(Rhetorical) alternative questions

Alternative questions in Cantonese also apply the form 'A or B', with a set of Cantonese equivalences to the English *or* (i.e. 定係 *deng6 hai6,* 定 *deng6,* 抑或 *jik1 waak6,* 或者 *waak6 ze2,* and 或是 *waak6 si6*) between alternative possibilities. Consider the example below, where Cantonese *deng6* 'or' between the two options *heoi2 maai5je5* 'go shopping' and *fann1 nguk1kei2* 'stay home' is used (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 322-323):

我	地	去	買野	定	返	屋企	啊？
ngo5	dei6	heoi2	maai5je5	deng6	faan1	nguk1kei2	aa3?
we	PL	go	shopping	or	stay	home	PRT

'Shall we go shopping or go home?'

(Rhetorical) declarative questions

In Cantonese declarative questions, the tone of the last word of a sentence is raised. They can be used rhetorically to signal the questioner's surprise or incredulity, as shown in the following example (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 318).

你	去左	加拿大?
nei5	heoi2zo2	gaa1 naa4 daai6?
you	Go-PFV	

"You've been to Canada?"

(Rhetorical) tag questions

The tag 係唔係 *hai6m4hai6* "right" (contracted form: 係咪 *ha6mi1*) is often used in Cantonese to turn a statement into a question. Such Cantonese tag is invariant in form, equivalent to the multiple English tags, such as "*isn't he?*", "*aren't you?*", and "*don't we?*" (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 317)

你	做	醫生	既，	係咪	啊？
nei5	zou6	ji1 saang1	gei3	hai6 mi1	aa3?
you	work	doctor	PRT	right	PRT

'You're a doctor, aren't you?'

Tag questions in Cantonese can be used rhetorically to elicit consent or approval, with the tag 得唔得 *dak1m4dak1* "okay?" (Matthews & Yip, 1994, pp. 318)

我	聽日	搵	你	傾計	得唔得	啊？
ngo5	ting3jat6	wan2	nei5	king1gai3	dak1m4dak1	aa3?
I	tomorrow	seek	you	chat-a-while	okay	PRT

I'll come and talk to you tomorrow, okay?

2.3.3 Manipulation of linguistic types in (rhetorical) questions in political discourse

Previous studies in political discourse concerning question types have identified how linguistic and functional differences can be manipulated in different political genres. However, this is not the case in the particular genre of electoral debates, since there have been no comprehensive studies which provide information on proportions of different question types and their corresponding functions in political debates.

In the genre of political interviews, for example, Gnisci (2008) examines interviewers' use of different question types in terms of their different degrees of coercion and face-threats, by basing his work on the mixed face model of Bavelas et al. (1990)'s equivocation theory and Brown and Levinson (1978)'s politeness theory. More specifically, Gnisci (2008) elucidates how interviewers direct and restrict the possibilities of politicians' answer to his or her expectation and provides the proportion for each question type (e.g. *wh*-questions at 31%, *yes/no* questions at 20%) and face-threats (e.g. neutral questions at 71% and face-threatening questions at 29%) (pp. 1196-1197).[12]

By examining the Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's use of RhQs in his political speeches in the 2012 U.S. presidential election, Wong and Yap (2015) provided the proportion of each question type. More specifically, their findings identified a strategic manipulation of question types based on Romney's target audience. Romney was more aggressive and used the more direct *yes/no* RhQs in the swing states (85%), particularly on topics related to the economy, his forte (2015: pp. 654-656). In comparison, he was more prudent and used a more balanced distribution of *yes/no* (41%) and the less face-threatening *wh*-RhQs (42%) in the states leaning towards Barack Obama, largely to downplay his lack of experience in political and social domains (2015: pp. 656-658).

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[12] In Gnisci (2008)'s categorization, the three types of "closed-ended" questions (i.e. declarative questions, tag questions, and *yes/no* questions) are most coercive, since they can be used to "limit the narrative freedom of the respondent" (pp. 1189-1190). "Choice questions" (i.e. alternative questions), which provide addressees only two possible answers are more coercive than "open-ended" questions (i.e. wh-questions) (pp. 1190).

In the genre of political debates, however, previous studies often adopt a more qualitative-based approach due to the highly context-dependent nature of rhetorical questions that requires more in-depth elaboration. Harris (2001), for example, examines the political interactions in the British parliamentary debates (i.e. Prime Minister's Question Time) by extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse.[13] Despite summarizing, in his examination of the syntax of interrogatives that *yes/no* question(s) were associated frequently with the negative presuppositions established by the questioner when addressing the Prime Minister, no descriptive statistics were provided.

Examining candidates' use of (rhetorical) questions in the Spanish presidential debates, Arroyo (2013) stated clearly in his coding process that all questions were categorized into different question types. However, he did not give any descriptive statistics regarding question types or elaborate on how they were favoured and used differently by the politicians.

Given the lack of descriptive statistics and their association with different pragmatic functions (e.g. face-threats management) regarding question types, as compared to other political genres, this study will examine the missing link using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (see detailed discussion in Sections 4.2.3 and Section 7.2.3).

2.3.4 Sentence structure in political debates

Previous studies have examined candidates' sentence structure in terms of the composition of arguments, the complexity of the vocabulary, sentence length and sentence structure (e.g. Rowland, 1986; Levasseur & Dean, 1996; Cienki and

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[13] For example, as described by Garcia-Pastor (2008: 121), candidates who participated in US presidential debates engaged in a zero-sum game, adopting a sequence of positive and negative face-aggravating acts.

Giansante, 2014; Savoy, 2018). Some of these studies also relate their findings to the candidates' strategy framing, interpersonal relationship building with the public, and the audience perception.[14]

Focusing on the quantity and quality of candidates' arguments delivered during the debates, Rowland's (1986) findings suggest that using more fully developed arguments (i.e. providing more evidence to support a candidate's own claim) was more likely to be perceived as the debate winner by the general public. However, the relationship between a candidate's argument and the audience's perception may vary widely across different debates. For example, in contrast with Rowland's (1986) findings, Levasseur and Dean (1996) suggested that viewers favoured the less developed arguments.

Comparing the complexity of vocabulary and sentence structure between Palin and Biden in the 2008 U.S. vice-presidential debate, (Cienki and Giansante, 2014) found that the two candidates take took divergent paths to appeal to the audience. Their findings reveal that Biden more often connects a series of embedded clauses with the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in constructing his longer and more complex arguments. In contrast, Palin more frequently used colloquial vocabulary and shorter noun and verb phrases to present her ideas. With a more conversational and easy-to-follow framing, Palin aimed to establish a closer relationship with the audience as she appealed to be one of the "conversation partners" who shares the same common ground (Cienki and Giansante, 2014: pp. 255).

Savoy (2018) also identified a notable difference between Trump and Clinton's communication style during the 2016 U.S. presidential debates. He found that Trump preferred shorter sentences, along with simpler vocabulary and more function words,

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[14] None, however, looked at these issues in terms of RhQs.

while Clinton provided more detailed reasoning and explanation in her longer sentences along with more lexical items (2018: pp. 175). Savoy (2018) attributes the syntactic structure favoured by Trump to the identity-construction of a "strong masculine figure" for himself (pp. 187).

Despite providing us with useful information of candidates' communication style, these studies often take a speaker-centered perspective (i.e. focusing on the relationship that the candidates intend to establish with the audience). These studies also rarely considered the simultaneous interactions among candidates as well as their impact on each other, which is an important aspect that distinguishes political debates from other political genres. This is also because the debate formats in early campaigns, particularly for the U.S presidential debates, were designed with relatively limited interactions and clashes among candidates (see also: Dailey, Hinck, & Hinck, 2008).

2.3.5 Pronouns in political debates

Compared to the analysis of syntactic structure, previous studies in pronouns have shed more light on how politicians may use personal pronouns to manage interpersonal relationship and face work, in terms of (i) different grouping of referents and (ii) affiliative and disaffiliative strategies (e.g. Goffman, 1974).

Personal pronouns give a significant indication of the speaker's solidarity with a particular ideology, and secondarily (if necessary) of the speaker's difference with another group (Tabakowska, 2002). In Bull and Fetzer (2006)'s examination of politicians' use of pronouns in interviews, they emphasize that "(. . .) politicians use personal pronouns to good effect: for example, to accept, deny, or distance themselves from responsibility for political action; to encourage solidarity; to designate and identify both supporters and enemies. Their choice of pronouns may also reflect their own personal and political ideologies" (2006: pp. 5).

Personal pronouns can also be adjusted by politicians regarding their clusivity (e.g. see Filimonova, 2005) to align with or disalign from the opponents or the audience. For example, in Putri and Kurniawan (2015)'s examination of Obama and Romney's use of pronouns in the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign speeches, there is a different usage pattern in the two candidates' use of exclusive "we" (i.e. the first-person plural that excludes the person being addressed) and inclusive we (i.e. the first-person plural that includes the person being addressed) (see also: O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011; Inigo-Mora, 2013). More specifically, apart from functioning as the general alignment between candidates and the audience, Obama used his incumbency advantage in 2012 by using the exclusive "we" more often to highlight the achievements he and his administration made, as compared to Romney.

Previous studies have also shown how different campaign genres influence candidates' use of pronouns (e.g. Bull & Fetzer 2006; Proctor & Su, 2011). Proctor and Su (2011), for example, examined election candidates' use of pronouns in political interviews and debates during the 2008 US presidential election. More specifically, they look at how the following two factors may affect candidates' distribution of personal and possessive pronouns: (i) whether the topic of the conversation make politicians uncomfortable, and cause them to switch to a different pronominal use, and (ii) whether the conversation's venue (and hence audience) affects their use of pronominal choice.

Their findings reveal that during the interviews, Sarah Palin more frequently uses "we" to indicate her solidarity with Americans (31%), Alaskans (28%), and the US (28%), while she rarely used "we" (8%) to identify herself with her running mate John McCain (2011: 3325). However, during the vice-presidential debate, Palin shifts her focus by using "we" to identify herself with McCain (43%), and only 18% with Americans. Compared to the earlier interview findings, it is apparent that Palin

manipulates her self-identification with the use of pronominal choice, aiming to show greater alignment with her running mate during the vice-presidential debate.

Previous studies have examined candidates' use of pronouns in political debates in combination with different rhetorical strategies, such as evasive replies in the 2017 H.K. chief executive debates (Wai & Yap, 2018) and conceptual metaphors in the 2008 U.S. presidential debates (Boyd, 2013). However, the extent to which candidates' use of pronouns facilitates their rhetorical questions remains uninvestigated. Therefore, I will examine if the distribution of candidates' pronouns in their RhQs varies across different types of debate settings and addressee(s) and the implications.

2.4 Previous studies on the pragmatic features of RhQs

In this section, I will define the notion of politeness and impoliteness in political debates and review the existing pragmatic descriptions of RhQs in political discourse. I will point out the necessary extension of (i) more concrete syntactic and pragmatic criteria for classifying RhQs as different face-threatening functions, and (ii) considering the complex participant relationship in political debates.

2.4.1 Defining the notion of politeness and impoliteness in political debates

Prior to my classification of RhQs as politeness and impoliteness strategies, it is necessary to contextualize the notion of politeness and impoliteness for this study. The genre of election debates is often described as adversarial (e.g. García-Pastor, 2008; Bull & Wells, 2011); however, the question of whether the genre is impolite and to what extent politeness and impoliteness exist has been in dispute in the literature.

Most of the studies which aligned with the standard principles of Brown and Levinson (1981) assumed that the speaker would mitigate possible face-threats to interactant(s) when performing face-threatening acts towards them, aiming to save the

face of either themselves or the interactant(s). However, the applicability of Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theories to political debates have been questioned, given that the candidates' objective is to defeat their opponents and distinguish themselves from their rivals in terms of the policy, ideas, etc. (e.g. García, 2014: pp. 66).

Instead, a number of studies have suggested that the notion of impoliteness in political debates (e.g. Culpepper, 1996, 2011; Bousfield, 2008) more adequately describes the politicians' deliberate and unmitigated face-threatening acts toward their opponent. Consider, for example, Bousfield's (2008: pp. 72) definition highlights the speaker's genuine intention to cause face-threats towards their rivals through:

"i. Unmitigated [rhetoric], in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or,

ii. With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted." (2008: pp. 72).[15]

However, while many of the impoliteness studies considered the genre of political debate exclusively impolite (e.g. Arroyo, 2001),[16] this appears to be an over-generalization as argued by Watts (2003: pp. 23), García (2014), Murphy (2014), among others, for the following reasons. First, the notion of politeness and impoliteness is highly contextualized. Watts (2003: pp. 23), for example, argues that the perception of (im)politeness at one particular moment may no longer be the same at another moment, considering the negotiable nature of political interactions. García (2014) also described the "fluctuating" nature of politeness and impoliteness across different phases within the same 2008 second Spanish presidential debate (pp. 68-71).

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[15] In agreement with this notion, Garcia (2014, pp. 69) also describes impolite behaviours in political debates as a completely open disagreement without any mitigation.

[16] Blas Arroyo (2001) argues that even the politeness markers politicians used in debates are intensifiers instead of mitigating the face-threats.

Culpeper (2010) added that due to the different audiences, situations or cultures, even an "apparently polite expression" can be used as sarcasm in an impolite way (2010: pp. 3234-3235). Aligning with the above notions, Fraser and Nolan claim that:

"[…] no sentence is inherently polite or impolite. We often take certain expressions to be impolite, but it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determines the judgement of politeness" (Fraser and Nolan, 1981: pp. 96).

To address this issue, I have identified there is a need to better understand candidates' communicative goals and dynamics across different phases in a political debate. At the more "macro" level, I will consider the format and rundown for each debate, such as rules, topics being discussed in different segments, interaction with co-participants (see detailed discussion in Sections 3.1.3, 3.1.5, 6.1.3, and 6.1.5). At the more "micro" level, I will extend Arroyo (2013)'s classification of different positions candidate's speaking turn or exchanges among them, i.e. "initial contexts", "intermediate contexts", "end contexts", "simultaneous speech contexts" (pp. 195-198).[17] Specifically, these four particular positions, as identified by Arroyo (2013), influence candidates' use of questions regarding their forms and functions in political debates, but the connection has not been elaborated.

Second, several studies have identified the existence of politeness strategies and elucidated how they align with the standard principles of Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theory. Galasinski (1998), for example, examined how candidates during the two 1995 Polish presidential debates used different mitigation devices to

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[17] Arroyo (2013) defined the four positions as follows: initial contexts refer to the beginning (or a "somewhat more advanced position") of a candidate's speaking turn; intermediate contexts refer to the "rest of the utterances in each turn"; end contexts refer to the "last utterance of his or her turns" or "questions that arise nearby"; simultaneous speech contexts are the situation where a candidate interrupts his or her adversary's turn in order to ask a question.

license their attacks at the opponents, especially in situations where they violated the rules that prohibited them from directly addressing each other. Murphy (2014) further noted that both genuine politeness and impoliteness strategies occur in the U.K. parliamentary debates. However, in Murphy's examination where he identified twelve politeness and impoliteness strategies, only three politeness strategies (i.e. "minimising the criticism", "deflecting attention" of a criticism, and "acting as a mouthpiece) (pp. 88, 90) and two impoliteness strategies (i.e. "unanswerable questions" and "accusation of hypocrisy") (pp. 91-92) were directly related to politicians' use of (rhetorical) questions.

As suggested by Ridao Rodrigo (2009), politicians use both politeness and impoliteness strategies in debates, with the former seeking to enhance their own face and the latter aiming to damage the opponent's face (pp. 15). García (2014) added that candidates would attempt to find a "medium point" between politeness and impoliteness, i.e. without appearing to be "overtly aggressive" by restraining their attacks against an opponent (pp. 80).

In sum, having recognized the highly contextualized nature of politeness and impoliteness as identified in previous studies, I suggest that a more comprehensive and in-depth contextual analysis is needed in order to more adequately determine when and how RhQs are used as politeness or impoliteness devices in political debates. In the next subsection, I will review the existing pragmatic descriptions of rhetorical questions in political discourse as well as their relevance to RhQs functioning as politeness or impoliteness devices.

2.4.2 Pragmatic descriptions of rhetorical questions as politeness and impoliteness strategies in political discourse

In this section, I review the existing pragmatic descriptions of rhetorical questions in political discourse and identify the necessary extension of the pragmatic criteria for classifying RhQs into different types of face-threatening functions (i.e., amplified/ mitigated/ non- face-threatening), and then consider the complex participant relationships in political debates.

Pragmatic criteria for classifying RhQs as different face-threatening functions

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the rhetorical question (RhQ) is an off-record politeness strategy that invites conversational implicatures. In other words, politicians can protect themselves from being perceived as directly engaging in face-threatening acts by taking cover under their use of RhQs. However, as elaborated in the previous subsection, this notion, rooted in politeness perspective, neglected the speaker's intent to cause unmitigated face-damage towards their opponents.

As an alternative to Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theory, Anzilotti (1982) suggests two more pragmatic aspects of the use of rhetorical questions: (i) as a means which enables the speaker to strengthen his or her propositions (e.g. expressing sarcasm than statements), or (ii) as a conversational strategy to encourage two-way interaction (pp. 298).

To reconcile these two divergent views, Ilie (1994) made a distinction between RhQs functioning as "mitigators" and "amplifies" to describe the two needs of politicians competing with each other in an adversarial political discourse. More specifically, as shown in the following example, Ilie (1994) describes politicians' need to amplify the argumentative force in their RhQs when challenging their opponents:

> "*Unless the Government start listening to Members of Parliament like me who represent towns such as Halifax, unless they stop turning their back on manufacturing and unless they are prepared to help towns such as mine and restore assisted area status where it has been removed. I believe that times look even bleaker for our increasingly divided country. **How on earth can any responsible Government tolerate that?***"
>
> (HANS 30, Parliamentary Debate on the Address, 26.06.1987)

As Ilie puts it, the rhetorical question here (especially with the additional use of the emphatic marker "how on earth") is face-threatening and strongly confrontational. Ilie also provides the following example to describe politicians' use of RhQs *"Who can say that we were wrong?"* as mitigators.

> "*Some of us warned them then that might not happen, because the longer that Israel remained in those territories, the greater would be the demand from the right wing in Israel for them to be incorporated into the state of Israel. **Who can say that we were wrong?***"
>
> (HANS 126, Parliamentary Debate on Northern Ireland, 7.09 1990)

However, apart from briefly comparing the rhetorical questions and their implied statements at the syntactic and semantic level (1994:54), Ilie did not provide clear pragmatic criteria to explain how RhQs are used as "mitigators" or "amplifies" (e.g. considering the speaker's intent).

Similarly, when examining politicians' use of questions and answers as politeness and impoliteness strategies during the Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in U.K parliamentary debates, Murphy (2014)'s categorization did not outline clear criteria specifying the relation between (rhetorical) questions and politeness and impoliteness strategies. Also, Murphy (2014) did not elaborate on the connection between his own categories for describing impoliteness strategies, which he claimed as an extension of Bousfied (2008) and Culpeper (2010)'s idea and framework.

In fact, there have been no studies, to the best of my knowledge, outlining clear syntactic, pragmatic and contextual criteria for rhetorical questions in terms of their (i) amplified face-threatening (impolite) functions, and (ii) mitigated face-threatening (polite) functions. Therefore, I will propose relevant parameters and elements in Sections 3.5 and 6.5 (based on previous discussions in this chapter).

Consideration of participant relationship

Previous studies have neglected the complex participant relationship in political discourse. For example, in her examination of RhQs, Ilie (1994; 1999) focused on the political speeches and talk shows, which have relatively simple participant relationship. Ilie (1994; 1999) have not elaborated on the genre where there are more complex role distributions among participants (i.e. the coexistence of both equal and

unequal relationships in televised debates, including moderators, candidates and their rival candidates, the studio audience and the general public).[18]

To address such a research gap, I will explore the participant relationship at (i) the communicative level and (ii) the thematic level. At the communicative level, I will look at the frequency and proportions of the different addressee types that candidates directed their rhetorical questions at. At the thematic level, I will interpret the theme from both the candidates' RhQs and the context, and identify whether it corresponds with "self" or "others" (e.g. opponents, studio audience, or the general public).

2.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the definitions and characteristics of rhetorical questions (RhQs) as identified in previous studies and pointed out the necessary extension of identifying RhQs from the syntactic and semantic levels to the pragmatic and contextual levels in Section 2.1. I also proposed my definition and distinctive features for identifying RhQs in political debates, aiming to compensate for some of the limitations in previous studies.

In Section 2.2, I provided an overview of the genre of political debates and outlined the three main factors influencing candidates' communication strategies in the political debates, namely, (i) candidates' standing in the polls, (ii) debate formats, and (iii) candidates' political and personal background.

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[18] Murphy (2014) also acknowledged that such a complexity (e.g. the situation where an MP is making reference to another politician in his or her questions) has implications for Brown and Levinson (1987)'s definition of face-threatening acts (2014: pp. 80), as he only considered the face-threats caused to the "direct recipient of the utterance" in his entire investigation (2014: pp. 80).

In Section 2.3, I reviewed the syntactic features of RhQs in English and Cantonese in terms of their question types and further explored how the linguistic resources of sentence structure and pronouns may influence candidates' construction of messages in political debates.

In Section 2.4, I reviewed the notion of politeness and impoliteness in political debates and the existing pragmatic descriptions of RhQs in political discourse. Discussions in Sections 2.2 to 2.4 lead to the following research questions in my examination of the U.S. and H.K. corpus, respectively:

RQ1&4: Is there a frequency difference between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?

RQ2&5: What syntactic patterns do 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

RQ3&6: What pragmatic features do 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

In the next chapter, I will describe the first selected corpus, which includes six U.S. Presidential election debates in 2012 and 2016, regarding the political background and different debate formats of each selected election. I will also explain the data collection, analytical procedures, and criteria of rhetorical questions in English and their face-threatening functions.

3. United States political situation, debates and corpus

This chapter starts with a description of the U.S. corpus of this study in Section 3.1, including the background of each selected election (e.g. political systems, political situations, the background of the candidates, formats for these debates, etc.).

Before moving on to the methodology of identifying and examining candidates' use of rhetorical questions, Section 3.2 describes the corpus and outlines the preparatory procedures, including the identification of sentences in Section 3.2.1 and the identification of sentence types in Section 3.2.2.

To examinine the influence of different election-specific factors in candidates' use of rhetorical questions, Section 3.3 outlines the criteria of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background in the U.S. corpus.

Section 3.4 outlines the criteria and procedures of classifying the interrogative sentences as rhetorical questions or non-rhetorical questions. Section 3.5 outlines the criteria and procedures of for distinguishing between face-threatening and non-face-threatening questions.

3.1 U.S. presidential election overview

This section begins with a brief description of the political system and the election process of the U.S. Presidential elections. It then moves on to the background of the election, in terms of the candidates and the significant election issues in the 2012 and 2016 U.S Presidential election. It then explains the format and other relevant information for the three televised debates during the election year.

3.1.1 Background

The U.S. Presidential election is held every four years, which is divided into four major electoral processes: (i) Primaries and Caucuses, and (ii) National Conventions, (iii) General Election, and (iv) Electoral College ("Presidential Election Process," 2018).[19] Apart from the incumbent President, who would mostly secure the nomination from his or her political party and thus enter directly into the race at the third process (i.e. the general election), other potential Presidential candidates had to go through all of the four processes. At the final stage of the election, the President is elected by Americans through the Electoral College, which requires 270 electoral votes for the winning candidate. See Figure 3.1 for a detailed illustration of the entire election process.

Figure 3.1: How to become President of the United States ("Presidential Election Process," 2018)

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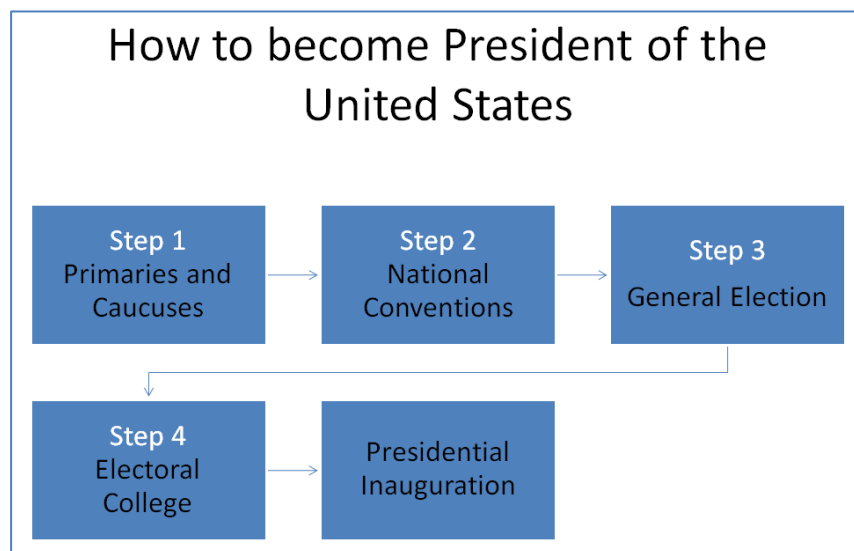
[19] In the first process 'Primary and Caucuses', candidates campaign to gain the support from their party members; in the second process 'National Conventions', a final presidential nominee representing each part is selected; in the third process 'General Election', voters in each state vote for a President and a Vice President; in the fourth process 'Electoral college', a winning candidate gets more than 270 out of the 538 electoral votes across the country.

US Presidential debates

The first televised presidential debate in the US was held in 1960, contested between the Massachusetts senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon. The debate was organized in the 'panel' format, where a moderator was directing the two candidates' speaking turns and facilitated them to answer the questions raised by a panel of journalists (e.g. Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Martel, 1983). The panel format generally consists of the opening and closing statements and the question and rebuttal sessions. It had been the dominant format applied to the Presidential debates in 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1988 (Dailey, Hinck & Hinck, 2008). From 1992 onwards, the panel format has been replaced by the following formats:

(i) 'town-hall' (with the distinctive feature of candidates engaging with the studio audience),

(ii) 'single moderator' (with candidates standing behind lecterns and with the moderator enforcing the rules and directing the distribution of talk among candidates), and

(iii) 'conversation' (with candidates sitting in front of a table and with the moderator enforcing the rules and directing the distribution of talk among candidates).

3.1.2 2012 election review

The 2012 U.S. presidential election was held on 6 November 2012, a race between the Democratic nominee, President Barack Obama, and the former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. As the incumbent President, Obama secured the Democratic nomination, while Romney went through the Republican Party's Presidential primaries and secured the Republican nomination on 29 May 2012 (e.g. Abraham, 2012).

One of the frequently-debated topics between Obama and Romney's policies lies in the role of government in the economic growth and tax plan. Specifically, in order to stimulate economic growth, Obama emphasized the need for involvement of and facilitation by the federal government, while Romney underscored the power of the private market to create jobs (Lauter, 2012). Romney and Obama also disagreed on the amount and the payers that the government should tax. While Obama proposed to increase the upper-income taxes and the tax level in general, Romney suggested a reduction in taxes for upper-income Americans but raised them for those who earned less than USD 20,000 a year (Lauter, 2012).

According to the Real Clear Politics (2012)'s poll average, before the first debate on October 3, it was shown that Obama led Romney by 3.3% (49.0% vs. 45.7%), but this lead was shifted to Romney, who led Obama by 0.1% before the second debate on October 16 (47.4% vs. 47.3%). The lead was shifted again before the third debate on October 22, with Obama leading by 0.2% (47.1 % vs. 46.9%). See Figure 3.2 for the standing of the two candidates in the polls throughout the election year. The election was eventually won by Obama as he defeated Romney in both the popular vote (51.1% vs. 47.2) and the electoral vote (332 vs. 206).

Figure 3.2: Poll average between Romney and Obama in the 2012 U.S. presidential election
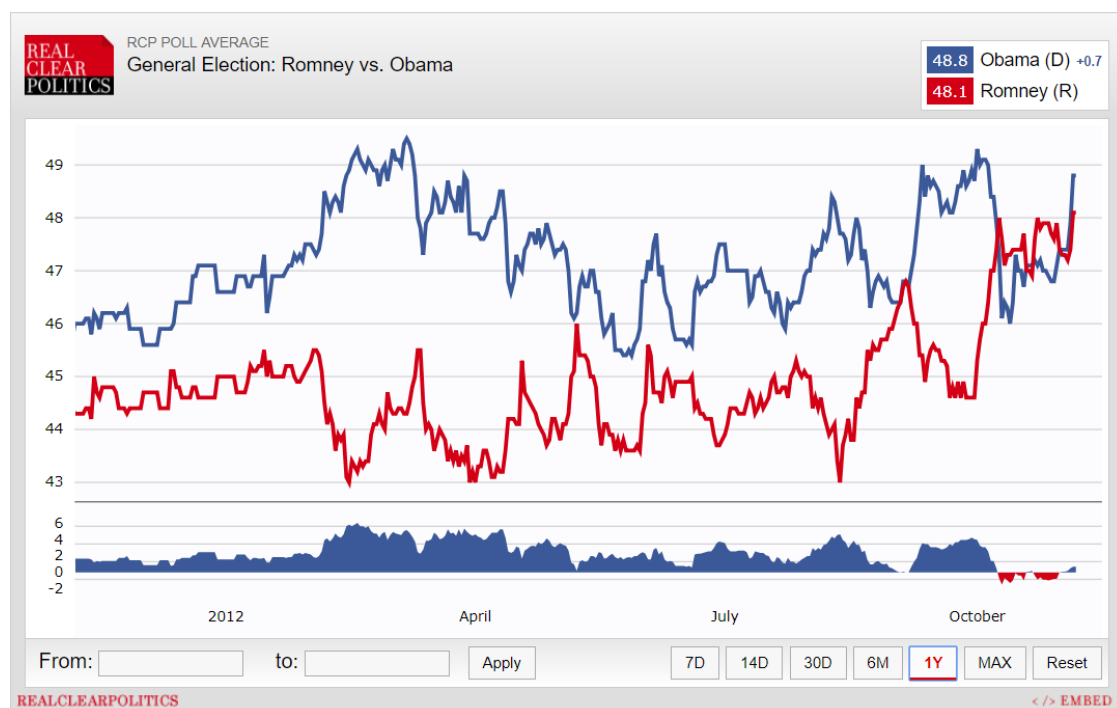
3.1.3 2012 election debate format

The first presidential debate took place at Colorado's University of Denver on October 3, 2012, with Barack Obama and Mitt Romney as the two candidates standing behind lecterns, moderated by Jim Lehrer of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) (Abraham, 2012).

The debate was split into six roughly 15-minute segments. After the moderator asked the first question for each segment, each candidate was given two minutes to respond, followed by an open discussion for the remainder of each segment, where candidates took a turn to speak (or addressed each other directly and simultaneously). At the end of the debate, a 2-minute closing statement for each of them. During the open discussion, the discussion flow (e.g. interruptions, direct exchanges between the candidates, follow up questions, etc.) could be directed by the moderator or co-facilitated by the two candidates. More specifically, moderators took into consideration the fair distribution of talk, candidates' clarity addressing the topics, or the normative structure of questioning and answering (e.g. accusations of the opponent avoiding a specific question). See Figure 3.3 for details of the rundown.

Figure 3.3: Rundown of the 1st presidential election debate in 2012

Segment 1: Economy and job creation

- 2-minute initial response for each candidate
- Open-discussions (direct exchanges between candidates allowed)

Segment 2: Economy and federal deficit

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 3: Entitlements and differences on social security

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 4: Health care and the affordable care act

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 5: Role and mission of the federal government

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 6: Governing in a presidential system and dealing with gridlock

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Concluding statements

- 2 minutes for each candidate

The second presidential debate took place on October 16, 2012, at New York's Hofstra University in a town hall setting, where the two candidates responded simultaneously to the questions raised by 11 uncommitted voters who were also attending the debate (Abraham, 2012). These questions related to the issues of job creation, tax rate reduction plans, inequalities between men and women in the workplace, the recent attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, energy independence, etc. (Presidential Campaigns and Elections, 2012). See Figure 3.4 for the themes of the questions in the debate. The debate was moderated by Candy Crowley of the Cable News Network (CNN).

Each candidate was given two minutes to respond to a question, followed by a two-minute rebuttal by the opponent, and an open discussion for the remainder of each question. During the open discussion, the discussion flow could be directed by the moderator or co-facilitated by the two candidates, in consideration of a number of factors, such as the fair distribution of talk, candidates' clarity addressing the topics, or the normative structure of questioning and answering.

Figure 3.4: Themes of questions in the 2nd presidential election debate in 2012

Questions for Romney

- Employment after university graduation
- Tax rate reduction plan
- Differences between Romney and former president George W. Bush
- Plans for immigrants without permanent residency
- Outsourcing and Romney's plans on securing jobs
- Biggest misperceptions about Romney

Questions for Obama

- Role of the Secretary of Energy in reducing gasoline prices
- Inequalities between men and women in the workplace, specifically women earning less than men for the same work
- Accomplishments to earn the questioner's vote
- Recent attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi
- Accomplishments in reducing assault weapons

The third presidential debate took place on October 22, 2012, at Florida's Lynn University, with the two candidates sitting in front of a table, and was moderated by Bob Schieffer of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) (Abraham, 2012). The debate was split into six roughly 15-minute segments. Rules and the overall discussion flow of the third presidential debate were similar to the first debate as

elaborated above. See Figure 3.5 for details of the rundown.

Figure 3.5: Rundown of the 3rd presidential election debate in 2012

Segment 1: Recent attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya

- 2-minute initial response for each candidate
- Open-discussions (direct exchanges between candidates allowed)

Segment 2: Iran's nuclear program

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 3: The Arab Spring, especially the Syrian civil war

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 4: Relations with Israel, relations with Pakistan

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 5: The War on Terror, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the size and scope of the U.S. military

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Segment 6: Relations and trade with China, as well as its rise

- (Format similar to Segment 1)

Concluding statements

- 2 minutes for each candidate

3.1.4 2016 election review

The 2016 U.S. presidential election was held on 8 November 2016. It was a race between the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton the former Secretary of State, and the businessman Donald Trump, the Republican nominee. During the 2016 Democratic National Convention, Clinton secured the Democratic nomination, by defeating her major opponent Bernie Sanders in 2016 June (Keith, 2016), while Trump also secured his Republican nomination in 2016 May, passing the threshold of 1,237 out of the 2,472 delegates required (Lee, 2016) during the 2016 Republican National Convention.

One of the frequently-debated topics between Clinton and Trump's policy lies in the economy and national borders. For the economy, Clinton proposed to raise the minimum wage while at the same time raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans, whereas Trump disagreed with an increased minimum wage or an increased tax on the wealthy. Clinton and Trump also disagreed on border policy. While Clinton advocated for looser borders and increased international trade, Trump called for strong borders (Dallas, 2016). In comparison with the 2012 election, the 2016 election was perceived as being dominated by scandals and mud-slinging (Dallas, 2016), for example, the controversy over Clinton's use of private email server over assigned departmental servers, Trump's inappropriate remarks on women, etc. were repeatedly raised by the candidates to attack each other during the election campaign.

Before the first debate on September 26, the Real Clear Politics (2016)'s poll average showed that Clinton led Trump by 2.4% (42.7% vs. 40.3%). The lead widened to 3.2% before the second debate on October 9 (44.1% vs. 40.9%), and 7.1% (46.2 % vs. 39.1%) before the third debate on October 19. See Figure 3.6 for the standing of the two candidates in the polls throughout the election year. The election was eventually won by Trump as he defeated Clinton in the electoral vote (304 vs.

227) although he received fewer popular votes than Clinton (46.1% vs. 48.2%).

Figure 3.6: Poll average between Trump and Hillary in the 2016 U.S. presidential election
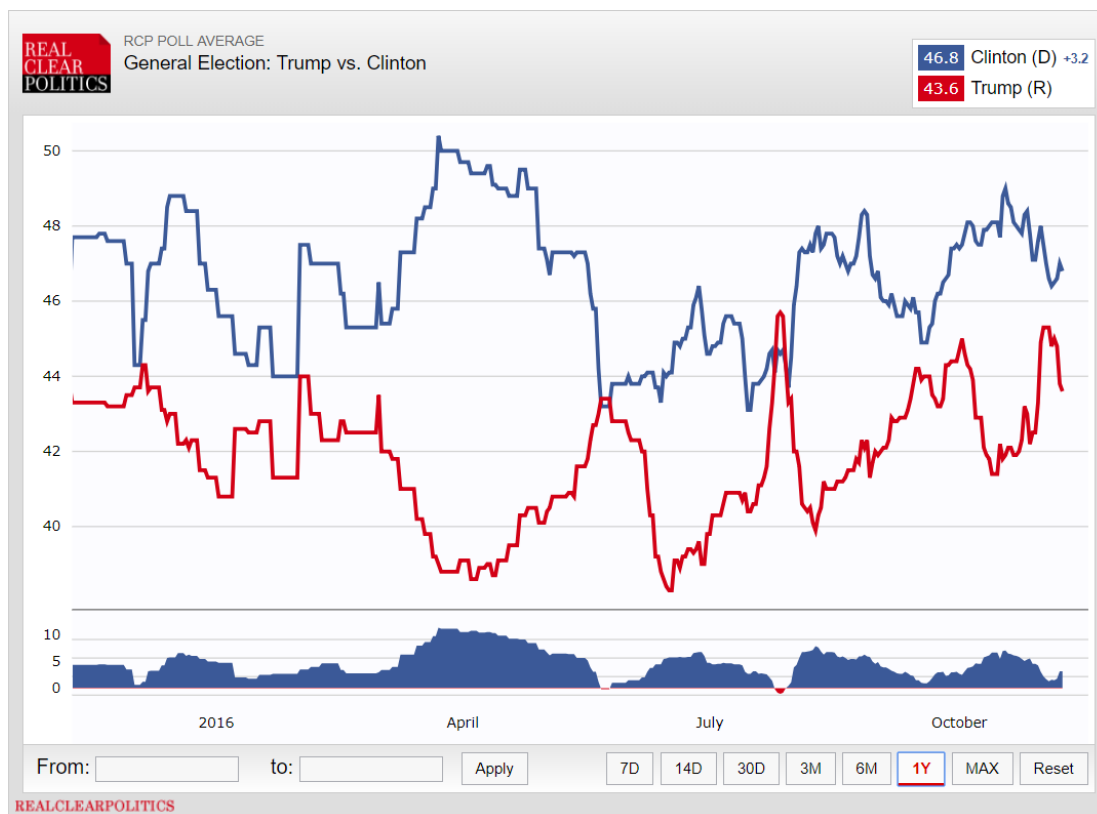
3.1.5 2016 election debate format

The first presidential debate took place on September 26, 2016, at New York's Hofstra University, with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as the two candidates standing behind lecterns, moderated by Lester Holt of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) (CPD, 2016). The debate was split into six roughly 15-minute segments, namely, (i) economy and job creation, (ii) trade, (iii) federal deficit, (iv) race relations and policing, (v) the war on terror, and (vi) the foreign policy of the United States, and each candidate's experience in the political and business realm (Abraham, 2016). Rules and the overall discussion flow of the debate were similar to the first debate in 2012 as elaborated above.

The second presidential debate took place on October 9, 2016, at St. Louis's Washington University in a town hall setting, where the two candidates responded to: (i) for the first half, the questions raised by 8 uncommitted voters, who were also attending the debate, and (ii) for the second half, the questions chosen by the moderators from the website of the bipartisan Open Debate Coalition (CPD, 2016). These questions concerned the issues of the appropriateness of the candidate's behaviours in the 1st presidential debate, tax provisions, Supreme Court justice, energy policy, etc. The debate was moderated by Anderson Cooper of the CNN and Martha Raddatz of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) (CPD, 2016).

Each candidate was given two minutes to respond to a question, followed by a two-minute rebuttal by the opponent, and an open discussion for the remainder of each question. During the open discussion, the discussion flow could be directed by the moderators or co-facilitated by the two candidates, in consideration of a number of factors, such as the fair distribution of talk, candidates' clarity addressing the topics, or the normative structure of questioning and answering. See Figure 3.7 for details of the rundown.

Figure 3.7: Rundown of the 2nd presidential election debate in 2016

Q& A session 1
- 8 questions were asked by 8 uncommitted voters
- 2-minute response for a candidate
- 2-minute rebuttal for the other candidate
- Open discussion between the two candidates

Q&A session 2
- Questions were randomly drawn by the moderators (initially submitted by the general public)
- (Format similar to Q&A session 1)
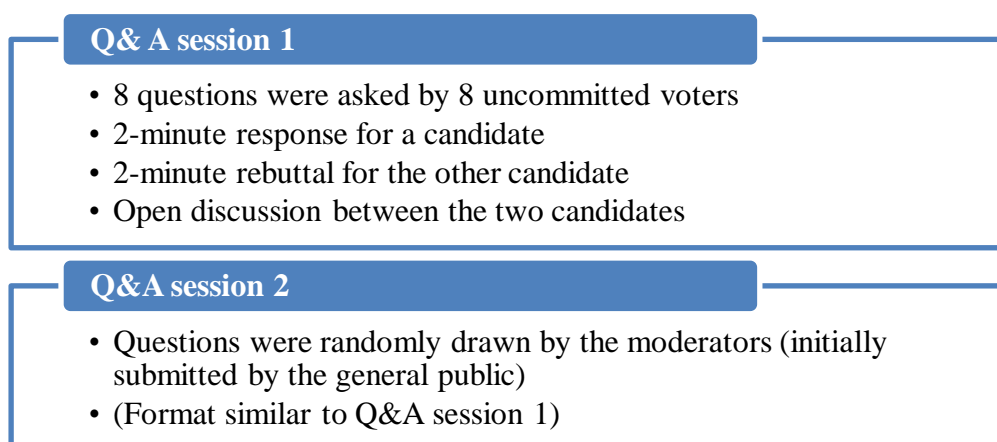
The third presidential debate took place on October 19, 2016, at Nevada's UNLV campus, with the two candidates standing behind lecterns, moderated by Chris Wallace of Fox News Channel's Fox News Sunday. The debate was split into six roughly 15-minute segments, namely, (i) debt and entitlements, (ii) immigration, (iii) economy, (iv) Supreme Court, (v) foreign hot spots, and (vi) fitness to be the President (Abraham, 2016). Rules and the overall discussion flow of the first and third presidential debate in 2016 were similar to the third debate in 2012 as elaborated above.

3.2 Corpus description and analytical procedures

This section describes the corpus, procedures, criteria and results of identifying

sentences and sentences types in the U.S. corpus, which functions as the preparatory

procedures that needed to be completed prior to identifying rhetorical questions and

face-threatening functions in our data which is discussed in Section 3.4 and Section

3.5.

3.2.1 Sentence identification in the U.S. corpus

Transcripts of the U.S. corpus were retrieved from the American Presidency Project

(http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/), which is a formal document archive collection

related to the study of the presidency, comprising the political speeches and televised

debates delivered by US presidential candidates from the years of 2012 and 2016 (i.e.

Barack Obama vs. Mitt Romney in 2012; Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton in 2016)

as the dataset of this study.

The transcript portion for each speaker was extracted and put into Wordsmith 6.0,

which is a concordance software that can help separate sentences based on sentence

delimiters or the criteria set by the user. The identification of sentences was initially

conducted by Wordsmith 6.0 and manually checked and modified, which includes the

four delimiters that separate full sentences, including the period '.', exclamation mark

'!', question mark '?', and semi-colon ';', as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Four punctuation marks as sentence delimiters in the U.S. corpus

Punctuation mark	Examples
1. Period '.'	Romney: "My priority is jobs."
	(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)
2. Exclamation mark '!'	Trump: "You're the puppet!"
	(3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)
3. Question mark '?'	Romney: "How did we do that?"
	(3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)
4. Semi-colon ';'	Obama: "Governor Romney doesn't have a five-point plan;"
	(2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Apart from these four punctuation marks that were counted as sentence delimiters, there are three different situations when the ellipsis "……" and the em-dash "—" were marked in the transcripts.[20]

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[20] In the U.S. corpus, there were 32 ellipses and dashes counted as sentence delimiters respectively.

In the first situation, the ellipses "……" and em-dashes "——" were not counted as sentence delimiters, as they occur within a speaker's utterance, signalling the situation of interruptions, self-repairs, or pauses, and the utterance was ended with one of the four grammatical sentence delimiters '.', '!', '?', or ';', as can be seen in Example (1) and (2).

Example (1) Clinton: "We cannot let those who would try to destabilize the world to interfere with American interests and security..."

Moderator: "Your two minutes is..."

Clinton: "... to be given any opportunities at all."

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Example (2) Obama: "Well, I think—let's talk about taxes because I think it's instructive."

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In the second situation, the ellipses "……" and em-dashes "——" were also not counted as sentence delimiters, as they occur at the end of a speaker's utterance, signalling an interruption or pause, yet the speaker did not finish delivering his or her idea in a manner which the others can clearly understand. See Example (3).

Example (3) Romney: That was something I concurred with.

Obama: The President. Governor——

Romney: Gov. Romney. That was your posture.

(3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In the third situation, the ellipses "……" and em-dashes "—" were counted as sentence delimiters, as they represent a full sentence in the context, by meeting both of the following conditions:

(i) The ellipsis '……' or the em-dash "—" occurs at the end of a speaker's utterance.

(ii) The speaker finished delivering his or her idea in a manner which the others can clearly understand, yet the utterance was ended immediately due to interruptions. See Example (4) and (5).

Example (4)	Clinton:	"In fact, I have written a book about it. It's called 'Stronger Together.' You can pick it up tomorrow at a bookstore..."
	Trump:	"That's about all you've..."
	(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)	

Example (5)	Romney:	"That, in my view, is making our future less certain and less secure— —"
	Obama:	"Bob, I just need to comment on this."
	(3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)	

In what follows, the number of sentences, speaking time and the normalized ratio of sentences per minute of each candidate in the U.S. corpus will be reported.

Results of the U.S. corpus

In the U.S. corpus, Obama spoke longer than Romney in each of the three 2012 presidential debates, ranging from a difference of 35 seconds to 3 minutes and 38 seconds. This totaled a greater speaking time of 7 minutes and 13 seconds. However, according to the normalized ratio of sentences per minute, Romney delivered more sentences in each of the three debates, ranging from 3.0 to 5.28 more sentences per minute.

In comparison to the 2012 presidential debates, Clinton and Trump shared a relatively equal amount of total speaking time (122 minutes and 41 seconds vs. 120 minutes and 54 seconds) in the three 2016 debates. Trump spoke longer than Clinton in the first and second debate, 3 minutes and 13 seconds, and 1 minute and 5 seconds, respectively, while Clinton spoke 6 minutes and 5 seconds longer in the third debate. Similar to Romney in 2012, Trump was the candidate who was behind in the polls, and he also delivered more sentences in each 2016 presidential debate, ranging from 5.56 to 7.36 sentences per minute more than Clinton.[21]

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[21] The speaking time of each candidate in the six debates were reported by CNN Debate Clock (2012) and The Hill (2016).

Table 3.2 Number of sentences per minute in U.S. corpus

U.S. corpus	Candidate	No. of Sentences	Speaking time	Normalized ratio (sentences per minute)
2012 US 1st debate	Obama	390	42m50s	9.11
	Romney	552	38m22s	14.39
2012 US 2nd debate	Obama	442	44m04s	10.03
	Romney	532	40m50s	13.03
2012 US 3rd debate	Obama	371	41m42s	8.90
	Romney	534	41m07s	12.99
2016 US 1st debate	Clinton	409	41m50s	9.78
	Trump	691	45m03s	15.34
2016 US 2nd debate	Clinton	334	39m05s	8.55
	Trump	639	40m10s	15.91
2016 US 3rd debate	Clinton	396	41m46s	9.48
	Trump	597	35m41s	16.73

3.2.2 Identification of sentence types in the U.S. corpus

Identification of the four sentence types, namely (i) declarative, (ii) imperative, (iii) interrogative, and (iv) exclamative, was done based on punctuation, sentence structure, and the contextual meanings. The following paragraphs elaborate on the definition, criteria and examples from the corpus for each sentence type.

Declarative sentences

The declarative sentence has been associated with the characteristic use as a statement (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, pp. 853), generally perceived as having no distinctive syntactic or pragmatic markers specifying the other three types of sentences. In our corpus, declarative sentences were identified when the period '.' or ellipsis '…' / em-dash '—' occurred at the end of a complete sentence. See Example (1) and (2).

Example (1)   Clinton: "We also have to make the economy fairer."

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Example (2)   Clinton   And you wouldn't pay what the man needed to be paid, what he was charging you to do...

Trump   Maybe he didn't do a good job and I was unsatisfied with his work...

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Exclamative sentences

The syntactically exclamative sentence contains a wh-word and an exclamation mark '!' at the end of a sentence, e.g. "How kind you are!" (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, pp. 1734). It can also be used to express "strong feelings, strong emphasis or emotion" (Arévalo & Gómez, 2013 pp. 744) without necessarily including the wh-word. Exclamative sentences in our data were identified based on the inclusion of an exclamation mark and the pragmatic use of adding emotional colouring to the statement, as shown in Example (3).

Example (3)   Trump: "You're the puppet!"

(3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Imperative sentences

Imperative sentences are used to express commands, orders, requests, or any other expressions aiming at getting the listeners to action (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, pp. 29). In imperative sentences, a second-person subject is omissible, and the verb is in the plain form, as shown in Example (4). Imperative sentences can also be realized as verbal negatives, with the contracted form *don't* (do + not) (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, pp. 857),[22] as shown in Example (5).

Example (4)   Romney: "Look at the evidence of the last 4 years."

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

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[22] The utterance was counted as an imperative sentence once an imperative clause was identified, even within longer sentence structures.

Example (5)   Obama: "And that—don't take my word for it."

(2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Interrogative sentences

Interrogative sentences are marked with a question mark at the end, and occur in the

form of either a closed interrogative or an open interrogative sentence, regarding their

corresponding answers. More specifically, while closed interrogatives elicit a closed

set of answers, e.g. "yes" and "no", open interrogatives may have any number of

possible answers (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, pp. 853, 856).

Closed interrogatives have a subject-auxiliary inversion and are always tensed,

as shown in Example (6).

Example (6)   Romney: "Mr. President, have you looked at your pension?"

(2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Open interrogatives contain one interrogative marker, which include *what, which,*

how, who, whom, whose, when, etc. They can be fronted, which triggers

subject-auxiliary inversion, as shown in Example (7).

Example (7)   Clinton: "Who does he owe money to?"

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

As shown in Example (8), open interrogatives can also be non-fronted or be reduced to just an interrogative phrase (see Example 9).

Example (8) Trump: "She said who is going to answer the call at 3 o'clock in the morning?"

(2st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Example (9) Trump: "Lester, how much?"

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

In this subsection, I have elaborated on the definition, criteria and examples from the U.S. corpus for each sentence type. In what follows, I will report on the frequency distribution of the four sentence types.

Results of the U.S. corpus

As shown in Table 3.3, *declarative* is the most frequent sentence type for every candidate in each debate. *Interrogative* is the second most frequent sentence type, except for the first and third debates in 2012, where the candidates used more *imperative* than interrogative sentences. For *exclamative* sentences, there was one usage by Trump in the third debate in 2016.

Table 3.3: Frequency distribution of sentence types in the U.S. corpus

Sentence type Candidate	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Exclamative
2012 US 1st debate — Obama	357 (92%)	15 (4%)	17 (4%)	0 (0%)
2012 US 1st debate — Romney	510 (93%)	17 (3%)	23 (4%)	0 (0%)
2012 US 2nd debate — Obama	415 (95%)	11 (4%)	10 (2%)	0 (0%)
2012 US 2nd debate — Romney	478 (91%)	39 (7%)	11 (2%)	0 (0%)
2012 US 3rd debate — Obama	359 (97%)	0 (0%)	10 (3%)	0 (0%)
2012 US 3rd debate — Romney	501 (96%)	12 (2%)	7 (1%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 1st debate — Clinton	372 (93%)	23 (6%)	6 (1%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 1st debate — Trump	625 (92%)	38 (6%)	15 (2%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 2nd debate — Clinton	313 (95%)	8 (2%)	8 (2%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 2nd debate — Trump	578 (92%)	39 (6%)	14 (2%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 3rd debate — Clinton	380 (97%)	9 (2%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)
2016 US 3rd debate — Trump	548 (92%)	25 (4%)	19 (3%)	1 (0%)

In Section 3.2, I outlined the preparatory procedures, including the identification of sentences and sentence types and reported on the frequency distribution of the four sentence types.

3.3 Criteria of election-specific factors

For the purpose of examining the influence of different election-specific factors in candidates' use of rhetorical questions, this section outlines the criteria of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background in the U.S. corpus.

In addition, this section explores the overall contextual configuration, in terms of the influence of the format variation and contextual cues on candidates' use of RhQs in the electoral debates.

(1) Candidates' standing in the polls

For each of the six presidential debates in 2012 and 2016, each candidate's standing in the polls (one day before each debate) was compared to the average poll by Real Clear Politics, which was calculated based on polling data from independent, pro-Republican and pro-Democratic media.[23]

Table 3.4: Election candidates' standing in the polls in the U.S. corpus

Election debate	RCP's poll average (before each debate)	Leading candidate
1st U.S. (2012)	Obama: 49.0%; Romney: 45.7%	Obama
2nd U.S. (2012)	Obama: 47.3%; Romney: 47.4%	Romney
3rd U.S. (2012)	Obama: 47.1 %; Romney: 46.9%	Obama
1st U.S. (2016)	Clinton: 42.7%; Trump: 40.3%	Clinton
2nd U.S. (2016)	Clinton: 44.1%; Trump: 40.9%	Clinton
3rd U.S. (2016)	Clinton: 46.2%; Trump: 39.1%	Clinton

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[23] Source of RCP's average poll (2012): Politico/GWU/Battleground, Rasmussen Reports, IBD/TIPP, CNN/Opinion Research, Gallup, ABC News/Wash Post, Monmouth/SurveyUSA/Braun, NBC News/Wall St. Jrnl, Pew Research;
RCP's average poll (2016): Bloomberg, IBD/TIPP Tracking, Economist/YouGov, ABC/Wash Post Tracking, FOX News, Monmouth, Gravis, NBC News/Wall St. Jrnl, Reuters/Ipsos, Rasmussen Reports, CBS News.

(2) Debate format

The criterion distinguishing different debate formats is the degree of interactivity, which refers to the space in each debate that allows candidates to interact with and ask questions to each other (or the studio audience).

In the six debates in our U.S. corpus, there is no clear rule prohibiting candidates from asking questions or responding to each other, like the one in the second two Hong Kong chief executive debates in 2012 and 2017. The most notable difference lies in whether the studio audience was involved face-to-face in asking their questions to the candidates, as shown in Table 3.5. Therefore, the two presidential debates with the town-hall format, which included interactive sessions with the studio audience, were defined as generating greater audience involvement compared to other debates in this study.

Table 3.5: Interactivity of different debate formats in the U.S. corpus

Election debate & format	Follow-up questions	Opponent rebuttal	Involvement of the studio audience
1st U.S. (2012) Single-moderator	Yes	Yes	No
2nd U.S. (2012) Town Hall	Yes	Yes	Yes
3rd U.S. (2012) Single-moderator	Yes	Yes	No
1st U.S. (2016) Single-moderator	Yes	Yes	No
2nd U.S. (2016) Town Hall	Yes	Yes	Yes
3rd U.S. (2016) Single-moderator	Yes	Yes	No

(3) Candidates' personal and political background

When compared to *candidates' standing in the polls* and *debate formats*, the following factors regarding candidate's personal and political background may be less quantifiable; however, they are still worth-considering given their potential influence in candidates' communication strategies. For example, in the U.S. presidential debates, I will consider candidates' political affiliations, recent positions, and their status as incumbents or challengers.

Table 3.6: Candidates' personal and political background in the U.S. corpus

Election year	Candidate	Former and current position & political affiliations
U.S. (2012)	Obama	Incumbent, Democratic Party
	Romney	Challenger (former governor of Massachusetts), Republican Party
U.S. (2016)	Trump	Former businessman, Republican Party
	Clinton	Former Secretary of State, Democratic Party

Overall contextual configuration

At the contextual level, I will also take a closer look at the format variation in each election debate, in terms of how candidates ask rhetorical questions in different phases (e.g. opening statements, closing statements, open-discussion, question-and-answer session).

In addition, I will capture relevant contextual cues which may be less generalizable (e.g. more determined by the individual candidate's speaking style) yet worth-investigating, as they also contribute to our understanding of candidates' use of rhetorical questions. These include: (i) specific topic(s) that candidates use RhQs to address, (ii) position of RhQs in candidates' speaking turn (e.g. initial, intermediate, end), (iii) candidates' use of RhQs in isolation vs. in sequence, and (iv) political commentaries on candidates and the election debates (e.g. audience's perception of candidate's debate performance), etc.

In this section, I outlined the criteria of the three election-specific factors, namely, *candidates' standing in the polls*, *debate formats*, and *candidates' personal and political background*. I also explored the overall contextual configuration, which may also influence candidates' use of rhetorical questions.

3.4 Criteria for identifying rhetorical questions and non-rhetorical questions

In this section, I will describe the criteria and procedures for classifying the interrogative sentences as *rhetorical questions* or *non-rhetorical questions* in our corpus.

As outlined in Ch.2 Previous studies, the working definition of RhQs is that the addresser has no intent to elicit a genuine answer from the addressee(s), who are physically present or absent, but to influence their recognition regarding the point that the addresser attempts to make during the election debate.

Along with this definition, there are four variations in terms of candidates' goals, features and functions:

(i)   the addresser indicates that he or she already knows the answer to the RhQ, and is making an assertion through the RhQ instead of seeking information;

(ii) the addresser did not indicate whether he or she knows the answer to the RhQ, but is signalling their commitment to the implicit answer of the RhQ;

(iii) the speaker uses RhQs as a mean to facilitate his or her argument or current line of talk;

(iv) the speaker uses RhQs to arouse the audience's attention to a point he or she is making.

The interpretation of whether a question was asked rhetorically can be determined by different analytical levels (i.e. from syntactic to pragmatic and contextual aspects). Below shows the multilayers examined in each interrogative sentence, which helps to decide if it is a rhetorical question or not in the corpus.

(Smallest analytical unit)   (Largest analytical unit)

| Question | Question & answer | Question & co-text | Question & speaking turn | Question & inter-text |
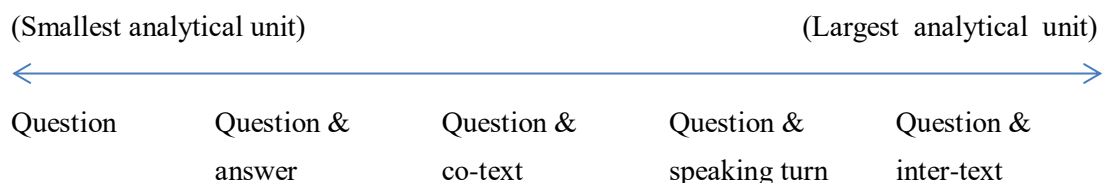
3.4.1 Rhetorical questions

In this subsection, I will use examples from the two corpora regarding each analytical aspect.

Question

The question was interpreted as rhetorical, if a complete assertion was embedded in the question, and can be derived clearly on its own without referring to its co-text. As can be seen in the following examples, such types of rhetorical questions may occur in the coercive form of questions (e.g. tag questions), which follows a statement with a complete meaning; or in the less coercive form of questions (e.g. *wh*-questions), with the candidate's use of rhetorical markers to emphasize his or her point of view.

Analytical unit	Examples
(1) Question	**(1a) Rhetorical questions with a complete assertion**
	E.g. "That was a great pivot off the fact that she wants open borders, OK? (Trump, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)
	(1b) Rhetorical questions with an assertion, which can be derived from rhetorical markers
	E.g. "Why the hell didn't you do it over the last 15, 20 years?" (Trump, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Question & response

The identification of rhetorical questions may have to go beyond the question itself and also consider the response given by the speaker. The speaker can provide a direct answer to the question, as shown in examples from (2a) below, or an indirect answer to the question, as can be seen in (2b).

Apart from examining the question from the addresser's perspective, the addressee's response also gives us some indication if the question was rhetorical. More specifically, the opponents may express disagreement (2c) or evasive response (2d), instead of answering the rhetorical question.

Analytical unit	Examples
(2) Question & response	**(2a) Rhetorical questions followed by the speaker's direct answer(s)** E.g. "You look at the record of the last four years and say, is Iran closer to a bomb? Yes. Is the Middle East in tumult? Yes." (Romney, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012) **(2b) Rhetorical questions followed by the speaker's indirect answer(s)** E.g. "Are we going to lead the world with strength and in accordance with our values? That's what I intend to do." (Clinton, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016) **(2c) Rhetorical questions followed by the addressee's disagreement** E. Trump: "Oh, you didn't delete them?" g. […] Clinton: "It was personal e-mails, not official." (Trump and Clinton, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016) **(2d) Rhetorical questions followed by the addressee's evasive response** E.g. Trump: "Secretary, is it President Obama's fault?" Clinton: "There are different views about what's good for country, our economy, and our leadership in the world. A

> it's important to look at what we need to do to get the econc
> again."
>
> (Trump, 1ˢᵗ U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Question & co-text

The co-text analysis allows us to determine whether a question was asked rhetorically, in the situation where the speaker did not directly provide an answer (or simply no response given by the speaker) to the question. The decision was made by examining the logical relation between the question and its co-text. In (3a), the answer can be derived from the co-text, as the only possibility to the question.

In addition, the rhetorical question may function as argumentative answers to the preceding question(s), as shown in examples from (3b).

Analytical unit	Examples
(3) Question & co-text	**(3a) Speakers signaling their commitment to their preferred implicit answer of the rhetorical questions**
	E.g. "Canada's tax rate on companies is now 15 percent. Ours is 35 percent. So if you're starting a business, where would you rather start it? We have to be competitive if we're going to create more jobs here." (Romney, 2ⁿᵈ U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)
	(3b) Rhetorical questions functioning as argumentative answers
	E.g. "Why do they have to say we're going to be attacking Mosul within the next four to six weeks, which is what they're saying? How stupid is our country?" (Trump, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Question & inter-text

In some cases, the answer (or the assertion) to the question cannot be derived from the question or its co-text, as the speaker did not elaborate on the question or indicate his or her commitment to the preferred implicit answer. Instead, the speaker assumes that the answer to the question is known by the listeners. An additional check on the topics raised by candidates in their rhetorical questions helps us to determine whether the question was asked rhetorically (e.g. to accuse the opponents of making excuses).

Analytical unit	Examples
(4) Question & inter-text	E.g. "You said in the Rose Garden the day after the attack it was an act of terror?" (Romney, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

3.4.2 Non-rhetorical questions

There are instances of other question types not being counted as rhetorical, yet were compared to rhetorical questions in our corpus, in terms of their frequency distribution and functions. The use of these non-rhetorical questions may have certain pragmatic functions apart from information-seeking (e.g. permission-seeking), yet they did not indicate any assertive meaning of suggesting which candidate is better, as compared to rhetorical questions. In the following section, I will outline several types of non-rhetorical questions identified in the corpus.

Information-seeking questions

The candidate aimed at getting the information from the addressee, for example, from the studio audience during the question-and-answer session.

E.g. Romney: "I'm sorry, what's your name?" (2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Procedural questions

The candidate confirmed with the moderator whether they acted appropriately

according to the debate rules, e.g. not getting off-topic, getting permission to continue

speaking, etc.

E.g. Obama: "Is that a — is that a separate topic? I'm sorry."

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Clarification questions

The candidate quoted a question asked by the others, to facilitate his or her utterances.

E.g. Clinton: The question you asked is, what do we do here in the United States?

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Questions concerning the speaking time

Candidates indicate their concern over the fair distribution of speaking time among

themselves.

E.g. Romney: "Jim, the president began this segment, so I think I get the last word, so

I'm going to take it. All right?"

(1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In this section, I described the criteria and procedures for classifying

interrogative sentences as *rhetorical questions* or *non-rhetorical questions* in our

corpus, by examining the smallest analytical unit (i.e. question) to the largest (i.e.

question and inter-text) at the syntactic, pragmatic, and contextual levels.

To guarantee the reliability, an inter-rater agreement was calculated following

Wimmer and Dominick (2013: pp. 175) with the analyst comparing his second coding

with the first coding after six months. More specifically, for the US corpus, 147

instances (30% of the data) were re-coded, and Cohen's Kappa showed that the

reliability for RhQ identification was substantial: (k=0.637). For the HK corpus, 75 instances (30% of the data) were re-coded, and Cohen's Kappa showed that the reliability for RhQ identification was substantial: (k=0.778).[24]

3.5 Criteria for identifying face-threatening and non-face-threatening functions

The distinction between *face-threatening* and *non-face-threatening* questions in this study is whether or not a candidate signalled to the audience that he or she is the better candidate, through positive self-representation and negative others-representation for the opponents. More specifically, such a message could be measured by considering the following three elements: (i) pronouns and referent terms, (ii) evaluative markers or descriptions, (iii) presuppositions against the opponents, at the analytical levels of the question, and the question and co-text.

Pronouns and referent terms used in the questions reveals to us: (i) the target of being attacked (e.g. opponents), acclaimed (e.g. self), or persuaded (e.g. audience), (ii) evaluative markers or descriptions, which inform us of whether a candidate intended to deliver a positive, neutral or negative message, and (iii) an indication of disagreement between the opponents, which can cause face threats by rejecting the

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[24] The relatively low Cohen's Kappa may be due to the following two reasons:
(i) over-generalization of 'unanswerable' questions as RhQs: as commented by Prof. Hinck, even if a question was initially framed by the candidate(s) as an 'unanswerable' one, it is debatable whether it should still be considered an RhQ if the addressee (e.g. the opponents) can answer it literally;
(ii) over-interpretation of a question's influence on the opponents or the audience: based on the working definition of this study, an RhQ enables the addresser to influence the opponents' or the audience's recognition (e.g. urging the opponents to answer, persuading the audience, etc.); however, the relevance with the opponents or the audience in some of the questions asked by the candidates is debatable. For example, Romney's question "Can you help us?" below was considered an RhQ (1st U.S. Presidential election debate, October 3, 2012), but its negative connotation against Obama's administration is relatively implicit compared to some other RhQs in this study:

> "I was in Dayton, Ohio, and a woman grabbed my arm and she said, I've been out of work since May […] and we've now just lost our home. *Can you help us?* And the answer is, yes, we can help, but it's going to take a different path"

others' claims and ideas. The identification of face-threatening and

non-face-threatening questions will be outlined in Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.

3.5.1 Face-threatening rhetorical questions

Candidates can directly assert positive self-representations or negative

others-representations into their rhetorical questions. For example, in (1a), Trump

used the first-person singular "I", and the positive evaluative descriptions "have a

much better temperament" to praise himself. For negative others-representations, in

(1b), Trump asserted into his RhQs several presupposed accusations of Clinton using

similar interrogative framing of "why didn't you" and "why don't you".

Candidates can also assert positive self-representations or negative

others-representations into the co-text. For example, in (1c), in spite of lacking the

clear positive or negative evaluation markers in the RhQ, Obama referred to the past

accomplishments by him and his administration in the co-text "We stepped in…". For

negative others-representations, in (1d), despite using a simple RhQ "Why?", Romney

answered the question by criticizing the outcome of Obama's policies.

Examples
(1a) Positive self-representation in the question

E.g. "I also have a much better temperament than she has, you know?"
(Trump, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

(1b) Negative others-representation in the question

E.g. "Why didn't you change it when you were a senator?"
(Trump, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

E.g. "So I'd like to ask you right now, why don't you give back the money that you've taken from certain countries that treat certain groups of people so horribly?"
(Trump, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

(1c) Positive self-representation in the co-text

E.g. "So what did we do? We stepped in and had the toughest reforms on Wall Street since the 1930s. We said you've got—banks, you've got to raise your capital requirements."
(Obama, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

(1d) Negative others-representation in the co-text

"E.g. […] gas production is down 9 percent. Why? Because the president cut in half the number of licenses and permits for drilling on federal lands and in federal waters."
(Romney, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

3.5.2 Non-face-threatening rhetorical questions

Non-face-threatening rhetorical questions often lack clear evaluative markers or indication of disagreements with the others (both in the RhQ and co-text) but are often used in facilitating candidates' current line of talk or arousing attention from the audience. For example, in (2a) Romney used the RhQ "So how do we deal with it?" as an introduction to his proposed policies in tackling a deficit; Judge Woo pointed out the solution to dealing with the population-ageing problem in response to his own RhQ. In (2b), Obama did not indicate any positive or negative evaluations for self or opponents in the question or the co-text, but instead used the RhQ to arouse the audience's attention when elaborating his policy.

Examples

(2a) Rhetorical questions facilitating a current line of talk
E.g. "So how do we deal with it? Well, mathematically, there are three ways
that you can cut a deficit."
(Romney, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

(2b) Rhetorical questions arousing attention from the audience
E.g. "[…] maybe they looked like they might be undocumented workers and
check their papers. And you know what? If my daughter or yours looks to
somebody like they're not a citizen, I don't want to empower somebody like
that."
(Obama, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In this section, I described the criteria and procedures used for classifying rhetorical questions as *face-threatening* or *non-face-threatening* functions in our corpus, by examining if candidates project positive self-representation or negative others-representation, using (i) pronouns and referent terms, (ii) evaluative markers or descriptions, (iii) indications of disagreement with the opponents at the analytical levels of question, and question and co-text.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I described the U.S. corpus regarding its political background and different debate formats of each selected election in Section 3.1. I also described the criteria and results of identifying sentences and sentences types in the corpus in Section 3.2. In Section 3.3, I outlined the criteria and the overall contextual configuration of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background. In Section 3.4, I outlined the criteria and procedures used for classifying the interrogative sentences as rhetorical questions or non-rhetorical questions. In Section 3.5, I outlined the criteria and procedures used for distinguishing between face-threatening and non-face-threatening questions at the syntactic, pragmatic and contextual levels.

4. U.S. politicians' use of RhQs

This chapter aims to address the first overarching research question "How do U.S. politicians use rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?" with an added focus of comparing between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates through the following three sub-questions:

RQ1: Is there a frequency difference between U.S. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of RhQs in political debates?"

RQ2: What syntactic patterns do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

RQ3: What pragmatic features do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

To answer RQ1, I will compare the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'prime' candidates (i.e. Romney in 2012 and Trump in 2016) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016) in the presidential debates in Section 4.1. To further examine if there is a significant difference, I will adopt a log-likelihood test.

In Section 4.2, I will address RQ2 by examining candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) sentence structure, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type, with an added log-likelihood analysis to test the significance. I will also examine the syntactic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates.

In Section 4.3, I will answer RQ3 by examining candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type and (ii) face threats.

4.1 Frequency difference in RhQs between U.S. prime & non-prime candidates

As an overview of the RhQ distribution among presidential candidates, Table 4.1

shows that in the six 2012 and 2016 U.S. presidential debates, there were 215

rhetorical questions. Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, asked more

rhetorical questions (3.71 and 5.14 RhQs per hundred sentences) than the two 'prime'

candidates, Obama and Clinton (1.66 and 3.16 RhQs per hundred sentences).

According to the log-likelihood test, in both 2012 and 2016 U.S. debates, 'non-prime'

candidates were more likely to ask RhQs than 'prime' candidates (Yr. 2012:

LL=10.83, p<0.01; Yr. 2016: LL=6.67, p<0.01).

Table 4.1: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the U.S. debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio
2012 US debate	Obama	1203	20	1.66
	Romney	1618	60	3.71
2016 US debate	Clinton	1139	36	3.16
	Trump	1927	99	5.14
Total		5887	215	N/A

In the following subsections, I will examine how the frequency of 'prime' and

'non-prime' candidates' RhQs varied across different debate formats.

4.1.1 U.S. presidential debates in 2012

As shown in Table 4.2, despite asking slightly fewer rhetorical questions than his opponent in the first debate (2.90 vs. 3.85 RQs per hundred sentences), Romney the 'non-prime' candidate, asked more RQs than Obama the 'prime' candidate in the second and third debates (5.83 vs. 1.13 RQs per hundred sentences, and 2.43 vs. 0 RQs per hundred sentences, respectively).

Table 4.2: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the 2012 debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio
2012 US 1st debate	Obama	390	15	3.85
	Romney	552	16	2.90
2012 US 2nd debate	Obama	442	5	1.13
	Romney	532	31	5.83
2012 US 3rd debate	Obama	371	0	0.00
	Romney	534	13	2.43

Considering the debate format, a notable change in the number of RhQs can be found in the 2012 second presidential debate (i.e. town-hall setting). More specifically, in the second debate, Romney asked more rhetorical questions (5.83 RhQs per hundred sentences) compared to his use of RhQs in the first and third debates. In comparison, Obama decreased his number of rhetorical questions from 3.85 RhQs in the first debate to 1.13 RhQs per hundred sentences in the second debate, and he further decreased the number to 0 RhQs in the third debate.

4.1.2 U.S. presidential debates in 2016

In the 2016 presidential election, Trump, the 'non-prime' candidate, asked more rhetorical questions than Clinton the 'prime' candidate in all three of the presidential debates (5.64 vs. 4.89 RQs per hundred sentences, 5.63 vs. 2.10 RhQs per hundred sentences, and 4.02 vs. 2.27 RhQs per hundred sentences, respectively).

Table 4.3: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the 2016 debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio	No. of non-RhQs	Normalized ratio
2016 US 1st debate	Clinton	409	20	4.89	2	0.49
	Trump	691	39	5.64	0	0.00
2016 US 2nd debate	Clinton	334	7	2.10	1	0.30
	Trump	639	36	5.63	4	0.63
2016 US 3rd debate	Clinton	396	9	2.27	0	0.00
	Trump	597	24	4.02	1	0.17

Considering the different debate formats, in the second presidential debate in 2016, Trump asked slightly more rhetorical questions compared to the other two debates (5.95 RhQs vs. 5.64 RhQs and 4.02 RhQs per hundred sentences). In contrast, Clinton asked the fewest number of rhetorical questions in the second debate (2.10 RhQs per hundred sentences) compared to the first and third debates (4.89 RhQs and 2.21 RhQs per hundred sentences respectively).

The above pattern of the number of rhetorical questions is noteworthy, as both Romney in 2012 and Trump in 2016, the 'non-prime' candidates who were behind in the polls for most of the time during the elections, asked more rhetorical questions than their opponents (i.e. Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016).

Also, the different debate formats had a notable influence on candidates' frequency of RhQs. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to increase their number of RhQs in the second debates in 2012 and 2016, which was in the town-hall format, therefore leading to greater audience involvement. In contrast, the 'prime' candidates reduced their number of RhQs during the town-hall debates. These patterns suggest that 'non-prime' candidates used RhQs more actively to engage with their opponents and the audience, especially in the debate setting where they had more freedom to do so. In comparison, the decrease of RhQs can be seen as the 'prime' candidates' strategy to avoid initiating a direct exchange with their opponent.

4.2 RhQ syntactic structure between U.S. prime & non-prime candidates

This section aims to address the second research question "What syntactic patterns do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

I will examine candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type. Furthermore, I will examine if the usage pattern of these syntactic features in RhQs varied between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates across different debate formats.

4.2.1 Length and complexity of RhQs

As shown in Table 4.4, the sentence length of RhQs in the 2012 presidential debates is more extended than in 2016. Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, tended to ask RhQs at a longer length, averaging 15.00 words and 12.17 words per RhQ. In comparison, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, tended to ask shorter RhQs, averaging 11.25 words and 8.51 words per RhQ.

Table 4.4: Sentence length of RhQs in the 2012 and 2016 U.S. presidential debates

Sentence length	2012		2016	
	Obama	Romney	Clinton	Trump
No. of RhQs	20	60	36	101
Total words	300	675	438	860
Words per RQ	15.00	11.25	12.17	8.51

The difference in sentence length can be further elaborated by comparing candidates' RhQs regarding the sentence structure, lexical density, and explicitness of referents. For example, in (1), Obama asked a rhetorical question which consisted of 31 words. The long question appears to be clearly defined and grammatically well-formed, including a mix of dependent and independent clauses. The question is also lexically dense as it contains a considerable number of lexical items and content words, including nouns (e.g. "American people", "reason", and "secret"), adjectives (e.g. "good"), and verbs (e.g. "think"). The target referent of the rhetorical question is explicit as "Governor Romney" was mentioned.

Overall, Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, delivered their message through rhetorical questions in a clear and complete manner which supported their claims and arguments. This can be seen as a move to appeal to the audience as a more rational and capable political leader.

(1) Obama: "And at some point, I think the American people have to ask themselves, **is the reason that Governor Romney is keeping all these plans to replace secret because they're too good?"**

(Obama, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In contrast, some of the shortest rhetorical questions which only include a few words, as shown in (2) an exchange between Trump and Clinton in the first presidential debate in 2016, were more context-dependent since little information was embedded. More specifically, in (2), the more straightforward rhetorical question "Who gave it that name?" functioned as an instant rebuttal to Clinton. Instead of constructing his RhQs as a well-developed argument, Trump frequently puts pressure on Clinton by directing such simple RhQs at her.

(2) Clinton: But when I look at what you have proposed, you have what is called now the Trump loophole, because it would so advantage you and the business you do. You've proposed an approach that has a...

Trump   **Who gave it that name?**   The first I've—**who gave it that name?**

(Trump, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Generally speaking, both Trump and Romney tended to use briefer RhQs in simultaneous situations, aiming to initiate a direct engagement with their opponents and cause possible face-threats, especially when their opponents failed to respond immediately.

4.2.2 Pronouns of RhQs

Similar to the previous subsection, a notable difference in the use of pronouns can be found between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates.

As shown in Figure 4.1, each candidate tends to use more exclusive pronouns (i.e. first-person singular, second-person, third-person plural, third-person singular, and exclusive first-person plural) than inclusive pronouns (i.e. inclusive first-person plural) in their rhetorical questions. It is noteworthy that 'prime' candidates tended to include proportionally more inclusive pronouns in their RhQs (i.e. Clinton, 31.6%; Obama, 29.6%) than 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Romney, 20.8%; Trump, 9.4%). According to the log-likelihood test, 'non-prime' candidates were more likely to use inclusive pronouns in their RhQs than 'non-prime' candidates (LL=8.01, p<0.01).
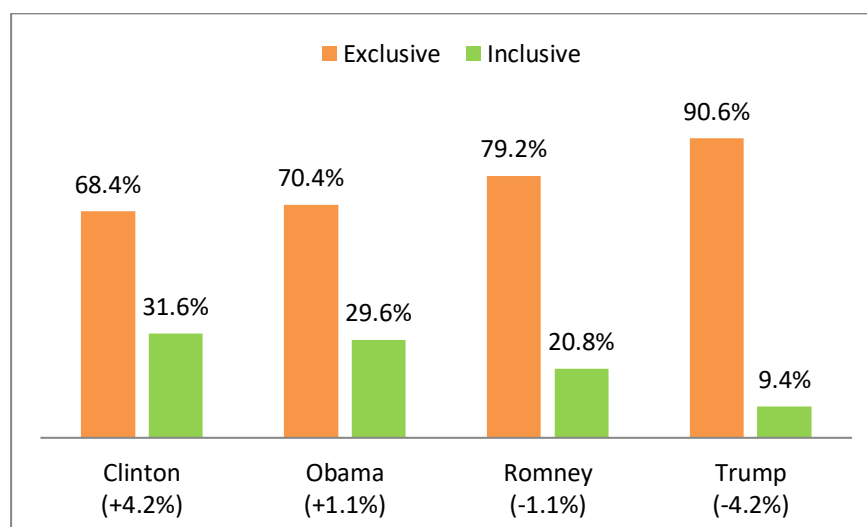
Figure 4.1: Exclusive and inclusive pronouns in U.S. candidates' RhQs.

In addition, a closer look at the specific types of pronouns that the candidates used accompanying their RhQs during the debates reveals a similar usage pattern between Obama and Clinton, which contrasts notably with Romney and Trump.

'Prime' candidates' use of pronouns

As shown in Table 4.5, both Obama and Clinton used the inclusive first-person plural "we" (subject), "our" (possessive), "us", and "ourselves" (object) most frequently among the other pronouns within their rhetorical questions (eight times out of 27 pronoun tokens, and 18 times out of 57 pronoun tokens respectively).

Table 4.5: Distribution of pronouns in RQs between Obama and Clinton

Pronoun	Obama (2012)	Clinton (2016)
I	1	6
My	0	0
Me	1	1
Myself	0	0
First-person sg.(sub-total)	2	7
You	3	7
Your	0	1
Yourself	0	1
Second-person (sub-total)	5	9
We	5	2
Our	0	0
Us	1	0
Ourselves	0	0
Exclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	6	2
We	7	10
Our	1	6
Us	0	2
Ourselves	0	0
Inclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	8	18
They	4	5
Their	1	1
Them	1	1
Themselves	1	0
Third-person pl. (sub-total)	7	7
He/she	0	12
His/her	0	3
Himself/herself	0	0
Third-person sg. (sub-total)	0	15
Total	27	57

The first-person plural was frequently used by the two candidates to create a sense of unity with the audience. For example, in (3), Obama's two rhetorical questions contain the inclusive "we" and "our", which enable him to identify with the audience, since he framed the prevention of violence jeopardizing the youngsters as a mutual pursuit of all Americans. Also, the inclusion of the two inclusive pronouns could help intensify Obama's goodwill and efforts in tackling the problems.

(3) Obama: **"And so what can we do to intervene, to make sure that young people have opportunity**? **That our schools are working**? That if there's violence on the streets, that working with faith groups and law enforcement, we can catch it before it gets out of control.

(Obama, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Regarding the use of exclusive pronouns, Obama used the exclusive "they" frequently in his RhQs to criticize Romney and his party and policies, for example, the Republican Party's actions against the Obama administration's reining in the excesses of Wall Street, as shown in (4).

(4) Obama: **"And yes, have we had some fights between me and the Republicans when they fought back against us reining in the excesses of Wall Street?** Absolutely, because that was a fight that needed to be had.

(Obama, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Compared to Obama, Clinton used the more personal third-person singular frequently (15 times out of 57 pronoun tokens). More specifically, Clinton frequently adopted the use of "he" and "his" when referring to Trump as her target of criticism. In (5), in advance of the two rhetorical questions, Clinton strategically created an

interpersonal dichotomy, i.e. the more distancing third-person proper noun "Donald" vs. the less distancing second-person "you" (the Americans whom Clinton was directly addressing). After that, Clinton further reinforced the sense of the distance between Trump and the Americans in her two rhetorical questions, along with the repeated use of "he", aiming to amplify her criticism of the ambiguity and nonsense of Trump's foreign policies.

(5) Clinton: "And Donald never tells you what he would do. **Would he have started a war? Would he have bombed Iran?"**
                 (Clinton, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

'Non-prime' candidates' use of pronouns

Within the 69 and 112 rhetorical questions used by Romney in 2012 and Trump in 2016, second-person pronoun "you" (subject/ object), "your" (possessive) and "yourself" (object) were used most frequently, with 29 out of 72 pronoun tokens and 51 out of 114 pronoun tokens respectively.

Table 4.6: Distribution of pronouns in RhQs between Romney and Trump

Pronoun	Romney (2012)	Trump (2016)
I	14	17
My	2	2
Me	2	2
Myself	0	0
First-person sg.(sub-total)	18	21
You	23	48
Your	5	2
Yourself	1	1
Second-person (sub-total)	29	51
We	1	4
Our	0	0
Us	0	0
Ourselves	0	0
Exclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	1	4
We	12	9
Our	1	1
Us	2	1
Ourselves	0	0
Inclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	15	11
They	4	**9**
Their	0	1
Them	4	3
Themselves	0	0
Third-person pl. (sub-total)	8	**13**
He/she	1	13
His/her	1	2
Himself/herself	0	0
Third-person sg. (sub-total)	2	15
Total	72	114

Romney and Trump frequently used second-person pronouns to shorten the interpersonal distance with the opponents and put them in the role of the accused. For example, in (6), Trump included "you" three times in only one rhetorical question to accuse Clinton of the possible conflict of interest in her dealings with the Clinton Foundation while she was the secretary of state.

(6) Trump: "It's a criminal enterprise. Saudi Arabia giving $25 million, Qatar, all of these countries […] And yet you take their money. **So I'd like to ask you right now, why don't you give back the money that you've taken from certain countries that treat certain groups of people so horribly**?"

(Trump, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

Both Romney and Trump also used the first-person singular "I" (subject), "my" (possessive), "me", and "myself" (object) as their second most frequent pronouns (18 times out of 72 pronoun tokens, and 21 times out of 114 pronoun tokens respectively). The first-person singular was frequently involved in the two candidates' process of promoting themselves and their policies along with their use of rhetorical questions, for example, Romney's elaboration on the advantages of his tax-cut plan, as shown in (7).

(7) Romney: **"Why am I lowering taxes on the middle class**? Because under the last 4 years, they've been buried, and I want to help people in the middle class. And I will not—I will not under any circumstances reduce the share that's being paid by the highest income taxpayers."

(Romney, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

However, as the use of first-person singular can be perceived as speaker-centred and audience-exclusive in the context of political debates, skilful candidates carefully planned the sequence of personal pronouns in their utterance. In (8), Romney adopted a sequence of "you" (i.e. opponent as the direct addressee), inclusive "we" (i.e. both Romney and all Americans) and the exclusive "I" (i.e. Romney). Before the two rhetorical questions, Romney first used "you" to refer to Obama's failure of balancing the budget, and the inclusive "we" which indicated his sympathy towards the Americans. Such a move paved the way to Romney's use of "I" in the following two rhetorical questions to help unfold his vision and policy in a more legitimised manner.

(8) Romney: You found $4 trillion of ways to reduce or to get closer to a balanced budget, except we still show trillion-dollar deficits every year. That doesn't get the job done. **Let me come back and say, why is that I don't want to raise taxes? Why don't I want to raise taxes on people?**"

(Romney, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In sum, I found that presidential candidates' use of pronouns facilitates their RhQs to align with the general public or as to dis-align from their opponents. Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, used the inclusive "we" most frequently within the pronouns in their RhQs to align with the voters. Regarding their use of exclusive pronouns, while Obama used the exclusive "they" frequently in his RhQs, Clinton favoured the exclusive "he" to alienate Trump when attacking him.

In comparison, both Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, used the exclusive "you" most frequently. They often shortened the interpersonal distance with the opponents and put them in the role of the criticism. Both Romney and Trump use the first-person singular "I" as their second most frequent pronoun to promote their own identity and their policy. However, given the potential perception of "I" as a speaker-centred and audience-exclusive, 'non-prime' candidates tended to carefully plan the sequence by using a combination of both inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns in their RhQs and co-text.

These patterns suggest that 'prime' candidates focused more on establishing common ground with the voters with the help of inclusive pronouns. In contrast, 'non-prime' candidates focused more on attacking 'prime' candidates using exclusive pronouns, while at the same time creating a unique and favourable political identity for their own.

4.2.3 Question types of RhQs

As an overview of candidates' use of question types, Figure 4.2, except for Obama, the *wh*-type of rhetorical questions (RhQs) were used most frequently by other presidential candidates (i.e. Clinton, 58.3%; Romney, 60.0%; Trump, 48.5%). Following *wh*-RhQs, the *yes/no* RhQs appear to be the second most frequent type used by the candidates (i.e. Clinton, 38.9%; Romney, 21.7%; Trump, 25.3%). In comparison, the declarative RhQs, tag RhQs, and alternative RhQs accounted for a low percentage of overall usage.

Apart from the dominant use of *wh*- and *yes/no* RhQs, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, also asked a considerable number of declarative RhQs and tag RhQs. Compared to Clinton and Obama, Romney and Trump's use of more diversified question types reveal their efforts to create a more dynamic interaction with multiple participants in the debates.
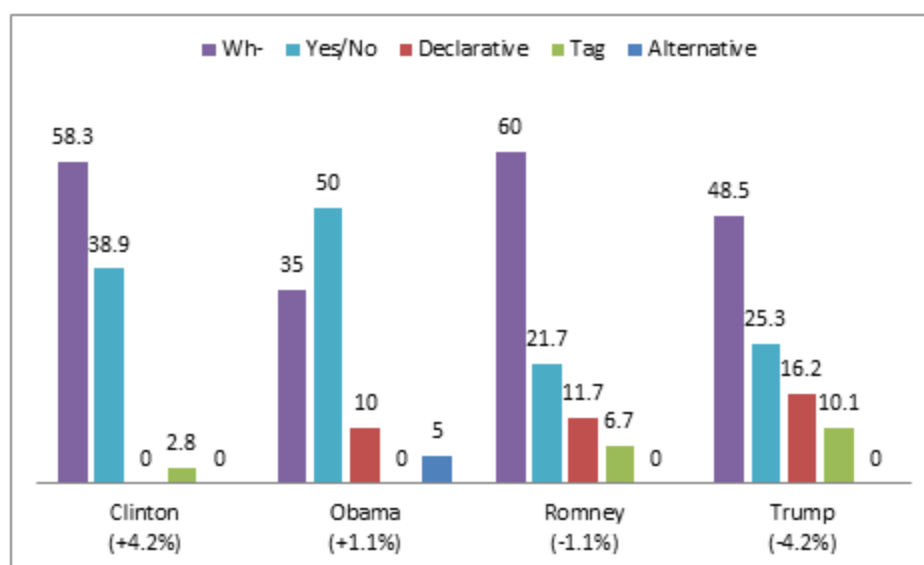
Figure 4.2: Proportion (%) of question types among U.S. candidates' use of RhQs

Taking a closer look at the (i) speech positions and (ii) question-and-answer of the use of *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs, I found the following differences between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates.

'Prime' candidates' use of question types

'Prime' candidates tended to use *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their speaking turn, which requires no cooperation from their opponents. They frequently used *wh*-RhQs to facilitate their claims and arguments by providing their own well-elaborated answers or reasoning. For example, in (9), when addressing the issue of national security, Clinton asked the two *wh*-questions in the frame of "How do we...?" to prepare for her following proposal and self-praise.

(9) Clinton: **How do we prevent attacks? How do we protect our people?** And I think we've got to have an intelligence surge, where we are looking for every scrap of information. I was so proud of law enforcement in New York, in Minnesota, in New Jersey.

(Clinton, 1ˢᵗ U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'prime' candidates tended to frame the questions as well-developed assertions, which enable the audience to retrieve the implied claims and arguments easily. For example, in (10), Obama embedded in his use of *yes/no* RQs an explicit assertion "*Nobody out there thinks that the big problem we had is that there was too much oversight and regulation of Wall Street*". The assertion can be retrieved from the RhQs and the co-text, where Obama was criticising Romney's view on government regulations. Giving an immediate interjection to his question, Obama further supported his assertion by making explicit mention of his opponent (i.e. "*Governor Romney*") and reiterated his disagreement "*But that's not what I believe*".

(10) Obama: "Governor Romney has said he just wants to repeal Dodd-Frank, roll it back. **And so the question is does anybody out there think that the big problem we had is that there was too much oversight and regulation of Wall Street**? Because if you do, then Governor Romney is your candidate. But that's not what I believe."

(Obama, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

'Non-prime' candidates' use of question types

'Non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in both their own speaking turn and direct exchange with the opponents. In their own speaking turn, 'non-prime' candidates frequently used *wh*-RhQs as a hook to attack. Specifically, they did not leave the unspoken answer to the audience but immediately answered these *wh*-RhQs with their criticisms of the opponents.

For example, in (11), Romney's use of wh-RhQs allows him to direct a cascade of attacks at Obama within his own speaking time. After asking each of the three *wh*-RQs (i.e. "Why?", "So where did…?" and "What was his…?"), Romney did not leave the unspoken answer to the audience. Instead, he provided immediate criticism of Obama's ineffective energy plan as answers to these rhetorical questions.

(11) Romney: "As a matter of fact, oil production is down 14 per cent this year on Federal land, and gas production is down 9 per cent. **Why?** Because the President cut in half the number of licenses […] **So where did the increase come from?** Well, a lot of it came from the Bakken Range in North Dakota. **What was his participation there?** The administration brought a criminal action…"

(Romney, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates tended to answer themselves immediately with a simple "yes" (to affirm their criticism of the opponents) or a simple "no" (to reject the opponents' claims and ideas). For example, in (12), Romney asked four rhetorical *yes/no* questions in a sequence to criticise the Obama administration of their unsatisfied progress in foreign policy. Romney also answered each of the questions immediately with the start of a simple "yes" or "no".

(12) Romney: "We talk a lot about these things, but you look at the record. **You look at the record of the last 4 years and say, is Iran closer to a bomb?** Yes. **Is the Middle East in tumult?** Yes. **Is al Qaeda on the run, on its heels?** No. **Is—are Israel and the Palestinians closer to reaching a peace agreement?** No, they haven't had talks in 2 years."

(Romney, 3rd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In the direct exchange, 'non-prime' candidates often required from their opponents an immediate answer to the *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs, which is always against the opponents' political interest. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to use *wh*-RhQs to elicit an answer that may cause negative consequences towards the opponents. For example, in (13), Trump attacked Clinton with an accused tone by asking the *wh*-RhQ "Why didn't you do it?" twice, requesting Clinton to explain immediately her failure of getting rid of carried interest when she was a senator from New York.

(13) Clinton: I've been in favour of getting rid of carried interest for years, starting when I was a senator from New York. But that's not the point here.

Trump: **Why didn't you do it? Why didn't you do it?**

Cooper: Allow her to respond.

(Trump, 2ⁿᵈ U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates tended to restrict the opponents from providing any alternative answers, instead of a simple acceptance (e.g. yes) or denial (e.g. no) of the preceding attack or criticism, for example, as shown in (14), either an answer of 'yes' or 'no' to Trump's *yes/no* RhQ may cause negative consequences to Clinton.

(14) Clinton: [...] which I was not responsible for, I concluded it wasn't. I wrote about that in my book...

Trump: **So is it President Obama's fault**?

Clinton: ... before you even announced.

Trump: **Is it President Obama's fault**?

Clinton: Look, there are differences...

Trump: **Secretary, is it President Obama's fault**?

(Trump, 1ˢᵗ U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

In sum, both 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs most frequently among the five question types, but they differed in the (i) speech positions and (ii) question-and-answer patterns.

Both Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, tended to use *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their own speaking turn. Specifically, they used *wh*-RhQs to facilitate their claims and arguments and frame their *yes/no* RhQs as well-developed assertions.

In contrast, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in both their own speaking turn and direct exchange with their opponents. In their own speaking turn, 'non-prime' candidates frequently answered these *wh*-RhQs with their immediate criticisms of the opponents. When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates tended to answer themselves immediately with a simple "yes" (to affirm their criticism of the opponents) or a simple "no" (to reject the opponents' claims and ideas).

In the direct exchange, 'non-prime' candidates often required from their opponents an immediate answer to the *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs, which is always against the opponents' political interest. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to use *wh*-RhQs to elicit an answer that may cause negative consequences towards their opponents and used *yes/no* RhQs to force their opponents to address the preceding attack or criticism.

4.3 RhQ pragmatic features between U.S. prime & non-prime candidates

This section aims to address the third research question "What pragmatic features do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

I will examine candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee types and (ii) face threats, as well as the pragmatic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates using a more in-depth contextual analysis.

4.3.1 Addressee types

As shown in Figure 4.3.1.1, Clinton and Obama, the two 'prime' candidates, were more likely to address the audience directly in their use of RhQs (97% and 95% respectively). In comparison, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, adopted a more diversified approach by directing relatively more RhQs at the opponents and the moderators.
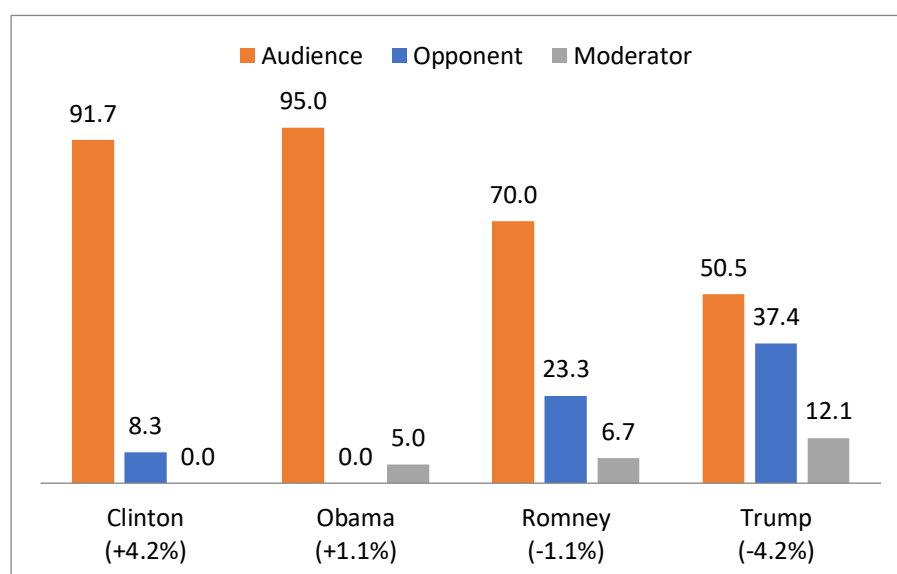
Figure 4.3.1.1: Addressee types in U.S. candidates' RhQs.

In addition, a closer look at the distribution of face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs reveals a similar usage pattern between Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates.

4.3.2 'Non-prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs

When addressing their opponents and the audience, 'non-prime' candidates gradually increased the proportion of face-threatening RhQs across the first and second debates. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to ask fewer RhQs which were face-threatening to their opponents in the first debates (i.e. 'single moderator' format), but they increased the portion of face-threatening RhQs in the second debates (i.e. 'town-hall' format).

Romney in the 2012 debates

As shown in Table 4.7, when addressing the audience, Romney asked more non-face-threatening RhQs (10 out of 11 tokens, i.e. 90.91%) in the first debate. In comparison, he increased the portion of face-threatening RhQs from 9.09% to 60% (i.e. 12 out of 20 tokens) in the second debate.

When addressing Obama his opponent, Romney increased his percentage of face-threatening RhQs from 6.25% (i.e. 1 out of 16 tokens) in the first debate to 35.48% (i.e. 11 out of 31 tokens) in the second debate. In the third debate, Romney reduced his use of face-threatening RhQs to 15.38% (i.e. 2 out of 13 tokens).

Table 4.7: Romney's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2012 presidential debates

	Addressee type Face-threats	Obama (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		Total (%)	
2012 US 1st debate	No. of RQs	1		11		4		16	
	FT	1	100.00	1	9.09	1	25.00	3	18.75
	Non-FT	0	0	10	90.91	3	75.00	13	81.25
2012 US 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	11		20		0		31	
	FT	11	100.00	12	60.00	0	0	23	74.19
	Non-FT	0	0	8	40.00	0	0	8	25.81
2012 US 3rd debate	No. of RhQs	2		11		0		13	
	FT	2	100.00	4	36.36	0	0	6	46.15
	Non-FT	0	0	7	63.64	0	0	7	53.85

When addressing the audience using non-face-threatening RhQs in the second debate, Romney tended to frame his RhQs as an explicit assertion against Obama, for example, as shown in (15), Romney's use of the explicit negative word "fail" to criticize Obama's immigration policy.

(15) Romney: "Why did he fail to even promote legislation that would have provided an answer for those that want to come here legally and for those that are here illegally today?"

(Romney, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

In comparison, when addressing Obama in the direct exchange, Romney did not necessarily assert such an explicit message, but he strategically paved his way to elicit an 'unanswerable' reply from Obama using RhQs. For example, as shown in (16), after initiating an attack accusing Obama of cutting permits and licenses on federal land and federal waters in half, Romney asked Obama directly the RhQ "So how much did you cut them by?" to exemplify his epistemic stance forcing Obama to

address a topic that is difficult for him to answer. Romney's repeated use of the direct referent "you" addressing Obama in his three rhetorical questions not only projected a sense of confrontation but signalled to the audience a dis-alignment between himself and Obama (i.e. clear polarity of "you" vs. "I" throughout the whole exchange). The entire strategic setup also using the three RhQs in a cascade also enabled Romney to gain additional speaking time to put forward his well-prepared elaborations, as proof to the assertions he has just made about Obama's weak policy regarding oil-drilling permits and licenses on federal land and federal waters.

(16) Romney: In the last four years, you cut permits and licenses on federal land and federal waters in half.

Obama: Not true, Governor Romney.

Romney: **So how much did you cut them by?**

Obama: It's not true.

Romney: **By how much did you cut them by, then?**

Obama: Governor, we have actually produced more oil on —

Romney: **No, no, how much did you cut licenses and permits on federal land and federal waters?**

Obama: Well, Governor, if-if you're asking me a question, I'm going to answer it.

Romney: My — and the answer is I don't believe people think that's the case, because I — I'm — that wasn't a question.

Obama: OK. All right.

Romney: That was a statement. I don't think — (chuckles) — the American people believe that.

(Romney and Obama, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Trump in the 2016 debates

As shown in Table 4.8, apart from a relatively higher use of non-face-threatening

RhQs (i.e. 4 out of 39 tokens, 10.27%) in the first debate compared to the second and

third debates, Trump adopted a more predominant use of face-threatening RhQs (i.e.

96 out of 101 tokens, 95.05%) compared to Romney.

Table 4.8: Trump's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2016
presidential debates

Addressee type / Face-threats		Clinton (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		**Total (%)**	
2016 US 1st debate	No. of RQs	16		20		3		39	
	FT	15	93.75	17	85.00	3	100.00	35	89.74
	Non-FT	1	6.25	3	15.00	0	0.00	4	10.27
2016 US 2nd debate	No. of RQs	14		19		5		38	
	FT	14	100	18	94.74	5	100	37	97.37
	Non-FT	0	0	1	5.26	0	0	1	2.63
2016 US 3rd debate	No. of RQs	7		13		4		24	
	FT	7	100	13	100.00	4	100	24	100.00
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00

Compared to Romney, Trump frequently used a more direct and explicit approach to attack Clinton with his use of face-threatening RhQs. For example, in (17), Trump attacked Clinton with an intensified accusatory tone. He first asked an RhQ with a combination of the *wh*-word, negation marker and the more distancing third-person singular (i.e. "why didn't she") to put the blame on Clinton, and further increased the intensity in his second *wh*-RQ with the less distancing "you".

(17) Trump: She complains that Donald Trump took advantage of the tax code. **Well, why didn't she change it? Why didn't you change it when you were a senator?** The reason you didn't is that all your friends take the same advantage that I do.

(Trump, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

A distinctive feature in Trump's RhQs is his use of a considerable number of face-threatening RhQs to criticize the moderators. For example, in (18), Trump was complaining about Raddatz, the moderator's frequent interruptions, aiming to induce doubts in the audience's mind concerning the fairness of them hosting the debates.

(18) Raddatz: And why did it morph into that? No, did you—no, answer the question. Do you still believe...

Trump: **Why don't you interrupt her?** You interrupt me all the time.
(Trump, 2nd U.S. presidential debate 2016)

4.3.3 'Prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs

In contrast, there is no consistent proportion pattern between Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs when addressing their opponents and the audience across different debates. However, both candidates tended to frame their RhQs in a more indirect manner compared to their opponents.

Obama in the 2012 debates

As shown in Table 4.9, Obama's strategy in using face-threatening RhQs and non-face-threatening RhQs to address the audience varied across the first and second debates. When addressing the audience in the first debate, Obama used more face-threatening RhQs (11 out of 14 tokens, i.e. 75.57%). In comparison, all RhQs used by him were non-face-threatening (5 out of 5 tokens, i.e. 100%) in the second debate.

Table 4.9: Obama's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2012 presidential debates

	Addressee type / Face-threats	Romney (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		**Total (%)**	
2012 US 1st debate	No. of RhQs	0		14		1		15	
	FT	0	0	11	78.57	0	0	11	73.33
	Non-FT	0	0	3	21.43	1	100.00	4	26.67
2012 US 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	0		5		0		5	
	FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-FT	0	0	5	100.00	0	0	5	100.00
2012 US 3rd debate	No. of RhQs	0		0		0		0	
	FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Compared to his opponent, Romney's frequent use of explicit criticisms (e.g. negatively evaluative words), Obama tended to frame his RhQs in a more indirect manner. As shown in (19), commenting on Romney's tax-cut plan, Obama first used the RhQ "does anybody think…" to question its fairness when addressing the audience. Obama then moved on to use the combination of the *wh*-word, negation marker and the collective first-person plural (i.e. "why don't we") in his following two RhQs. Such moves indicate Obama's consistent focus of addressing the audience, instead of engaging in direct rival talk with his opponent.

(19) Obama: "The — the oil industry gets $4 billion a year in corporate welfare. Basically, they get deductions that those small businesses that Governor Romney refers to, they don't get. **Now, does anybody think that ExxonMobil needs some extra money when they're making money every time you go to the pump? Why wouldn't we want to eliminate that? Why wouldn't we eliminate tax breaks for corporate jets?** My attitude is if you got a corporate jet, you can probably afford to pay full freight, not get a special break for it.

(Obama, 1st U.S. Presidential election debate 2012)

Clinton in the 2016 debates

As shown in Table 4.10, Clinton did the opposite compared to Obama as she used more non-face-threatening RhQs (11 out of 17 tokens, i.e. 64.71%) in the first debate, but reversed her strategy by using more face-threatening RhQs (6 out of 7 tokens, i.e. 85.71%) in the second debate.

Table 4.10: Clinton's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RQs in the 2016 presidential debates

	Addressee type / Face-threats	Trump (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		**Total (%)**	
2016 US 1st debate	No. of RhQs	3		17		0		20	
	FT	3	100	6	35.29	0	0	9	45.00
	Non-FT	0	0	11	64.71	0	0	11	55.00
2016 US 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	0		7		0		7	
	FT	0	0	6	85.71	0	0	6	85.71
	Non-FT	0	0	1	14.29	0	0	1	14.29
2016 US 3rd debate	No. of RhQs	0		9		0		9	
	FT	0	0	5	55.56	0	0	5	55.56
	Non-FT	0	0	4	44.44	0	0	4	44.44

Clinton's use of face-threatening RhQs is similar to Obama in the way that she tended to maintain a certain interpersonal distance and avoid direct rival talk with her opponent. For example, instead of directly criticizing Trump and his foreign policy, Clinton asked a hypothetical RhQ on behalf of the majority Muslim nations, in order to criticise Trump for hindering the necessary coalition between the U.S. and these countries from fighting ISIS, as shown in (20).

(20) Clinton: It's also important I intend to defeat ISIS, to do so in a coalition with majority Muslim nations. Right now, a lot of those nations are hearing what Donald says and wondering, **why should we cooperate with the Americans?**

(Clinton, 2nd U.S. presidential debate 2016)

At the same time, Clinton often put Trump as the more specified target in her face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience, for example, using the more specified third-person "he" to alienated Trump and his isolationist foreign policy, as shown in (21).

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(21) Clinton: "We are a country founded on religious freedom and liberty. **How do we do what he has advocated without causing great distress within our own county?**"
(Clinton, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

5. Summary of the U.S. findings

To answer my first overarching research question "How do U.S. politicians use RhQs in political debates?", I will summarize my major U.S. findings from Section 5.1 to 5.3.

5.1 Frequency distribution of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the U.S. corpus

To answer the first research question "Is there a frequency difference between U.S. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?". I compared the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Romney in 2012 and Trump in 2016) and 'prime' candidates (i.e. Obama in 2012 and Clinton in 2016) in the presidential debates.

I found that the two 'non-prime' candidates asked more RhQs than the 'prime' candidates in the presidential debates. These patterns, along with the syntactic and pragmatic analyses in Section 5.2 and 5.3, suggest that 'non-prime' candidates used RhQs more actively to engage with their opponents and the audience. In contrast, 'prime' candidates tend to avoid engaging in a direct exchange with their opponents.

5.2 Syntax of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the U.S. corpus

To answer my second research question "What syntactic patterns do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?", I examined candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type. I also examined the syntactic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates.

Sentence structure

Regarding the **sentence structure** of rhetorical questions, I found that Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, tend to ask RhQs with a longer length than their opponents. By examining the interrogative structure, lexical density and explicitness of referents, I also found that 'prime' candidates tend to use RhQs in a clearly defined and grammatically well-formed manner. 'Prime' candidates' RhQs were also more lexically dense and indicated with more explicit target referent. In other words, leading candidates delivered their political messages through the RhQs in a more clear and complete manner, requiring less effort from the listeners.

In contrast, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, tended to do the opposite by asking shorter RhQs, with less clearly-defined structure and lower lexical density. It is interesting to notice though – 'non-prime' candidates more often used these RhQs to invite "pseudo cooperation" from their opponents. More specifically, although they did not deliver much of a political message or information through their RhQs, they constantly sought from their opponents an implied answer that was against their opponents' political interests.

Pronouns

Presidential candidates' **use of pronouns** facilitates their RhQs to align with the general public or as to dis-align from their opponents. Both Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, used the inclusive "we" most frequently within the pronouns in their RhQs, aiming to create a sense of unity with the voters. Regarding their use of exclusive pronouns, while Obama used the exclusive "they" frequently in his RhQs, Clinton favoured the exclusive "he" to alienate Trump and maintain a greater interpersonal distance when attacking him.

In comparison, both Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, used the exclusive "you" most frequently within the pronouns in their RhQs. More specifically, they often shortened the interpersonal distance with the opponents and put them in the role of the criticism. Both Romney and Trump used the first-person singular "I" as their second most frequent pronoun to promote their own identity and their policy. However, given the potential perception of "I" as a speaker-centred and audience-exclusive pronoun in the context of political debates, they tended to carefully plan the sequence by using a combination of both inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns in their RhQs and co-text.

These patterns suggest that 'prime' candidates focused more on establishing common ground with the voters with the help of inclusive pronouns. In contrast, 'non-prime' candidates focused more on attacking 'prime' candidates using exclusive pronouns, while at the same time creating a unique and favourable political identity for their own.

Question types

Regarding the **question type** of presidential candidates' RhQs, I found that both 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs most frequently among the five question types, but they differed in the (i) speech positions and (ii) question-and-answer patterns.

Both Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, tended to use *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their own speaking turn, which requires no cooperation from their opponents. More specifically, they used *wh*-RhQs to facilitate their claims and arguments by providing their own well-elaborated answers or reasoning. When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'prime' candidates tended to frame the questions as well-developed assertions, which enable the audience to retrieve the implied claims and arguments easily.

In contrast, Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in both their own speaking turn and direct exchange with their opponents. In their own speaking turn, 'non-prime' candidates frequently used *wh*-RhQs as a hook to attack. Specifically, they did not leave the unspoken answer to the audience but immediately answered these *wh*-RhQs with their criticisms of the opponents. When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates tended to answer themselves immediately with a simple "yes" (to affirm their criticism of the opponents) or a simple "no" (to reject the opponents' claims and ideas).

In the direct exchange, 'non-prime' candidates often required from their opponents an immediate answer to the *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs, which is always against the opponents' political interest. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to use *wh*-RhQs to elicit an answer that may cause negative consequences towards their opponents. When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates tended to restrict their opponents from providing any alternative answers, instead of a simple

acceptance (e.g. yes) or denial (e.g. no) of the preceding attack or criticism.

5.3 Pragmatics of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the U.S. corpus

To answer my third research question "What pragmatic features do U.S. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?", I examined candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type, and (ii) face threats. I also examined the pragmatic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates.

Addressee types

Regarding the **addressee type** of rhetorical questions, I found that Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, predominantly addressed the audience with their RhQs. In comparison, both Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, included relatively more RhQs to address their opponents. These patterns reveal that 'prime' candidates tended to communicate with the audience while avoiding direct interaction with their opponents. In contrast, 'non-prime' candidates were more likely to create a direct interaction with their opponents.

Face threats

Regarding the distribution of face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs, I found a different usage pattern between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates when they addressed their opponents and the audience.

When addressing their opponents and the audience, 'non-prime' candidates gradually increased the proportion of face-threatening RhQs across the first and second debates. More specifically, 'non-prime' candidates tended to ask fewer RhQs which were face-threatening to their opponents in the first debates (i.e. 'single

moderator' format), but they increased the portion of face-threatening RhQs in the second debates (i.e. 'town-hall' format).

In contrast, there is no consistent proportion pattern between the two 'prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs when addressing the opponents and the audience. More specifically, Obama asked the audience more RhQs which were associated with face-threats to the opponent in the first debate, but he used a reserved strategy by asking the audience more non-face-threatening RhQs in the second debate in 2012. Clinton did the opposite as she profoundly increased the portion of face-threatening RhQs to the opponent when addressing the audience in the 2016 second debate. It is noteworthy that compared to the 'non-prime' candidates, 'prime' candidates tended to maintain a certain interpersonal distance and avoid direct rival talk with their opponents when using RhQs.

6. Hong Kong political situation, debates and corpus

This chapter starts with a description of the H.K. corpus of this study in Section 6.1, including the background of each selected election (e.g. political systems, political situations, the background of the candidates, formats for these debates, etc.).

Before moving on to the methodology of identifying and examining candidates' use of rhetorical questions, Section 6.2 describes the corpus and outlines the preparatory procedures, including the identification of sentences in Section 6.2.1 and the identification of sentence types in Section 6.2.2.

For the purpose of examining the influence of different election-specific factors in candidates' use of rhetorical questions, Section 6.3 outlines the criteria of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background in the H.K. corpus.

Section 6.4 outlines the criteria and procedures of classifying the interrogative sentences as rhetorical questions or non-rhetorical questions. Section 6.5 outlines the criteria and procedures of for distinguishing between face-threatening and non-face-threatening questions.

6.1 H.K. chief executive election overview

This section begins with a brief description of the political system and the election process of the Hong Kong Chief Executive elections. I will then move on to the background of the election, in terms of the candidates and the significant election issues in the 2012 and 2017 H.K. Chief executive elections. After that, I will also explain the format and other relevant information for the two televised debates during the election year.

6.1.1 Background

After more than a century under British colonial rule, Hong Kong was returned to
Chinese sovereignty in 1997. In consideration of its unique history and realities, Hong
Kong has been authorized to exercise a "high degree of autonomy" for 50 years under
the principle of "one country, two systems" (Basic Law Art 2; see also: Oliveira &
Cardinal, 2009). In accordance with the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Special
Administrative Region (HKSAR) would be able to develop a democratic form of
governance with the ultimate goal of having its Chief Executive and all the
Legislative Council members elected through universal suffrage (Basic Law Art 45
and 68).

At present, the Hong Kong Chief Executive, the highest office in HKSAR is
elected by a 1200-member Election Committee,[25] and the Legislative Council
(LegCo) with half of its 70 seats elected on the "one person, one vote" basis through
the geographical constituencies (Electoral Affairs Commission, 2012).[26]

To implement universal suffrage, one of the most crucial parts is that the
electoral reform proposal (proposed by the Chief Executive and his or her
administration, with the framework initiated by the National People's Congress) could
receive endorsements with two-thirds (47 votes) majority of all the members of the
LegCo (Lo, 2016, pp. 217). Despite receiving the majority of support from the

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[25] The winning candidate has to secure over half of the votes from the Election Committee. The
number of the members of the committee has been increased from 800 to 1200 since the 2010 Hong
Kong electoral reform, which is equally distributed by the 4 following sectors: (i) industrial,
commercial and financial sectors, (ii) the professions, (iii) labour, social services, religious and other
sectors, (iv) members of the Legislative Council, representatives of members of the District Councils,
representatives of the Heung Yee Kuk, Hong Kong deputies to the National People's Congress, and
representatives of Hong Kong members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political
Consultative Conference (e-Legislation, 2010)

[26] The number of the LegCo members has been increased from 60 to 70 since the 2010 Hong Kong
electoral reform (Electoral Affairs Commission, 2013).

pro-establishment members, who adopt a more conservative stance towards democratization (Oksansen, 2011) and often align with the Hong Kong government, the Chief executive's mission is not easy to accomplish. More specifically, the LegCo members of the pan-democracy camp (or the opposition parties, accounted for more than one-third of the LegCo seats) has taken a more progressive stance towards democratization (Oksansen, 2011) and often do not align with the HKSAR administration and the Central Government. For example, all of the 27 pan-democratic LegCo members voted against the electoral reform proposal in 2015. Therefore, one of the biggest political challenges facing the Hong Kong Chief Executive is to serve as a bridge between the Central PRC government, different sectors and the Hong Kong citizens, by seeking their consent and making progress to the political reform.

Among the many domestic issues, including the deep-rooted problems of inequality, inflation, medical services and education, one of the Chief Executive's most prominent policies is to tackle the rising house prices. According to the 14th Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey (Carozzi, Cheshire, & Hilber, 2018), home prices in Hong Kong topped the list of 293 cities for eight straight years, as described by Demographia as being the "least affordable" in the world. The Chief Executive also has to propose a widely-accepted universal retirement protection along with other effective policies (e.g. elderly housing and medical care), because of the rapidly ageing population in the city with an estimated 2.58 million Hong Kong people aged 65 or above.

6.1.2 2012 election overview

The 2012 Chief executive of Hong Kong election was held on March 25, 2012. It was a race between Chun-ying Leung (CY Leung) the former convenor of the Executive Council, Ying-yen Tang (Henry Tang) the former Chief Secretary for Administration, and Chun-yan Ho (Albert Ho) the chairman of the Democratic Party from 2006 to 2012 and a former LegCo member (SCMP, 2012).

The three candidates went through a competition where Henry Tang started out as the front-runner favoured by the business tycoons and the Central government. He received 379 nominations in the Election Committee, which was the highest among the three candidates (293 and 184 nominations received by CY Leung and Albert Ho respectively). However, Henry Tang eventually lost to CY Leung after a series of scandals and controversies (e.g. revelations of an extramarital affair, reporting on illegal structures added to his residential buildings, etc.) (RTHK, 2012).

CY Leung, who was initially a surveyor by profession and often projected himself as someone from the grassroots and therefore not linked to the business tycoons, received greater support from the general public. Before the first debate on March 16, the Public Opinion program by the University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP, 2012) showed that CY Leung led Henry Tang and Albert Ho,[27] respectively by 20% (41% vs. 21%) and 30% (41% vs. 11%). The lead slightly narrowed to 17% before the second debate on March 19 (39% vs. 22% vs. 11%). Despite also suffering from rumors such as the accusation of "black gold politics", conflict of interest allegations during the 2001 concept planning competition for the West Kowloon Cultural District, etc., CY Leung managed to win the election by receiving 689 votes in the Election

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[27] Albert Ho, who received the fewest nominations and lowest support rate in the poll, had little hope of winning the election. As he claimed, one of his major tasks in the election was to fight for the benefits of the Hong Kong general public, by criticizing the credibility and integrity of CY Leung and Henry Tang.

Committee, while Henry Tang and Albert Ho received 285 and 76 votes respectively

(Electoral Affairs Commission, 2012).

6.1.3 2012 debate format

The 11-media-outlet debate, which was moderated by Joseph Tse Chi-fung (RTHK)

and Hui Fong-fai (TVB), took place at RTHK's Broadcasting House on Mar 16, 2012.

The three candidates, CY Leung, Henry Tang, and Albert Ho, received questions from

mass media organizations and the guest audience. The debate was divided into five

major sectors, namely, (i) opening statements, (ii) three rounds of Q&A sessions

(questions from journalists), (iii) three rounds of Q&A sessions (questions from the

guest audience), (iv) free debate among the three candidates, and (v) closing

statements ("Rivals agree on," 2012). See Figure 6.1 for a complete rundown.

Figure 6.1: Rundown of the 11-media-outlet televised debate (March 16, 2012)

Opening statements
- 1 minute for each candidate

Q& A session 1
- 3 questions were asked by the 3 journalists
- 1-minute initial response for the candidate who received the question
- 20-second follow-up response from other candidates

Q&A session 2
- 9 questions were asked by 3 studio audience members, with each candidate receiving 3 questions.
- 45-second response for the candidate who received the question
- No follow-up response from other candidates

Q& A session 3
- (Format similar to Q&A session 1)

Q& A session 4
- (Format similar to Q&A session 2)

Q& A session 5
- (Format similar to Q&A session 1)

Q& A session 6
- (Format similar to Q&A session 2)

Free debate
- Divided into three rounds
- Candidates took turn to initiate each round, by directing questions at each other.
- Follow-up reponses were allowed, but the candidate who initiated the turn had the right to allow for or cutt off the follow-up responses by other candidates.

Concluding statements
- 2 minutes for each candidate

The Chief Executive Election Forum took place on March 19, 2012, at the

International Trade & Exhibition Centre in Kowloon Bay, moderated by Ng Ming-lam.

The two-hour forum was organized by members of the Election Committee. CY

Leung, Henry Tang, and Albert Ho received 13 questions from members of the

Election Committee and an additional four questions from the general public. No

direct exchanges between the candidates were permitted. See Figure 6.2 for complete

details.

Figure 6.2: Rundown of the Chief Executive Election Forum (March 19, 2012)

Opening statements

- 3 minutes for each candidate

Q& A session 1

- 13 questions were asked by 13 randomly-drawn members from the Election Committe
- The three candidates took turn to respond to each question.
- 17 minutes in total for each candidate responding to all questions

Q&A session 2

- 4 questions were randomly drawn by the moderators (initially submitted by the general public)
- The three candidates took turn to respond to each question.
- The three candidates made follow-up response, depending on the moderator's decision.

Concluding statements

- 2 minutes for each candidate

6.1.4 2017 election overview

The 2017 Chief executive of Hong Kong election was held on March 26, 2017, which was a race between Yuet-ngor Lam Cheng (Carrie Lam) the former Chief Secretary for Administration, Chun-wah Tsang (John Tsang) the former Financial Secretary, and Kwok-hing Woo (Judge Woo) the former vice-president of the Court of Appeal of the High Court (SCMP, 2017). Carrie Lam was perceived as the candidate favoured by the Central PRC government, and she received 580 nominations in the Election Committee, which was far more than the 165 and 180 nominations that John Tsang and Judge Woo received, mostly from the pan-democracy camp (Neil, 2017).

Given her political image as a serious, tough and efficient "policy fighter", Carrie Lam was less popular when compared to John Tsang's image as a friendlier and more humorous leader, which was demonstrated in the results of the polling. Before the first televised debate on March 14, the Public Opinion program by the University of Hong Kong (HKUPOP, 2017) showed that John Tsang led Carrie Lam and Kwok-hing Woo, respectively by 18.4% (50.6% vs. 32.2%) and 41.3% (50.6% vs. 9.3%). The lead slightly narrowed to 16.8% before the second debate on March 19 (51.2% vs. 34.4% vs. 8.7%).

Throughout the election, John Tsang often associated Carrie Lam with the incumbent CY Leung, criticizing that she is the second version of CY Leung who would split the society, while at the same time promoting himself as the candidate who could unite the society after the umbrella movement. For example, as widely acknowledged, John Tsang conducted the most successful social media campaign of the three candidates, which allowed him to connect with the citizens of Hong Kong (Lee, 2018: pp. 69). Carrie Lam, on the other hand, continually challenged John Tsang's progressive profit tax and his track record, such as the underestimation of Hong Kong's annual budget surplus when he was the Financial Secretary (Tong,

2017). The election was eventually won by Carrie Lam, who received 777 votes in the Election Committee, while John Tsang and Judge Woo received 365 and 21 votes, respectively (Electoral Affairs Commission, 2017).[28]

6.1.5 2017 debate format

The 7-media-outlet televised debate, which was co-organized by now TV, Cable TV, TVB, Phoenix HK, CRHK, Metro Radio and RTHK, took place on March 14, 2017, at TVB City and was moderated by Kenneth Ng (TVB) and Mei Wong (Cable TV) (SCMP, 2017). The debate was divided into three sectors, including politics, economy and Hong Kong people's livelihood. Carrie Lam, John Tsang, and Kwok-hing Woo received questions from the media and the 137 members of the studio audience. Candidates were allowed to direct questions at each other during the "Free debate". See Figure 6.3 for complete details.

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[28] Given his lack of administrative experiences in the government sectors, Judge Woo focused on criticizing Carrie Lam and John Tsang and questioning their credibility and integrity, in a claimed attempt to safeguard the transparency and fairness of the political system in Hong Kong

Figure 6.3: Rundown of the 7-media-outlet televised debate (March 14, 2017)

Opening statements

- 1 minute for each candidate

Sector 1: Politics

- Q&A session 1 (candidates responding to the journalists)
- Q&A session 2 (candidates responding to the studio audience)

Sector 2: Economy

- Q&A session 1
- Q&A session 2

Sector 3: People's livelihood

- Q&A session 1
- Q&A session 2

Free debate

- Divided into three 4-minute segments
- Candidates took turn to initiate each segment, by directing questions at each other.
- Follow-up questions allowed

Concluding statements

- 1 minute for each candidate

The Chief Executive Election Forum, which was moderated by Joseph Tse and

Kaman Lee, took place on March 19, 2017, at AsiaWorld-Expo. The two-hour forum

was organized by members of the Election Committee, including 507 of the 1,194

members attending the forum. Carrie Lam, John Tsang, and Kwok-hing Woo received

21 questions from members of the Election Committee and 12 questions from the

general public. No direct exchanges between the candidates were permitted (SCMP,

2017). See Figure 6.4 for details.

Figure 6.4: Rundown of the Chief Executive Election Forum (March 19, 2017)

Opening statements

- 3 minutes for each candidate

Q& A session 1

- 21 questions were asked by 21 randomly-drawn members from the Election Committe
- The three candidates took turn to respond to each question.
- 17 minutes in total for each candidate responding to all questions

Q&A session 2

- 12 questions were randomly drawn by the moderators (initially submitted by the general public)
- The three candidates took turn to respond to each question.

Concluding statements

- 2 minutes for each candidate

6.2 Corpus description and analytical procedures

This section describes the corpus, procedures, criteria and results of identifying

sentences and sentences types in the H.K. corpus, which functions as the preparatory

procedures that needed to be completed prior to identifying rhetorical questions and

face-threatening functions in our data which is discussed in Section 6.4 and Section

6.5.

6.2.1 Sentence identification in the H.K. corpus

Four undergraduate students from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who

demonstrated excellent proficiency of Cantonese, along with accurate typing and

transcribing skills during the test of transcribing part of a political speech in

Cantonese, were employed. Before transcribing the data for this study, the four

transcribers were instructed to use a transcription template, which they had to indicate

the session (e.g. opening remarks), speaker (e.g. moderator, candidate, etc.), and every

question used in the election debates. The four transcribers were then asked to (i)

transcribe the Cantonese conversational data for the selected 2012 and 2017 Hong

Kong Chief Executive election debates,[29] and (ii) cross-check the transcripts with

each other.

  The transcript portion for each speaker was extracted and put into Wordsmith 6.0.

The identification of sentences includes the four delimiters that separate full sentences,

including the period ' 。 ', exclamation mark '!', question mark '?', and semi-colon ';',

as shown in Table 6.1.

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[29] The selected Cantonese data consists of the following four televised debates (453 mins in total): (i) 2012 Chief Executive Election debate (Mar, 16) (101 mins), (ii) 2012 Chief Executive Election Forum (Mar, 19) (117 mins), (iii) 2017 Chief Executive Election Debate (Mar, 15) (105 mins), and (iv) 2012 Chief Executive Election Forum (Mar, 19) (130 mins).

Table 6.1: Four punctuation marks as sentence delimiters in the H.K. corpus

Punctuation mark	Examples
1. Period '。'	Tang: "我喺政府工作九年。"
	(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)
2. Exclamation mark '!'	Ho: "所以，我相信有左民主之後，我地就係可以一心一志，就係就我地既理念嚟到改善我地既民生，但要先要落實民主！"
	(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)
3. Question mark '?'	Tang: "你點樣可以確保，如果你當選之後，你因為有行政經驗，唔會落錯藥呢？"
	(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)
4. Semi-colon ';'	Ho: "扶貧委員會，虎，虎頭蛇尾；"
	(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)

Apart from these four punctuation marks that were counted as sentence delimiters, there are three different situations when the ellipsis "……"was marked in the transcripts.[30]

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[30] In the H.K corpus, there were 75 ellipses counted as sentence delimiters.

In the first situation, the ellipses "……" were not counted as sentence delimiters, as they occur within a speaker's utterance, signalling the situation of interruptions, self-repairs, or pauses, and the utterance was ended with one of the four grammatical sentence delimiters ' 。', '!', '?', or ';', as can be seen in Example (1).

Example (1) John Tsang: "樓價確實係一個大問題來嘅對香港來講，呢個主…… 基本上嘅原因呢就係我地果個供應上面果個係唔夠大。"

[House price is a major problem for Hong Kong absolutely, this is…… basically the reason is that we don't have sufficient supply.]

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2017)

In the second situation, the ellipses "……" were also not counted as sentence delimiters, as they occur at the end of a speaker's utterance, signalling an interruption or pause, yet the speaker did not finish delivering his or her idea in a manner which the others can clearly understand. See Example (2).

Example (2) CY Leung: "如果……"

[If……]

Henry Tang: "我冇俾你講野。"

[I didn't allow you to speak.]

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)

In the third situation, the ellipses "……" were counted as sentence delimiters, as they represent a full sentence in the context, by meeting both of the following conditions:

(i) The ellipsis '……' occurs at the end of a speaker's utterance.

(ii) The speaker finished delivering his or her idea in a manner which the others can clearly understand, yet the utterance was ended immediately due to interruptions. See Example (3).

Example (3)	CY Leung:	"一國兩制既完整性，就正正係今場選舉大家要正視既嚴肅問題，因為一國兩制就係港人治港……"
		[The completeness of the "one country, two systems" is what we have to consider seriously, because the "one country, two systems" is "Hong Kong People ruling Hong Kong"…]
	Albert Ho:	咁即係點姐？
		[So what does it mean?]

(Leung & Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

Results of the H.K. corpus

As shown in Table 6.2, in both of the two 2012 H.K. Chief Executive election debates, the 'non-prime' candidate Albert Ho delivered more sentences than CY Leung and Henry Tang, the two 'prime' candidates.

In the two 2017 debates, there was no clear trend among the three candidates, as Carrie Lam (the 'prime' candidate) and Judge Wu (the 'non-prime' candidate) were delivering the most sentences respectively in the first and second debate.

Table 6.2: Number of sentences in H.K. corpus

H.K. corpus	Candidate	No. of Sentences
2012 HK 1st debate	CY Leung	184
	Henry Tang	187
	Albert Ho	233
2012 HK 2nd debate	CY Leung	194
	Henry Tang	161
	Albert Ho	231
2017 HK 1st debate	Carrie Lam	121
	John Tsang	109
	Judge Wu	102
2017 HK 2nd debate	Carrie Lam	75
	John Tsang	63
	Judge Wu	86

6.2.2 Sentence type identification in the H.K. corpus

Identification of the four sentence types, namely (i) declarative, (ii) imperative, (iii) interrogative, and (iv) exclamative, was done based on punctuation, sentence structure, and the contextual meanings. The following paragraphs elaborate on the definition, criteria and examples from the corpus for each sentence type.

Declarative sentences

In the H.K. corpus, declarative sentences were identified when the period ' 。 ' (or ellipsis '……', i.e., with the speaker finished delivering his or her idea in a clear manner) occurred at the end of a complete sentence. See Example (4).

Example (4)　　Henry Tang:　　"僭建係錯既。"

　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Having illegal structures (added to my residential

　　　　　　　　　　　　　buildings) is wrong.]

　　　　　　　　　　　　(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)

Exclamative sentences

Exclamative sentences in my data were identified based on the inclusion of an exclamation mark '!' and the pragmatic use of adding emotional colouring to the statement, as shown in Example (5).

Example (5)   Albert Ho: "所以，我相信有左民主之後，我地就係可以一心一志，就係就我地既理念嚟到改善我地既民生，但要先要落實民主！"

"Therefore, I believe once we have democracy, we can focus on our manifesto, which is to improve people's livelihood, but (we) have to have democracy first!"

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)

Imperative sentences

Imperative sentences in Cantonese are used to give commands, directions or requests (Matthews & Yip, 1994: pp. 359). For instance, a request was made with the politeness marker "請" [please], as shown in Example (6). Imperative sentences can also function as negative commands with the combination of a verb and a negation marker "唔好" [don't], as shown in Example (7).

Example (6)   Carrie Lam: "青年人各展所長，成年人安居樂業，長者安享晚年，請大家下個星期日，投票俾我,2 號候選人，林鄭月娥，多謝大家。"

"Youngsters developing to their full potentials, adults living a happy life, elders enjoying life in their twilight years, please vote for me next Sunday, Candidate No. 2, Carrie Lam, thank you."

(2nd H.K. Chief executive election debate 2017)

Example (7)   Carrie Lam: "[…] 民望呢樣野呢就係可上可落嘅啫==

[[…] Public popularity is something that has its ups and downs ==]

John Tsang: "==唔好講民望呢樣野……"

[== Don't talk about public popularity…..]

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2017)

Interrogative sentences

Interrogative sentences in the Cantonese corpus were marked with a question mark at the end. Compared to English interrogatives, Cantonese questions are indicated by their unique interrogative constructions, such as A-non-A constructions and sentence-final particles (see Example 8), instead of the common word order changes in English (see Example 9) (Matthews & Yip, 1994: pp. 310).

Example (8)   John Tsang: "嗯我（，）係咪 (A-not-A construction) 佢應該熄咗咪架 (sentence-final particle)？"

[And I, was her microphone supposed to be turned off?]

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2017)

Example (9)   Albert Ho: "咁究竟你以咩 (*wh*-word) 為基礎呢？"

[What did you exactly base on?]

(1st H.K. Chief executive election debate 2012)

Results of the H.K. corpus

As shown in Table 6.3, *declarative* is the most frequent sentence type for every candidate in each debate. In comparison with the U.S. corpus, all candidates in Hong Kong constantly used interrogatives as the second most frequent sentence type, with both *imperative* and *exclamative* sentences rarely used (5 and 1 tokens respectively in the entire H.K. corpus).

Table 6.3: Frequency distribution of sentence types in the H.K. corpus

Candidate	Sentence type	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Exclamative
2012 HK 1st debate	CY Leung	160 (86%)	24 (13%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)
	Henry Tang	154 (87%)	24 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Albert Ho	176 (76%)	55 (24%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
2012 HK 2nd debate	CY Leung	185 (97%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Henry Tang	147 (97%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Albert Ho	201 (87%)	30 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2016 HK 1st debate	Carrie Lam	73 (77%)	22 (23%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	John Tsang	56 (72%)	22 (28%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Judge Wu	62 (67%)	30 (32%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
2016 HK 2nd debate	Carrie Lam	72 (97%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
	John Tsang	56 (90%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Judge Wu	55 (67%)	27 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

In Section 6.2, I outlined the preparatory procedures, including the identification of sentences and sentence types and reported on the frequency distribution of the four sentence types.

6.3 Criteria of election-specific factors and broad categories of questions

For the purpose of examining the influence of different election-specific factors in candidates' use of rhetorical questions, this section outlines the criteria of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background in the H.K. corpus.

In addition, this section also explores the overall contextual configuration, in terms of the influence of the format variation and contextual cues on candidates' use of RhQs in the electoral debates.

(1) Candidates' standing in the polls

For each of the four 2012 and 2017 Hong Kong Chief executive debates, each candidate's standing in the polls (based on a 3-4 day polling investigation before each debate) in 2012 and 2017 was compared to the Public Opinion program by the University of Hong Kong.[31]

Table 6.4: Election candidates' standing in the polls in the H.K. corpus

Election debate	RCP's poll average (before each debate)	Leading candidate
1st H.K. (2012)	Leung: 41%; Tang: 21%; Ho: 11%	Leung
2nd H.K. (2012)	Leung: 39%; Tang: 22%; Ho: 11%	Leung
1st H.K. (2017)	Lam: 32.2%; Tsang: 50.6%; Woo: 9.3%	Tsang
2nd H.K. (2017)	Lam: 34.4%; Tsang: 51.2%; Woo: 8.7%	Tsang

(2) Debate format

The criterion distinguishing different debate formats is the degree of interactivity, which refers to the space in each debate that allows candidates to interact with and ask questions to each other (or the studio audience).

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[31] Investigation time period, (HKUPOP, 2012): Mar 12 to 15; Mar 16 to 19; (HKUPOP, 2017): Mar 9 to 13; Mar 14 to 18.

In the four Chief executive debates, there was a clear distinction between the first and second debate in each year in terms of its degree of interactivity among candidates. More specifically, in the first debate, candidates were allowed to direct questions (along with follow-up questions) to each other during the "free debate" session. In the second debate, however, direct exchanges (including questions) between the candidates were not permitted. Therefore, the two first chief executive debates in 2012 and 2016 were defined as "interactive" and the two second chief executive debates in 2012 and 2016 as "non-interactive" in our study.

Table 6.5: Interactivity of different debate formats in the H.K. corpus

Election debate & format	Follow-up questions	Opponent rebuttal	Direct exchanges among candidates
1st H.K. (2012)	Yes	Yes	Yes
2nd H.K. (2012)	No	No	No
1st H.K. (2017)	Yes	Yes	Yes
2nd H.K. (2017)	No	No	No

(3) Candidates' personal and political background

When compared to *candidates' standing in the polls* and *debate formats*, the following factors regarding candidate's personal and political background may be less quantifiable; however, they are still worth-considering given their potential influence in candidates' communication strategies. More specifically, I will consider the nominations candidates received from the Election Committee before the election.

Table 6.6: Candidates' personal and political background in the H.K. corpus

Election year	Candidate	Personal and political background
H.K. (2012)	CY Leung	Nonpartisan (former Convenor of the Executive Council), nominations (293)
	Henry Tang	Nonpartisan (former Chief Secretary for Administration), nominations (379)
	Albert Ho	Democratic Party chairman, nominations (184)
H.K. (2017)	Carrie Lam	Nonpartisan (former Chief Secretary for Administration), nominations (580)
	John Tsang	Nonpartisan (former Financial Secretary), nominations (165)
	Judge Woo	Nonpartisan (former Deputy Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court), nominations (180)

Overall contextual configuration

At the contextual level, I will also take a closer look at the format variation in each election debate, in terms of how candidates ask rhetorical questions in different phases (e.g. opening statements, closing statements, open-discussion, question-and-answer session).

In addition, I will capture relevant contextual cues which may be less generalizable (e.g. more determined by the individual candidate's speaking style) yet worth-investigating, as they also contribute to our understanding of candidates' use of rhetorical questions. These include (i) specific topic(s) that candidates use RhQs to address, (ii) position of RhQs in candidates' speaking turn (e.g. initial, intermediate, end), and (iii) candidates' use of RhQs in isolation vs. in sequence, etc.

In this section, I outlined the criteria of the three election-specific factors, namely, *candidates' standing in the polls*, *debate formats*, and *candidates' personal and political background*. I also explored the overall contextual configuration, which may also influence candidates' use of rhetorical questions.

6.4 Criteria for identifying rhetorical questions and non-rhetorical questions

Following the same working definition of English RhQs, a Cantonese RhQ is that the addresser has no intent to elicit a genuine answer from the addressee(s), who are physically present or absent, but to influence their mental recognition regarding the point that the addresser attempts to make during the election debate.

Along with this definition, there are four variations in terms of candidates' goals, features and functions:

> (i)   the addresser indicates that he or she already knows the answer to the RhQ, and is making an assertion through the RhQ instead of seeking information;
>
> (ii) the addresser did not indicate whether he or she knows the answer to the RhQ, but is signalling their commitment to the implicit answer of the RhQ;
>
> (iii) the speaker uses RhQs as a mean to facilitate his or her argument or current line of talk;
>
> (iv) the speaker uses RhQs to arouse the audience's attention to a point he or she is making.

The interpretation of whether a question was asked rhetorically can be determined by different analytical levels (i.e. from syntactic to pragmatic and contextual aspects).

6.4.1 Rhetorical questions

Question

The question was interpreted as rhetorical, if a complete assertion was embedded in the question, and can be derived clearly on its own without referring to its co-text. As can be seen in the following examples, such types of rhetorical questions may occur in the coercive form of questions (e.g. tag questions), which follows a statement with a complete meaning (1a); or in the less coercive form of questions (e.g. *wh*-questions), with the candidate's use of rhetorical markers to emphasize his or her point of view (1b).

Analytical unit	Examples
(1) Question	**(1a) Rhetorical questions with a complete assertion**
	E.g. "即係你唔敢批評佢 吓嘛？"
	[So you dare not to criticize him, right?]
	[Albert Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012]
	(1b) Rhetorical questions with an assertion, which can be derived from rhetorical markers
	E.g. "點解大學生仲要住劏房呢？"
	[Why university graduates still have to live in sub-divided flats?]
	[Albert Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012]

Question & response

The identification of rhetorical questions may have to go beyond the question itself and also consider the response given by the speaker. The speaker can provide a direct answer to the question, as shown in examples from (2a) below, or an indirect answer to the question, as can be seen in (2b).

Apart from examining the question from the addresser's perspective, the addressee's response also gives us some indication if the question was rhetorical. More specifically, the opponents may express disagreement (2c) or evasive response (2d), instead of answering the rhetorical question.

Analytical unit	Examples
(2) Question & response	**(2a) Rhetorical questions followed by the speaker's direct answer(s)**
	E.g. "我對經濟發展嘅核心思想 喺政府嘅角色方面 係能夠更加主動同埋更加主導。係咩意思呢？ 金融發展係唔可以求其比市場自由發展嘅。"
	[My core thought to the economic development is that the government should take a more proactive role. What does it mean? The financial development cannot be randomly driven by the market.]
	(Henry Tang, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)
	(2b) Rhetorical questions followed by the speaker's indirect answer(s)
	E.g. "咁你點……即係你民……你點樣能夠領導個社會呢？民無信而不立。
	[How can you lead the society? The country will collapse if the people have no trust in it.]
	(Albert Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

(2c) Rhetorical questions followed by the addressee's disagreement

  E.g. Ho: 唔係 郝鐵川，係咪干預緊香港既學術自由？

[No, was Mr. Hao Tiechuan interfering the academic freedom of Hong Kong?" […]]

Leung: "依個問題呢既唔係何俊仁先生口裏面講既一國兩制 […]"

[This issue is not relevant to what Mr. Ho Chun-yan described as one country, two systems […]]

(CY Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

(2d) Rhetorical questions followed by the addressee's evasive response

  E.g. Ho: "OK 梁振英 任何形式既功能組別 完全取消。係抑或唔係?"

[Okay, Leung Chun-ying, all forms of Functional Consistencies to be cancelled. Yes or no?]

Leung: "我同唐英年先生唔同 我從來唔係功能組別立法會選舉既得益者 […]"

[I am different from Mr. Tang Ying-yen. I have never been a beneficiary of any Legislative Council elections from the Functional Consistencies […]]

(Albert Ho and CY Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

Question & co-text

The co-text analysis allows us to determine whether a question was asked rhetorically, in the situation where the speaker did not directly provide an answer (or simply no response given by the speaker) to the question. The decision was made by examining the logical relation between the question and its co-text. In (3a), the answer can be derived from the co-text, as the only possibility to the question.

In addition, the rhetorical question may function as argumentative answers to the preceding question(s), as shown in examples from (3b).

Analytical unit	Examples
(3) Question & co-text	**(3a) Speakers signaling their commitment to their preferred implicit answer of the rhetorical questions**
	E.g. "係 我哋知道新嘅行政長官七月一號就職。依個行政長官點樣喺七月份向老人家每人派三千蚊呢？ [We know that the Chief Executive will take office on July 1st. How can the Chief Executive distribute to each of our elderlies three thousand dollars? (CY Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)
	(Indicating a contradiction between the question and the preceding statement.)

(3b) Rhetorical questions functioning as argumentative answers

E.g. "第二，你唔駛擔心我同中央冇渠道溝通，當我做左特首，第一件事緊係攞返張回鄉証先啦吓嘛？仲唔俾我？"

[Secondly, you don't have to worry if I don't have communication means with the Central government. Once I become the Chief Executive, the first thing I will do is to get my home-return permit back, right? (The Central government) still not give me?]

(Albert Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

Question & inter-text

In some cases, the answer (or the assertion) to the question cannot be derived from the question or its co-text, as the speaker did not elaborate on the question or indicate his or her commitment to the preferred implicit answer. Instead, the speaker assumes that the answer to the question is known by the listeners. An additional check on the topics raised by candidates in their rhetorical questions helps us to determine whether the question was asked rhetorically (e.g. to accuse the opponents of making excuses).

Analytical unit	Examples
(4) Question & inter-text	E.g. "請問唐英年先生，新界有冇一套另外既建築物條例？" [Mr. Tang Ying-yen, is there another Buildings Ordinance in the New Territories?] (CY Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012) (There is only one Buildings Ordinance in the New Territories)

6.4.2 Non-rhetorical questions

In this subsection, I will outline several types of non-rhetorical questions identified in the corpus.

Information-seeking questions

The candidate aimed at getting a genuine answer from the addressee, for example, from the studio audience, moderator, or his or her opponents during the question-and-answer session.

E.g. Lam: "咁所以我想問下胡生對於職專教育點樣看法呢？"
[So I want to ask Mr. Woo, what is (his) view on continuing and professional education?]

Woo: "職專？"
[continuing and professional (education]?]

Lam: "職專教育。"
[continuing and professional education?]

Woo: "係，職專教育我認為呢 […]"
[Yes, for continuing and professional education, I think […]

Procedural questions

The candidate confirmed with the moderator whether they acted properly according to the debate rules, e.g. not getting off-topic, getting permission to continue speaking, etc.

E.g. Moderator: 好請大家靜一靜。[(Studio audience) please keep quiet.]

Tsang: "我係咪繼續講呀？" [Should I continue?]

(1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

In this section, I described the criteria and procedures for classifying the interrogative sentences as *rhetorical questions* or *non-rhetorical questions* in the H.K. corpus, by examining the smallest analytical unit (i.e. question) to the largest (i.e. question and inter-text) at the syntactic, pragmatic, and contextual levels.

To guarantee the reliability, inter-rater agreement was calculated following Wimmer and Dominick (2013: pp. 175) with the analyst comparing his second coding with the first coding after six months. More specifically, for the HK corpus, 75 instances (30% of the data) were re-coded, and Cohen's Kappa showed that the reliability for RhQ identification was substantial: (k=0.778).[32]

6.5 Criteria for identifying face-threatening and non-face-threatening functions

The distinction between *face-threatening* and *non-face-threatening* questions in this study is whether or not a candidate signalled to the audience that he or she is the better candidate, through positive self-representation and negative others-representation for the opponents. More specifically, such a message could be measured by considering the following three elements: (i) pronouns and referent

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[32] The relatively low Cohen's Kappa may be due to the following two reasons:
(i) over-generalization of 'unanswerable' questions as RhQs: as commented by Prof. Hinck, even if a question was initially framed by the candidate(s) as an 'unanswerable' one, it is debatable whether it should still be considered an RhQ if the addressee (e.g. the opponents) can answer it literally;
(ii) over-interpretation of a question's influence on the opponents or the audience: based on the working definition of this study, an RhQ enables the addresser to influence the opponents' or the audience's recognition; however, the relevance with the opponents or the audience in some of the questions asked by the candidates is debatable. For example, whether there is a negative connotation against the opponent (i.e. John Tsang's lack of experience in handling the jurisdiction issues) in Carrie Lam's question "What is his view?" below is debatable (1st HK Chief Executive election debate, March 14, 2017):

> "咁所以或者我想再問下阿 John，係佢雖然做財政司司長期間，或者唔係禁多司法嘅工作……佢點睇呢？"
> [So maybe I can ask John again, although he did not handle many jurisdiction issues when he was the former Financial Secretary […] what is his view?]

terms, (ii) evaluative markers or descriptions, (iii) presuppositions against the opponents, at the analytical levels of the question, and the question and co-text.

Pronouns and referent terms used in the questions reveals to us: (i) the target of being attacked (e.g. opponents), acclaimed (e.g. self), or persuaded (e.g. audience), (ii) evaluative markers or descriptions, which inform us of whether a candidate intended to deliver a positive, neutral or negative message, and (iii) an indication of disagreement between the opponents, which can cause face threats by rejecting the others' claims and ideas. The identification of face-threatening and non-face-threatening questions will be outlined in Sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2.

6.5.1 Face-threatening rhetorical questions

Candidates can directly assert positive self-representations or negative others-representations into their rhetorical questions. For example, in (1a), Albert Ho imposed his goodwill on behalf of the general public by involving them with the use of "all of us". For negative others-representations, in (1b), CY Leung used the third-person pronoun "佢" [he] and the negative evaluation term "自相矛盾" [contradicting] to criticize Henry Tang.

Candidates can also assert positive self-representations or negative others-representations into the co-text. For example, in (1c), Henry Tang used an immediate response "即刻可以做得到既" [it can be done immediately] as an affirmation to his RhQ and promoted his plan of offering enough vacancies for every local pregnant woman in public hospitals. For negative others-representations, in (1d), Judge Woo used an immediate "No" to project an opposite view against it.

Examples
(1a) Positive self-representation in the question

E.g. "因為大家知道係希望我入黎係為大家講啲說話 雖然贏唔到都 冇所謂 係咪呀？"
[Since you know I am here speaking on behalf of the all of us, it doesn't matter even if I couldn't win, right?]
[Albert Ho, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2012]

(1b) Negative others-representation in the question

E.g. "佢呢方面係咪自相矛盾呢咁？"
[Is he contradicting himself in this regard?]
(CY Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

(1c) Positive self-representation in the co-text

E.g. "我係講過，本地既孕婦喺公立醫院可以一人一床位。點樣先可 以做得到呢？即刻可以做得到既。"
[I have said, every local pregnant woman can be offered a bed in public hospitals. How can it be done? It can be done immediately.]
(Henry Tang, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

(1d) Negative others-representation in the co-text

E.g. 每一個你都認為要呃測試到呢學生果個能力嘅，係咪我地幼稚
園低班已經開始考試呢？唔係嘅，係要適合先至考試嘅…
[For everything that can test our students' ability, is it appropriate that
we have an exam even for our kindergarten students? No, it is all about
the appropriateness…]
(Judge Woo, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2016)

6.5.2 Non-face-threatening rhetorical questions

Non-face-threatening rhetorical questions often lack clear evaluative markers or

indication of disagreements with the others (both in the RhQ and co-text) but are often

used in facilitating candidates' current line of talk. For example, in (2a), Judge Woo

pointed out the solution to dealing with the population-ageing problem in response to

his own RhQ.

Examples
(2a) Rhetorical questions facilitating a current line of talk

E.g. "我哋香港呢係面對一個人口老化嘅問題 我哋最重要係做咩呢？
我哋最重要架呢係增加勞動人口 […]"
[We are facing a population-ageing problem in Hong Kong, what is the
most important thing we should do? We have to increase our labour force
[…]]
(Judge Woo, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2016)

In this section, I described the criteria and procedures used for classifying

rhetorical questions as *face-threatening* or *non-face-threatening* functions in the H.K.

corpus, by examining if candidates project positive self-representation or negative

others-representation, using (i) pronouns and referent terms, (ii) evaluative markers or

descriptions, (iii) indications of disagreement with the opponents at the analytical

levels of question, and question and co-text.

6.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I described the H.K. corpus regarding its political background and different debate formats of each selected election in Section 6.1. I also described the criteria and results of identifying sentences and sentences types in the corpus in Section 6.2. In Section 6.3, I outlined the criteria and the overall contextual configuration of the three election-specific factors, i.e. candidates' standing in the polls, debate format, and candidates' personal and political background. In Section 6.4, I outlined the criteria and procedures used for classifying the interrogative sentences as rhetorical questions or non-rhetorical questions. In Section 6.5, I outlined the criteria and procedures used for distinguishing between face-threatening and non-face-threatening questions at the syntactic, pragmatic and contextual levels.

7. H.K. politicians' use of RhQs

This chapter aims to address the second overarching research question "How do H.K. politicians use rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?" with an added focus of comparing between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates through the following three sub-questions:

RQ4: Is there a frequency difference between H.K. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of RhQs in political debates?"

RQ5: What syntactic patterns do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?

RQ6: What pragmatic features do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

To answer RQ4, I will compare the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'prime' candidates (i.e. CY Leung and Henry Tang in 2012, Carrie Lam and John Tsang in 2017) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Albert Ho in 2012 and Judge Woo in 2017) in the presidential debates in Section 7.1. To further examine if there is a significant difference, I will adopt a log-likelihood test.

In Section 7.2, I will address RQ5 by examining candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) sentence structure, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type, with an added log-likelihood analysis to test the significance. I will also examine the syntactic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates.

In Section 7.3, I will answer RQ6 by examining candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type and (ii) face threats.

7.1 Frequency difference in RhQs between H.K. prime & non-prime candidates

As an overview of the RhQ distribution among presidential candidates, Table 7.1 shows that in the four 2012 and 2017 H.K. chief executive election debates, there were 211 rhetorical questions. Albert Ho and Judge Woo, the two 'non-prime' candidates, asked more rhetorical questions (15.73 and 22.87 RhQs per hundred sentences) than the four 'prime' candidates, namely, CY Leung, Henry Tang, Carrie Lam, and John Tsang (7.14, 7.47, 7.65 and 15.70 RhQs per hundred sentences). According to the log-likelihood test, in both 2012 and 2017 H.K. debates, 'non-prime' candidates were more likely to ask RhQs than 'prime' candidates (Yr. 2012: LL=18.4, $p<0.01$; Yr. 2016: LL=10.09, $p<0.01$).

Table 7.1: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the H.K. debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio
2012 HK debates	CY Leung	378	27	7.14
	Henry Tang	348	26	7.47
	Albert Ho	464	73	15.73
2017 HK debates	Carrie Lam	196	15	7.65
	John Tsang	172	27	15.70
	Judge Woo	188	43	22.87
Total		1746	211	N/A

In the following subsections, I will examine how the frequency of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' RhQs varied across different debate formats.

7.1.1 H.K. chief executive debates in 2012

As shown in Table 7.2, a notable difference in the number of RhQs between the first and second chief executive debates in 2012 can also be found.[33] More specifically, in the first chief executive debate in 2012, CY Leung and Henry Tang, the two "real contenders", asked 13.04 RhQs and 12.30 RhQs per hundred sentences. However, when participating in the "less interactive" second debate, CY Leung and Henry Tang profoundly reduced the number of rhetorical questions to 1.55 RhQs and 1.86 RhQs per hundred sentences, respectively. According to the log-likelihood test, the two 'prime' candidates were more likely to ask more RhQs in the "more interactive" format than the "less interactive" format (LL=34.26, p<0.01).

In comparison, although Albert Ho also decreased his number of rhetorical questions from 18.03 RhQs per hundred sentences in the first debate to 13.42 RhQs per hundred sentences in the second debate, such a decrease was not as notable as CY Leung and Henry Tang. More specifically, such a difference between the "more interactive" and "less interactive" is not significant, according to the log-likelihood test (LL=1.57, p>0.05).

Table 7.2: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the 2012 debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio
2012 HK 1st debate	CY Leung	184	24	13.04
	Henry Tang	187	23	12.30
	Albert Ho	233	42	18.03
2012 HK 2nd debate	CY Leung	194	3	1.55
	Henry Tang	161	3	1.86
	Albert Ho	231	31	13.42

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[33] As discussed in Ch.6, the first H.K. chief executive debate in 2012 and 2017 appeared to be more "interactive" than the second debate in 2012 and 2017, as only the first debate allowed direct exchanges among candidates.

7.1.2 H.K. chief executive debates in 2017

As shown in Table 7.3, a similar tendency can be found in John Tsang and Carrie Lam's, the two 'prime' candidates, frequency of rhetorical questions between the first and second debates. John Tsang and Carrie Lam asked 19.27 RhQs and 11.57 RhQs per hundred sentences in the first chief executive debate, but they reduced the number of rhetorical questions to 9.52 RhQs and 1.33 RhQs per hundred sentences respectively when participating in the second debate. According to the log-likelihood test, the two 'prime' candidates were more likely to ask more RhQs in the "more interactive" format than the "less interactive" format (LL=8.78, $p<0.01$).

Judge Woo, the 'non-prime' candidate", asked rhetorical questions most frequently among the three candidates in the first debate (19.61 RhQs per hundred sentences). When participating in the less interactive second debate, Judge Woo further increased his use of rhetorical questions in the second chief executive debate to 26.74 RQs per hundred sentences.

Table 7.3: Frequency distribution of RhQs in the 2017 debates

	Candidate	No. of Sentences	No. of RhQs	Normalized ratio
2017 HK 1st debate	Carrie Lam	121	14	11.57
	John Tsang	109	21	19.27
	Judge Woo	102	20	19.61
2017 HK 2nd debate	Carrie Lam	75	1	1.33
	John Tsang	63	6	9.52
	Judge Woo	86	23	26.74

Judge Woo's increase of RhQs is worth-noting, since Albert Ho, another 'non-prime' candidate in 2012, reduced his use of RhQs in the less interactive second debate. Such a different strategy between the two 'non-prime' candidates may be due to Judge Woo's inexperience as a politician.[34]

7.2 RhQ syntactic structure between H.K. prime & non-prime candidates

This section aims to address the second research question "What syntactic patterns do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

I will examine candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type. Furthermore, I will examine if the usage pattern of these syntactic features in RhQs varied between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates across different debate formats.

7.2.1 Length and complexity of RhQs

As shown in Table 7.4, the average length of RhQs in the 2017 election is longer than in 2012. Henry Tang and Carrie Lam, the two 'prime' candidates (who also received most nominations from the Election Committee),[35] tended to ask longer RhQs compared to other candidates, averaging 32.19 words and 57.27 words per RhQ.

CY Leung and John Tsang, the other two 'prime' candidates who were leading in the polls, also tended to ask longer RhQs, averaging 30.85 and 32.59 characters per RhQ respectively.

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[34] If we examine the 2012 and 2016 U.S. presidential debates, it is interesting to note that Trump in 2016, the more inexperienced politician, did not decrease his frequency of RhQs in the less interactive debates to the extent that the more experienced Romney did in 2012.

[35] The reason for taking into consideration the number of nominations each candidate received from the Election Committee is that the eventual winner of the Chief Executive Election is voted in by the same group of members who nominated them prior to the election.

In contrast, Albert Ho and Judge Woo, the two 'non-prime' candidates, tended to ask RhQs at a shorter length, averaging 11.26 and 19.95 characters per RhQ respectively.

Table 7.4: Sentence length of RhQs in the 2012 and 2017 H.K. presidential debates

Sentence length	2012			2017		
	CY Leung	Henry Tang	Albert Ho	John Tsang	Carrie Lam	Judge Woo
No. of RQs	27	26	73	27	15	43
Total characters	833	837	822	880	859	858
Characters per RhQ	30.85	32.19	11.26	32.59	57.27	19.95

In the following, the difference in word length is demonstrated by comparing candidates' RhQs regarding the sentence structure, lexical density, and explicitness of referents.

In (1), Carrie Lam asked a well-elaborated rhetorical question. The question is clearly defined and grammatically well-formed. It is also lexically dense consisting of a considerable number of lexical items and content words, such as proper nouns (e.g. "國際金融市場" [international trade centre]) and verbs (e.g. "發展" [develop]). The target referent of the rhetorical question is explicit as "監管同埋市場發展" [monitoring and the development of the market] was mentioned. Listeners were supposed to understand Lam's message of the question as it was structured in a clear and complete manner.

(1) Lam: "呃多謝你嘅提問,香港係一個國際金融中心啦,所以喺監管嘅制度同埋水平呢同國際接軌呢係有需要嘅 […] 市場都要發展,**咁所以點樣令到監管同埋市場發展係取得一個平衡呢？**"

[Thank you for your question, Hong Kong is an international trade centre, so it is necessary to have a monitoring system, which reaches the international level […] the market has to develop at the same time, **so how can (we) make a balance between monitoring and the development of the market?**]

(Lam, HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

In comparison, candidates did not embed enough content in some of their rhetorical questions with a short length, especially during the direct exchange with their opponents. In (2), the rhetorical question asked by Albert Ho was without any lexical items or explicit referents but functioned as an interrogation against CY Leung.

(2) Leung: "一國兩制既完整性，就正正係今場選舉大家要正視既嚴肅問題，因為一國兩制就係港人治港……"
[The completeness of the "one country, two systems" is what we have to consider seriously, because the "one country, two systems" is "Hong Kong People ruling Hong Kong"…]

Ho   **咁即係點姐？**
[**So what does it mean?**]

(Leung & Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

Overall, CY Leung, Henry Tang, Carrie Lam, and John Tsang, the four 'prime' candidates, delivered their own claims and arguments through rhetorical questions in a more developed manner, which is somewhat similar to Clinton and Obama, the two U.S. 'prime' candidates. However, as will be elaborated on later, the 'prime' candidates adopted a more aggressive approach when competing with each other in the chief executive debates.

7.2.2 Pronouns of RhQs

Similar to the previous subsection, a notable difference in chief candidates' use of pronouns can be found between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates.

As shown in Figure 7.1, all candidates tended to use more exclusive pronouns (i.e. first-person singular, second-person, third-person plural, third-person singular, and exclusive first-person plural) than inclusive pronouns (i.e. inclusive first-person plural) in their rhetorical questions. In addition, CY Leung and John Tsang, the two "prime candidates" with the largest lead in the polls, included proportionally more inclusive pronouns in their RhQs than the other candidates.
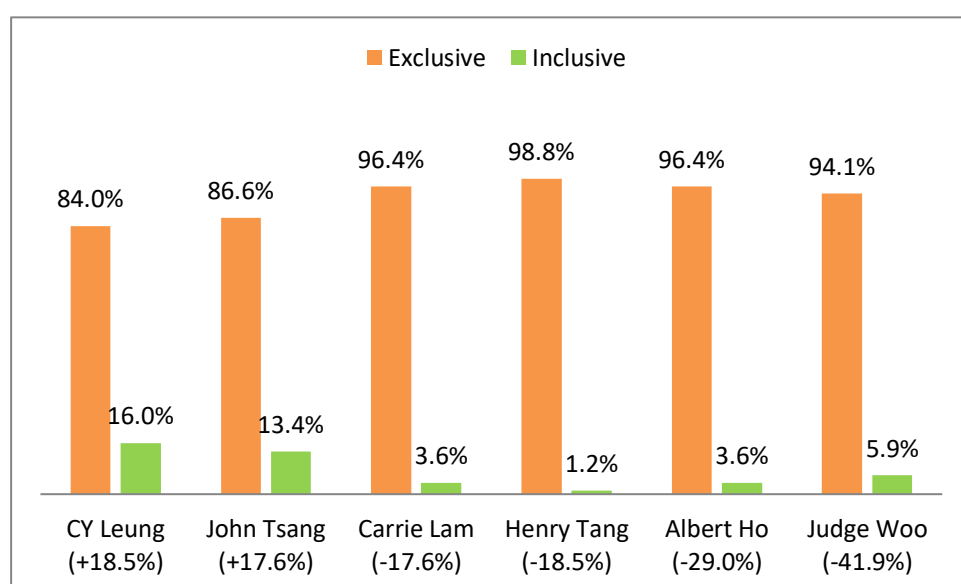
Figure 7.1: Exclusive and inclusive pronouns in H.K. candidates' RhQs.

Compared to the U.S. corpus, where the first-person plural was highly favoured by candidates who were leading in the polls, the first-person plural was not a frequent type used by any chief executive candidate in the debates, as shown in Table 7.5 Instead, a high incidence of the less-distancing second-person pronoun, including "你" [you] (subject/ object), "你既" [your] (possessive), and "你自己" [yourself] (object) and the first-person singular, including "我" [I] (subject), "我既" [my] (possessive), "我" [me] and "我自己" [myself] (object) was highly favoured by the chief executive candidates.

More specifically, the second-person pronoun was the most frequent pronoun used by CY Leung, Henry Tang and Albert Ho in 2012 and John Tsang in 2017. The first-person singular, on the other hand, was the second most frequent type used by all candidates in 2012 and Judge Woo in 2017.

Table 7.5: Pronouns in RhQs in the 2012 and 2017 H.K. chief executive debates

Pronoun	CY Leung	Henry Tang	Albert Ho	John Tsang	Carrie Lam	Judge Woo
I/ me "我"	25	12	27	35	26	27
My "我既"	1	3	0	0	0	0
Myself "自己/ 我自己"	0	1	1	0	0	0
First-person sg. (sub-total)	26	16	28	35	26	27
You "你"	34	54	43	45	14	21
Your "你既"	1	1	0	0	0	0
Yourself "你自己"	0	1	0	1	0	0
Second-person (sub-total)	35	56	43	46	14	21
We/ us "我地"	1	1	1	2	1	1
Our "我地(既)"	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ourselves	0	0	0	0	0	0

"我地自己"						
Exclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	1	1	1	2	2	1
We/ us "我地"	8	1	3	16	1	5
Our "我地(既)"	5	0	0	0	1	0
Ourselves "我地自己"	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inclusive first-person pl. (sub-total)	13	1	3	16	2	5
They/ them "佢地"	0	3	1	2	4	3
Their "佢地既"	0	0	0	0	0	0
Themselves "佢地自己"	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third-person pl. (sub-total)	0	3	1	2	4	3
He/him, she/ her "佢"	5	5	8	18	8	28
His/her "佢既"	1	0	0	0	0	0
Himself/herself "佢自己"	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third-person sg. (sub-total)	6	5	8	18	8	28
Total	81	82	84	119	56	85

Use of the second-person and first-person singular pronouns

The second-person pronoun was frequently used by chief executive candidates in their rhetorical questions to enact the following two major functions: (i) facilitating candidates' direct attack at their opponents, (ii) seeking the common ground from the audience when attacking their opponents.

As an example for the first common function, in (3), Albert Ho was criticising Henry Tang for his policy on the poor efforts to set up retirement protection for the older adults in Hong Kong. Ho used the second-person "你" [you] twice in his rhetorical question to specify Tang as the role of accused. Along with the negation "點解你唔去" [Why didn't you do it], Ho further reinforced the criticism of Tang, by imposing a presupposition that Tang did a poor job in the past.

(3) Ho: "你真係想照顧啲老人家，照顧人地退休人士,點解你唔去認真啲，以及係承諾去到制定設立一個全民退休保障，全民養老金？"

[(If) you want to take care of the older adults and, why didn't you do it more seriously and promise to set up retirement protection, a universal pension?]
(Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

For the second common function of "你" [you], candidates strategically involve the overhearing audience (i.e. the general public) in the midst of their RhQ attack against their opponents. For example, in (4), Judge Woo was criticising Carrie Lam of her flip-flopping on multiple political issues. Interestingly, Woo did not explicitly mention Lam with the use of proper names but used "依啲咁嘅證人" [this type of witnesses] and "佢" [she] to implicitly describe Lam's inconsistencies.

In addition, Woo created an imaginary dialogue and connection with the audience using "你" [you] to refer to them as the sensible attendants in a court. Such a move enabled Woo to establish common ground with the general public as the case of making inconsistent statements in a court (i.e. representing Lam's flip-flop) is clearly unacceptable.

(4) Woo: "咁如果我喺法庭到審案阿 依啲咁嘅證人 前言不對後語 你話我點樣對佢阿？"

        [If I were holding a court trial, (treating) this type of witnesses who are inconsistent in their statements, you say how I should treat them?]

      (Woo, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

In the example above, Judge Woo also used the first-person singular "我" [I] at the beginning of his rhetorical question to put himself in the role of a legit questioner, as well as positioning the opponent in the midst of criticism. Such move was also used by other election candidates frequently, but varied across different interpersonal distances between candidates and others, depending on their combination of pronouns. More specially, in (5), Carrie Lam was questioning whether John Tsang has met with the doctors and reflected their opinions regarding the Hospital Authority's grant. Interestingly, after using "我" [I], Lam referred to Tsang using the more distancing "佢" [him] instead of the more direct "你" [you] as we can see in Judge Woo's rhetorical question in (4).

(5) Lam: "咁所以我想問下阿 John 近年對於醫管局果個撥款，呢同埋佢今次競選有無見過啲醫生，有無反映過呢啲意見呢？"

      [So I want to ask John, in recent years regarding the Hospital Authority's grant, has he met with the doctors and reflected these opinions?]

      (Lam, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

Candidates may also actively promote themselves or their policy with the use of the first-person pronoun. However, they carefully justified such messages to avoid seeming overtly self-centred. For example, in (6), Albert Ho expressed his determination and courage to question the authority with the exclusive use of "我" [I], which highlighted the difference between him and the other two pro-government candidates. However, he mitigated the self-praising message by using "on behalf of the citizens" in his rhetorical question, aiming to justify his action as a pursuit of mutual benefits.

(6) Ho:　　　　　"我都係親自為市民問　值唔值得做呀呢樣嘢？"
　　　　　　　　[I am asking on behalf of the citizens, is it worth it to do this?]

　　　　　　　　(Ho, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

7.2.3 Question types of RhQs

As shown in Figure 7.2, the *wh*-type of rhetorical questions (RhQs) was used most frequently by all chief executive candidates (56.3%). Following *wh*-RhQs, the *yes/no* RhQs were the second most frequent type which accounted for 27.3%. Both declarative questions, tag questions and alternative questions accounted for a relatively low overall usage at 4.6%, 6.1% and 5.7% respectively.

Compared to the U.S. corpus where 'non-prime' candidates who were behind in the polls asked more diversified question types, such tendencies only apply to Albert Ho, who was the former leader of the Democratic Party. This is noteworthy as compared to all other CE candidates who were behind in the polls, Albert Ho was an experienced contender who had previously participated in multiple Legislative Council elections and political debates.
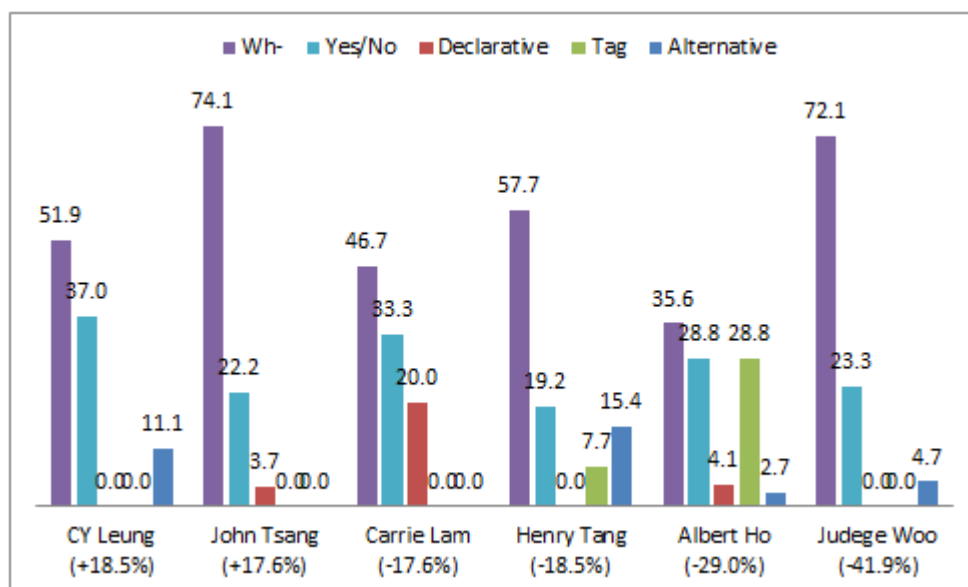
Figure 7.2: Proportion (%) of question types among H.K. candidates' use of RhQs

Taking a closer look at the (i) speech positions and (ii) question-and-answer of the use of *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs, I found the following differences between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates.

'Prime' candidates' use of question types

'Prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs predominately in their own speaking turn to facilitate their claims and arguments. For example, in (7), Tsang's rhetorical *wh*-RhQ attempted to address the teenagers indirectly. With the more open-end answer-hood of the *wh*-question, it allowed Tsang to elaborate his ideology and policy which can provide the city with a bright future for the next generation.

(7) Tsang: "我哋點樣樣可以俾到我哋年青人對未來係有一個希望呢？"
                 [How can we give our teenagers a hope of the future?]

                 (Tsang, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

In the direct exchange with the opponents, 'prime' candidates used both wh-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs. They used *wh*-RhQs frequently to require from their opponents (i.e. mainly the other 'prime' candidates) an immediate answer, which is always against the opponents' political interest. For example, in (8), Carrie Lam's *wh*-RhQ was embedded with an aggressive assertion against John Tsang, implying that he was flip-flopping for the sake of getting support from the voters.

(8) Lam: "咁我想喺呢度問一問阿 John 點解過去九年佢都唔能夠接受呢個建議喺選舉期間可以改變初衷？"

[I want to ask John, why is that in the last nine years, he still has not accepted the suggestion, but all of a sudden he can accept it during the election?]

(Lam, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'prime' candidates tended to frame the questions as well-developed assertions to attack each other, or as an interrogation which restricts the opponents from providing any alternative answers, instead of a simple acceptance (e.g. yes) or denial (e.g. no) of the preceding attack or criticism. For example, in (9), Tang interrogated Leung about his comments in the past on the license renewal of the Commercial Radio of Hong Kong. Tang's *yes/no* question appeared to be highly aggressive, as after Leung not addressing the question directly, Tang continued with his attack by imposing his implied answer "That means you did say it" on Leung.

(9) Tang: "我俾多一次機會俾你。**你有冇講過?**"
[Let me give you one more chance. **Did you say it?**]

Leung: "我喺行政會議裏面講既所有既野呢 全部係有紀錄既。"
[Everything I said in the Executive Council is in the record.]

Tang: 即係你有講過啦。
[That means you did say it.]

(Tang, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

'Non-prime' candidates' use of question types

'Non-prime' candidates used both *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their own speaking turn and used wh-RhQs in the direct exchange with their opponents. In their own speaking turn, 'non-prime' candidates frequently used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs to refer to the issues that the 'prime' candidates were reluctant to answer, aiming to induce doubts in the audience's mind towards the opponents. For example, in (10), Albert Ho asked a number of *wh*-RhQs in a cascade to express his dissatisfaction with society, which he explicitly (or implicitly) attributed to the previous administration and policy making where Henry Tang and CY Leung were involved.

(10) Ho: "各位市民 **點解依個老人家仲要周街執紙皮呢？點解大學生仲要住劏房呢？**中產點解供唔起樓呢？買唔到樓呢？**點解做生意嘅人咁都要捱貴租捱得咁辛苦呢？打工仔嘅強積金點解俾銀行食水咁深呢？香港貧富懸殊點解越黎越嚴重呢？**"

[My fellow citizens, **why do our old people still have to scavenge cardboards? Why do our university students still have to live in sub-divided flats? Why couldn't our middle class afford a home mortgage?** Can't buy a property? **Why are our businessmen suffering that much from the expensive rent? Why is the MPF of our working-class deprived by the banks? Why is the wealth gap getting bigger?**]

(Ho, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

In (11), Woo asked two *yes/no* RhQs to induce doubts in the audience's mind towards his opponents, the two former chief secretaries' handling of the Wang Chau scandal, aiming to criticize their failure of fulfilling their responsibilities.

(11) Woo: "有冇利益輸送？有冇好似議員所講 官商 鄉黑？

[Was there any illegal transfer of benefits? Was there any collusion between the government, businesses, rural groups and organised crime, as said by some LegCo members?]

(Woo, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2017)

In the direct exchange with their opponents, 'non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs to elicit an answer that may cause negative consequences towards the opponents. In addition, they framed the *wh*-RhQs as well-developed assertions to attack the 'prime' candidates. For example, in (12), Judge Woo's rhetorical *wh*-questions were asked in an accused tone against his opponent by inserting a clear message that Carrie Lam was copying his policy of the starter home scheme.

(12) Woo: "呢你話果個首次上車盤點解喺你在任嘅時候唔提出來呢？
(點解) 而家我提咗出來之後呢喺個政綱果度呢,你又會抄咗來提出來呢？"

[Why in your term, didn't you propose the starter home scheme?   (Why) when I proposed it in my manifesto, you copied it?]

(Woo, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2016)

7.3 RhQ pragmatic features between H.K. prime & non-prime candidates

This section aims to address the third research question "What pragmatic features do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?"

I will examine candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee types and (ii) face threats, as well as the pragmatic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates using a more in-depth contextual analysis.

7.3.1 Addressee types

As shown in Figure 7.3, it is worth-noting that H.K. chief executive candidates adopted a reverse strategy compared to the U.S. presidential candidates. More specifically, the majority of their RhQs were directed at the opponents, especially for the 'prime' candidates, i.e., CY Leung (70.4%), John Tsang (51.9%), Carrie Lam (73.3%) and Henry Tang (65.4%). In contrast, Albert Ho and Judge Woo, the two 'non-prime' candidates, adopted a more balanced distribution between addressing the opponents and the audience.

However, as will be further elaborated on in the qualitative findings, I argue that despite the 'prime' candidates' higher incidence of addressing their opponents, they frequently had no intention of creating a genuine interaction with them. Instead, they frequently framed these RhQs as highly assertive and unanswerable, aiming to cause explicit face-threats against them. 'Non-prime' candidates, by contrast, more often frame their RhQs as an interrogation, which required an immediate response from their opponents.[36]

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[36] Particularly in the 'more interactive' debate format, a more immediate follow-up response from the opponents was allowed. However, candidates who were in their speaking turn had the right to allow for or cut off the responses anytime, and therefore, it appears that they were not reluctant to use RhQs to engage in direct interaction with their opponents.
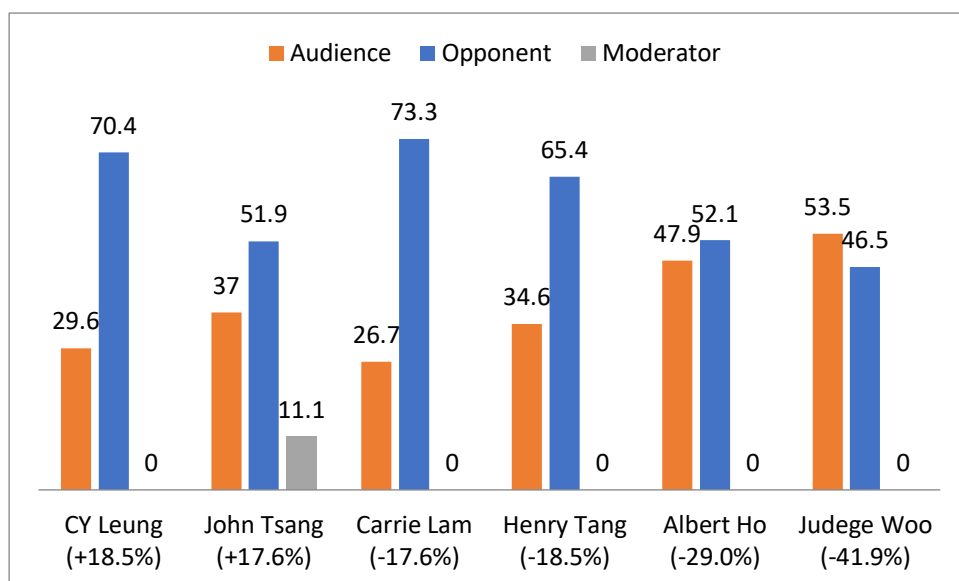
Figure 7.3: Addressee types in H.K. candidates' RhQs.

In addition, in the 'more interactive' debates, both 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates frequently addressed each other with their RhQs. However, 'prime' candidates tended only to target other 'prime' candidates, but neglect the 'non-prime' candidates.

In comparison, 'prime' candidates profoundly reduced their use of RhQs in the "less interactive" debates, which appeared to be a deliberate strategy for them to minimize face threats and make them appear more polite and respectful. By contrast, 'non-prime' candidates strived to create a certain degree of interaction and aggressiveness by frequently addressing the audience in the "less interactive" debates even though the 'prime' candidates were not actively engaged in these exchanges.

In the following subsections, I will report on the distribution of face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs, which reveals a different usage pattern between 'prime' candidates (i.e. CY Leung, Henry Tang, Carrie Lam, and John Tsang) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Albert Ho and Judge Woo) when they addressed their opponents and the audience.

7.3.2 'Prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs

'Prime' candidates predominately used face-threatening RhQs to attack their opponents, especially during the 'more interactive' first debate. In comparison, they mitigated the face-threats by asking relatively more non-face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience. In the following subsections, I will focus on CY Leung in 2012 and John Tsang in 2017, the two 'prime' candidates who had the largest lead in the polls during the chief executive elections.

CY Leung in the 2012 debates

As shown in Table 7.6, all RhQs used by CY Leung when addressing Henry Tang was face-threatening (18 out of 18 tokens, 100%). In comparison, a relatively low percentage of face-threatening RhQs to Tang (5 out of 8 tokens, 62.50%) was noted in Leung's RhQs when he addressed the audience.

Table 7.6: CY Leung's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2012 chief executive debates

	Addressee type / Face-threats	Henry Tang (%)		Albert Ho (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		Total (%)	
2012 HK 1st debate	No. of RhQs	18		1		5		0		24	
	FT	18	100	1	100.00	2	40.00	0	0	21	87.5
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0.00	3	60.00	0	0	3	12.5
2012 HK 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	0		0		3		0		3	
	FT	0	0	0	0	3	100	0	0	3	100.00
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00

When addressing his opponents, CY Leung often embedded a loaded assertion in his RhQs. For example, in (13), when criticising Henry Tang of his scandal, CY Leung first asked an RhQ "你點睇你自己既責任?" [How do you see your responsibility?]. However, the question was with no attempt to elicit a genuine answer from Henry Tang, since in his following RhQ "你是否認為…?" [Do you agree…?], Leung highlighted the rhetorical reading by inserting an explicit assertion "絕大多數香港市民所講既" [as what most Hong Kong people think], that Henry Tang should take full responsibility of the mistake. Borrowing the voice from the Hong Kong citizens as an exemplification of his attack on Tang, Leung made the two RhQs unanswerable for Tang.

(13) Leung: "你點睇你自己既責任?你是否認為,認同絕大多數香港市民所講既,你係責無旁貸既?"

[How do you see your responsibility? Do you agree that as what most Hong Kong people think, you should take full responsibility for the mistake?]

(Leung, 1st HK Chief Executive election debate 2012)

When addressing the audience, CY Leung often asserted his negative evaluation of his opponents in his face-threatening RhQs. In (14), Leung criticised that Henry Tang was justifying his low support rate in the polls by blaming the government. Leung's rhetorical question consisted of two contradictory conditions, implying that there is no way for a politician who had the track record of receiving such a low support rate from the general public.

(14) Leung: "點解佢一方面有政績，一方面又話佢既民望受低民望既政府拖累呢？"

[Why on the one hand, (he said) he had a track record, yet, on the other hand, he said his low support rate was due to the government's performance?]

(Leung, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

John Tsang in the 2017 debates

As shown in Table 7.7, most RhQs used by John Tsang when addressing Carrie Lam (11 out of 12 tokens, 91.67%) and Judge Woo (2 out of 2 tokens, 100%) were face-threatening. Compared to Carrie, Tsang included fewer face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience at 80% (4 out of 5 tokens).

Table 7.7: John Tsang's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2017 chief executive debates

	Addressee type / Face-threats	Carrie Lam (%)		Judge Woo (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		Total (%)	
2017 HK 1st debate	No. of RhQs	12		2		4		3		21	
	FT	11	91.67	2	100.00	0	0	3	100.00	16	76.19
	Non-FT	1	8.33	0	0	4	100.00	0	0	5	23.81
2017 HK 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	0		0		1		0		1	
	FT	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	100.00
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Compared to CY Leung's more assertion-loaded RhQs, John Tsang's face-threatening RhQs tended to create a more interactive exchange with his opponents. For example, in (15), John Tsang was questioning Carrie Lam's public popularity and whether she would be able to unite society. Specifically, Tsang referred to a recent poll which indicated that Lam did not receive enough support from the general public. He further questioned if Lam should consider withdrawing from the election for the sake of unifying the Hong Kong society.

(15) Tsang: "最近有個新嘅調查出來,你嘅支持率係三十個 percent，人地不支持你嘅率呢係四十五個 percent，你喺未上任做特首之前你已經係一個負嘅淨值喇，**你會唔會考慮你退選呢？**"

[A recent survey indicates that your support rate is 30%, and there is a 45% of the counter-support rate. You have such a negative margin before you become the chief executive. **Will you consider withdrawing the election**?]

(Tsang, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2017)

7.3.3 'Non-prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs

'Non-prime' candidates also used face-threatening RhQs predominately to attack their opponents; however, compared to the 'prime candidates', 'non-prime' candidates asked more face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience.

It is interesting to notice, however, that Albert Ho, the more experienced 'non-prime' candidate, reduced the use of face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience. In comparison, another 'non-prime' candidate, Judge Woo, continued with his face-threatening rhetoric to attack his opponents when addressing the audience.

Albert Ho in the 2012 debates

As shown in Table 7.8, Albert Ho also used a high percentage of face-threatening RhQs when addressing the two opponents CY Leung and Henry Tang (i.e. 14 out of 14 tokens, 100%; 22 out of 24, 91.67%). Interestingly, in the second debate when the interactivity among the candidates was greatly limited, Ho still approached the audience frequently with his increased inclusion of non-face-threatening RhQs (from 9 tokens at 25% in the first debate to 10 tokens at 43.48%).

Table 7.8: Albert Ho's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2012 chief executive debates

	Addressee type / Face-threats	CY Leung (%)		Henry Tang (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		Total (%)	
2012 HK 1st debate	No. of RhQs		9		21		12		0		42
	FT	9	100	20	95.24	9	75.00	0	0	38	90.48
	Non-FT	0	0	1	4.76	3	25.00	0	0	3	7.14
2012 HK 2nd debate	No. of RhQs		5		3		23		0		31
	FT	5	100	1	33.33	13	56.52	0	0	19	61.29
	Non-FT	0	0	2	66.67	10	43.48	0	0	12	38.71

Albert Ho often asserted an explicit message in his face-threatening RhQs that his opponents were not qualified to be the political leader of Hong Kong. In (16), Ho used two action verbs "鞠躬" [bow] and "道歉" [apologize] in his rhetorical question to presuppose that if Henry Tang got elected, he would make many mistakes.

(16) Ho: "咁我想問你預備將來會，即係贏左之後會鞠躬幾多次,道歉幾多次呢 ？"

[I want to ask after you take office, how many times are you to bow and apologize to the citizens for your mistakes?]

(Ho, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

Judge Woo in the 2017 debates

As shown in Table 7.9, Judge Woo also used face-threatening RhQs at a predominant 100% when addressing Lam and Tsang (i.e. 15 out of 15 tokens, 5 out of 5 tokens). In the second debate, Woo continued to approach the audience frequently with face-threatening RhQs (18 tokens).

Table 7.9: Judge Woo's face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs in the 2017 chief executive debates

	Degree of face-threats	Carrie Lam (%)		John Tsang (%)		Audience (%)		Moderator (%)		Total (%)	
2017 HK 1st debate	No. of RhQs	11		4		5		0		20	
	FT	11	100.00	4	100.00	4	80.00	0	0	19	95.00
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0	1	20.00	0	0	1	5.00
2017 HK 2nd debate	No. of RhQs	4		1		18		0		23	
	FT	4	100.00	1	100.00	18	100.00	0	0	23	100.00
	Non-FT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

More specifically, in the second debate where the interactivity among candidates was greatly limited, Judge Woo often used his face-threatening RhQs to induce doubts about the credibility and integrity of his two opponents. For example, in (17), Woo criticized both Carrie Lam and John Tsang for refusing to take responsibility for the Wang Chau scandal.

(17) Woo:　　　"到而家呢 佢地仲話 我唔知 唔關我事 卸膊 就算特(首) 架空左你 事後點解唔據理力爭?"

[Even until this point, they still said they don't know, and it's not relevant to them. Even if (you said) it was decided by the chief executive, why didn't you fight for it afterwards?]

(Woo, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2017)

Another RhQ that Judge Woo used in the second debate, as shown in (18), also signals Woo's attempt to escalate the aggression against the two opposing opponents. Specifically, after specifying the two opponents with "兩位司長" [the two chief secretaries], Woo asked the rhetorical question "what did they do for the citizens?" and provided his well-prepared elaborations to reinforce the criticism that the two opposing candidates did not fulfil their responsibilities in the Wang Chau scandal.

(18) Woo:　　　"[…] 我問過兩位司長架喇 佢地究竟喺橫洲呢個醜聞裏面 幫小市民做過乜野野呢? 管房屋果位就話 唔關我事 另一位司長管嘅 負責發展果位就話呢 唔關我事 […]"

[I already asked the two chief secretaries, during the Wang Chau scandal, what did they do for the citizens? The one who governed our housing said he was not responsible for that. Another chief secretary who governed the development also said he was not responsible for that […]]

(Woo, 2nd HK Chief Executive election debate 2016)

8. Summary of the H.K. findings

To answer my second over-arching research question "How do H.K. politicians use RhQs in political debates?", I will summarize my major H.K. findings from Section 8.1 to 8.3. In Section 8.4, I will discuss the theoretical contrast between my U.S. and H.K. findings.

8.1 Frequency distribution of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the H.K. corpus

To answer the first research question "Is there a frequency difference between H.K. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in their use of rhetorical questions (RhQs) in political debates?". I compared the frequency distribution of RhQs between 'prime' candidates (i.e. CY Leung and Henry Tang in 2012, Carrie Lam and John Tsang in 2017) and 'non-prime' candidates (i.e. Albert Ho in 2012 and Judge Woo in 2017) in the presidential debates.

I found that the two 'non-prime' candidates asked more RhQs than the 'prime' candidates in the chief executive debates. I also found that all chief executive candidates asked RhQs frequently in the first debates in 2012 and 2017, which were of "more interactive" format. However, 'prime' candidates profoundly reduced their number of RhQs in the "less interactive" second debates in 2012 and 2017.

These patterns, along with the syntactic and pragmatic analyses in Section 8.2 and 8.3, suggest that 'prime' candidates only engaged frequently with their opponents and audience in the "more interactive" debates. However, in the "less interactive" debates, they did not favour the use of RhQs. In contrast, 'non-prime' candidates used RhQs more frequently and actively to engage with their opponents and the audience in all debates.

8.2 Syntax of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the H.K. corpus

To answer my second research question "What syntactic patterns do H.K. 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?", I examined candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) length and complexity, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question type. I also examined the syntactic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime' candidates.

Sentence structure

Regarding the **sentence structure** of rhetorical questions, I found that CY Leung, Henry Tang, Carrie Lam, and John Tsang, the four 'prime' contenders tended to ask RhQs with a longer length than the 'non-prime' candidates Albert Ho and Judge Woo. By examining the interrogative structure, lexical density and explicitness of referents, I also found that 'prime' candidates tended to use RhQs in a clearly defined and grammatically well-formed manner. 'Prime' candidates' RhQs were also more lexically dense and indicated with more explicit target referents. In other words, 'prime' candidates delivered their political messages through the RhQs in a more clear and complete manner, requiring an effortless interpretation from the listeners.

In contrast, 'non-prime' tended to ask shorter and less clearly defined RhQs to create confrontation against their opponents. More specifically, they constantly seek from their opponents an implied answer that is against the opponents' political interests.

Pronouns

In terms of the **use of pronouns** in chief executive candidates' RhQs, I found that both 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates used exclusive "你" [you] and exclusive "我" [I] predominately within the pronouns in their RhQs in all debates. More specifically, the majority of candidates used the exclusive "你" [you] as their most common pronoun and the exclusive "我" [I] as their second most frequent type. Chief executive candidates tended to use exclusive "你" [you] to attack their opponents while using exclusive "我" [I] to create a unique and favourable political identity for their own.

Question types

Regarding the **question type** of chief executive candidates' RhQs, I found that both 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs most frequently among the five question types, but they differed in the (i) speech positions and (ii) question-and-answer patterns.

'Prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs predominately in their own speaking turn to facilitate their claims and arguments. In the direct exchange with the opponents, 'prime' candidates used both wh-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs. They used *wh*-RhQs frequently to require from their opponents (i.e. mainly the other 'prime' candidates) an immediate answer, which is always against the opponents' political interest. When using *yes/no* RhQs, 'prime' candidates tended to frame the questions as well-developed assertions to attack each other, or as an interrogation which restricts the opponents from providing any alternative answers, instead of a simple acceptance (e.g. yes) or denial (e.g. no) of the preceding attack or criticism.

In comparison, 'non-prime' candidates used both *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their own speaking turn and used wh-RhQs in the direct exchange with their

opponents. In their own speaking turn, 'non-prime' candidates frequently used
wh-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs to refer to the issues that the 'prime' candidates were
reluctant to answer, aiming to induce doubts in the audience's mind towards the
opponents.

In the direct exchange with the opponents, 'non-prime' candidates used *wh*-RhQs
to elicit an answer that may cause negative consequences towards the opponents. In
addition, they framed the *wh*-RhQs as well-developed assertions to attack the 'prime'
candidates.

8.3 Pragmatics of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs in the H.K. corpus

To answer my third research question "What pragmatic features do H.K. 'prime'
candidates and 'non-prime' candidates prefer when using RhQs?", I examined
candidates' RhQs in terms of (i) addressee type, and (ii) face threats. I also examined
the pragmatic similarities and differences between 'prime' candidates and 'non-prime'
candidates.

Addressee types

Regarding the **addressee type** of rhetorical questions, I found that CY Leung, Henry
Tang, Carrie Lam, and John Tsang, the four 'prime' candidates, addressed their
opponents more frequently with their RhQs. In comparison, both Albert Ho and Judge
Woo, the two 'non-prime' candidates, adopted a more balanced distribution between
addressing the opponents and the audience.

In addition, I found that in the 'more interactive' debates, both 'prime' and
'non-prime' candidates frequently addressed each other with their RhQs. However,
'prime' candidates tended   only to target other 'prime' candidates, but neglected the
'non-prime' candidates.

Also, I found that 'prime' candidates reduced their use of RhQs in the "less interactive" debates. In comparison, 'non-prime' candidates strived to create a certain degree of interaction by frequently addressing the audience in the "less interactive" debates.

Face threats

In terms of the face threats, I found a different distribution of face-threatening and non-face-threatening RhQs between 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates when they addressed their opponents and the audience.

'Prime' candidates predominately used face-threatening RhQs to attack their opponents, especially during the 'more interactive' first debate. In comparison, they mitigated the face-threats by asking relatively more non-face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience.

'Non-prime' candidates also used face-threatening RhQs predominately to attack their opponents; however, compared to the 'prime candidates', 'non-prime' candidates asked more face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience.

It is interesting to notice, however, that Albert Ho, the more experienced 'non-prime' candidate, reduced the use of face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience. In comparison, another 'non-prime' candidate, Judge Woo, continued with his face-threatening rhetoric to attack his opponents when addressing the audience.

8.4 Comparison of theoretical findings between H.K. and U.S. corpus

Adopting a more in-depth contextual analysis, this section further examines if RhQs were used by candidates as a politeness device to mitigate the face-threats, or as an impoliteness device to amplify the face-threats against the opponents. More specifically, candidates' use of politeness and impoliteness strategies associated with

their RhQs and surrounding utterances were identified and discussed.

8.4.1. *RhQs as impoliteness devices*

In this subsection, I will highlight some recurrent uses of candidates' RhQs as impoliteness devices identified in the U.S. and H.K. corpus.

Extending Culpepper (2010), Bousfied (2008) and Murphy (2014)'s notions of impoliteness, candidates' use of RhQs were defined as "impolite", when they intentionally caused face-damage to the target addressee (i) in a non-mitigated manner,[37] or (ii) in a deliberately aggressive manner by amplifying the face-threats, at the syntactic or pragmatic levels. For example, at the syntactic level, this can be achieved using *personalized negative characterizations* (Culpepper, 2003; Murphy, 2014) of the opponent(s) in the question or co-text, as shown in (1a), CY Leung's ridicule of Henry Tang's personal conduct when he was the former Chief Secretary for Administration.

(1a) Leung: "你係咪返工既呢？ 或者你返工既時候,你係咪望住天花板,一係,一如傳說中,你望住果張梳化既呢？"

[Are you working? Or when you work, are you looking at the ceiling, or, as what rumours say, are you looking at the sofa?]

(Leung, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

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[37] It is necessary to point out that although there are many mitigation devices at the linguistic level, as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) or other scholars when examining different genres, I will only consider those that are relevant based on the context of each RhQ in my data.

At the pragmatic level, candidates can amplify the face threats, for example, using *unanswerable questions* (Culpepper, 2010; Murphy, 2014). In (1b), despite the use of any negative markers, Clinton's reply to Trump's accusatory RhQs in a sequence may lead to possible negative consequences.

(1b) Trump: "Oh, you didn't delete them?"

        […]

    Clinton: "It was personal e-mails, not official."

    Trump: "Oh, 33,000? Yeah."

        (Trump, 2nd U.S. Presidential election debate 2016)

In a broad sense, most of these RhQs in the U.S. and H.K. corpus can be referred to as Murphy (2014)'s notion of "unanswerable questions" as they were used to elicit a reply from the opponents that may cause "potentially negative consequences" towards them (2014: pp. 91; see also Bull & Wells, 2011:6). For example, in (2), if Trump answered Clinton's RhQ with a "yes" (i.e. that Trump would make such an apology), it would make him accept Clinton's presupposition that he refused to pay thousands of people after taking the labor and goods that they produced. However, an answer of "no" would make Trump appear to be arrogant and irresponsible.

(2) Clinton: **Do the thousands of people that you have stiffed over the course of your business not deserve some kind of apology from someone who has taken their labor, taken the goods that they produced, and then refused to pay them?** I can only say that I'm certainly relieved that my late father never did business with you."

        (Clinton, 1st U.S. presidential debate 2016)

To intensify the face-threats in their unanswerable questions, candidates can create relational distance with their opponents with the use of third-person pronouns, and connect them with negative lexical choices. In (3), Romney included the combination of "he" and "fail" to criticize Obama's immigration policy, which can be seen as an impoliteness strategy that involves "deliberately insulting lexical choices" (Harris 2007: pp. 464) and which according to García-Pastor (2008: pp. 109) disassociates and distances the speaker (S) from the hearer (H). Moreover, in his following utterance, Romney used the formal address term "the President" to maintain such a relational distance, and "increase the imposition weight" (García-Pastor, 2008: pp. 108) by urging Obama to answer the question at that moment.

(3) Romney: "He had a Democrat House and Democrat Senate, supermajority in both Houses. **Why did he fail to even promote legislation that would have provided an answer for those that want to come here legally and for those that are here illegally today?** That's a question I think the President will have a chance to answer to answer right now."

(Romney, 2nd U.S. presidential debate 2012)

In the direct exchange with their opponents, candidates' use of impoliteness strategies in their RhQs and surrounding propositions is more complicated and interrelated to each other. In (4), Henry Tang questioned Albert Ho with the negative presupposition that Ho would make wrong decisions because of his lack of administrative experience. This can be seen as the impoliteness strategy of "convey dislike for, and disagreement with H* and close others (his/her/their things, actions, values and opinions)" as described by García-Pastor (2008: pp. 108).

(4) Tang:　　　　你點樣可以確保，如果你當選之後，你因為冇行政經驗，唔會落錯藥呢？

　　　　　　　[How can you ensure that if you get elected, you will not make the wrong decision because of the lack of administrative experience?]

　Ho:　　　　 […] 每個從政人，都會有第一次執政既經驗，你成日都話冇經驗，咁阿即係永遠就係咪你千秋萬世囉，係咪阿？ […] 但係我睇到你既經驗我就驚喎反為。你啲經驗係搞到點樣呢？ 扶貧委員會，虎，虎頭蛇尾；人口政策，無影無縱。一早要復建居屋喇係咪阿？ 搞到咁多年都唔做。

　　　　　　　[Every political leader has (his or her) first experience of running for political office, you always pick on the lack of experience, which means **you want to be in power forever, right?** […] But when I look at your (so-called) experience I am so worried. **What is the outcome of your experience?** The Commission on Poverty, impressive beginning with a poor ending. Population policy disappeared without a trace. **Should revive the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) much earlier, right**? (You) have postponed it for so many years.]

　　　　　　　(Ho, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

In response to Tang's attack, Albert Ho adopted a progression from deflecting Tang's argument to re-framing it in his own political favour. First, Ho conveyed a sense of "sarcasm" (García-Pastor, 2008: pp. 108; see also Lachenicht, 1980) with the term "千秋萬世" [be in power forever] in his RhQ to deflect Tang's argument by revealing Tang's genuine intent. Ho also used the personalized second-person "你" [you] to associate Tang with his genuine intent explicitly, which can be seen as the type of impolite strategy that Murphy (2014) described as "personalized negative characterizations" (pp. 91-92).

Also, Ho paved his way to reframe the notion of "experience" by first questioning the outcome under Tang's administration "你啲經驗係搞到點樣呢？" [What is the outcome of your experience?]. Ho then referred to Tang's track records of the Commission on Poverty and the population policy, with his negative evaluations of "虎頭蛇尾" [impressive beginning with poor ending] and "無影無縱" [disappeared without a trace]. This move can be seen as the impolite strategy of "belittle or diminish the importance of H and H's things, actions, values and opinions" as proposed by García-Pastor (2008: pp. 108).

Finally, Ho exemplified his counter-attack by criticizing Tang's delay of reviving the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) for so many years with his third RhQ, which can be seen as a "challenge" (García-Pastor, 2008: pp. 108; see also Lachenicht, 1980).

8.4.2. RhQs as politeness devices

In this subsection, I will highlight some recurrent uses of candidates' RhQs as politeness strategies, which enable them to mitigate the face-threats in their RhQs or the surrounding utterances.

Using some of the positive, negative or off-record politeness strategies initially proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), candidates can mitigate the face-threats and thus make themselves appear to be polite and rational individuals in the eyes of the voters. For example, in (5), prior to asking the face-threatening RhQ, John Tsang presupposes the *common ground* (i.e. knowing the importance of approaching the citizens) in combination with the *in-group identity marker* "我地" [we] (Brown and Levinson, 1987:102), which can be seen as an apparent attempt to minimize the face-threats.

(5) Tsang:　　　"阿 Carrie 我知道你係好努力閉門做野嘅,呃但係我地都知道呢係面對市民果個重要性,我就想問下你你點解即係每一次落去你都要用禁多警力嘅呢？"

　　　　　　　[Carrie, I know you work very hard on your own, but we all know the importance of approaching the citizens, I want to ask why you use this much police force when reaching the general public.]

　　　　　　　(Tsang, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2017)

In (6), despite the divergent view between Henry Tang (the pro-establishment candidate) and Albert Ho (the pro-democracy candidate) on enacting Article 23, Ho first used Brown and Levinson (1987)'s mitigation strategy of "presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground" (pp. 117). More specifically, Ho first referred to some of the comments that Tang made before "廿三條你就話係政府頭上一把刀…" [you said Article 23 is like a knife above the head of the government], which were in partial agreement with himself (i.e. the shared concern of the negative consequences if the process is rushed through). Ho then used the modal phrase "係咪應該" [should (we) really] to mitigate the intensity of such an urge, which can be seen as "minimize the imposition" outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987: pp. 176).

(6) Ho:　　　　我想問下唐英年呢，廿三條你就話係政府頭上一把刀，喂，真係好容易吉親人喝跌落嚟，咁係咪應該，真係要有一個有公信力既立法會，民選，普選既特首，睇到社會需要，先制定立法，唔應該匆匆立法？

[I want to ask Tang Ying-yen, you said Article 23 is like a knife above the head of the government, which may hurt someone easily, so should (we) really have a credible LegCo and Chief executive elected through universal suffrage, who can see the need of the society, before enacting Article 23?]

(Ho, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

Another strategy to mitigate the face-threats is to "give (or ask for) reasons" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: pp. 128) and "hedge" (1987: pp. 145). In (7), after asking the RhQ "*why won't he release his tax returns?*" to induce the audience's doubts about Trump's credibility, Clinton did not provide a negative criticism in an explicit way, as we can see in some other instances. Instead, she mitigated the threats by suggesting two reasons in her following utterances "First…" and "Second…". In addition, Clinton adopted several hedging markers, including "I think" and "maybe".

(7) Clinton: "So you've got to ask yourself, why won't he release his tax returns? And I think there may be a couple of reasons. First, maybe he's not as rich as he says he is. Second, maybe he's not as charitable as he claims to be.

(Clinton, 2nd U.S. presidential debate 2016)

A distinctive phenomenon observed in the Hong Kong chief executive elections is that candidates may initiate co-operation with the other candidates to attack a specific opponent. In (8), John Tsang ridiculed Carrie Lam's failure of proposing new policies. Interestingly, instead of directly addressing Lam, John Tsang was asking if Judge Woo the other opponent has read Lam's proposal "我唔知你有無睇過呀" [I'm not sure if you have read it], as if Woo can share with him if he found anything new. This move can be seen as Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness strategy of "convey that S and H are co-operators" (pp. 125).

In addition, Tsang used a considerable number of hedging markers, including "我唔知" [I'm not sure], "或者" [maybe], "一下" [a little bit] to minimize the imposition on Woo. The entire setup enables Tsang to take cover under Woo's (potential) agreement when performing such face-threatening acts towards Carrie Lam.

(8) Tsang: 咁然後另外佢亦都話佢有一個新嘅政策，咁呢啲新嘅政策睇來睇去我都睇唔到有啲咩新嘅地方，我唔知你有無睇過呀，**如果你有睇過嘅話,或者你可以同我分享一下，究竟係有啲咩嘅新野呢**？

[And then she said she has a new policy, but I couldn't find what's new about this, I'm not sure if you have read it, if you have read it, maybe you can share with us, exactly what are the new policies?]

(Tsang, 1st H.K. chief executive debate 2017)

During the process of conveying that S and H are co-operators, candidates may also indicate their acknowledgement of the other's actions. In (9), in response to Henry Tang's earlier accusation of another candidate CY Leung,[38] Albert Ho acknowledged Tang's action of issuing a legal letter through ICAC to accuse Leung after the first debate, ~~as~~ describing it as "大膽" [courageous]. This can be seen as the politeness strategy of "notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods) and "exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)" as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987: pp. 103-104)."

(26) Ho: "咁好清楚啦 咁呢一個講話係有第二個話冇 咁呢是但一個講大話。[…] 不過似乎唐英年大膽啲喎走去告人添依家 走去廉署度告人仲出律師信。 咁我唔知你即係嗰膽識點樣 **係咪應該搵個人獨立啲去睇睇啊**？**係咪呀**？依個大家香港人都最關心就係特首嘅誠信丫嘛。"

[So it is clear that either one of them is lying […] But it seems that Henry Tang is more courageous, as he even issued a legal letter through ICAC to accuse CY Leung. I am not sure how courageous you really are, should (we) really ask someone to investigate it independently? Right? Hong Kong citizens care most about the integrity of the chief executive.]

(Ho, 2nd H.K. chief executive debate 2012)

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[38] In the first 2012 chief executive debate, Henry Tang accused CY Leung of suggesting in an Executive council that the Hong Kong police has to send anti-riot police and tear-gas to deal with the protesters eventually

In addition, Ho also used the modal phrase "係咪應該" [should (we) really] to mitigate the intensity of the urge in his RhQ "係咪應該搵個人獨立啲去睇睇啊？" [should (we) really ask someone to investigate it independently?]. Although as can be seen in his earlier presupposition "either one of them is lying", Ho's genuine intent is to highlight the dishonest and conflicts between Tang and Leung, his use of a series of mitigation strategies enables him to appear rational and polite in the eyes of the voters.

In this section, I examined whether candidates' rhetorical questions (RhQs) were used as a politeness or impoliteness device by identifying candidates' use of politeness and impoliteness strategies associated with their RhQs and surrounding utterances. Overall, the use of RhQs is still an impoliteness device for candidates to cause face-damage to the opponents in a deliberately aggressive manner.

Specifically, candidates' recurrent use of impoliteness strategies were identified as (i) unanswerable questions, (ii) deliberately insulting lexical choices, disassociate, distance from H, (iii) increase the imposition weight, (iv) convey dislike for, and disagreement with H* and close others (his/her/their things, actions, values and opinions), (v) sarcasm, (vi) personalized negative characterizations, (vii) belittle or diminish the importance of H and H's things, actions, values and opinions, and (viii) challenge.

Candidates' recurrent use of politeness strategies were identified as (i) presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground, (ii) minimize the imposition, (iii) give (or ask for) reasons, (iv) hedge, (v) convey that S and H are co-operators, (vi) notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods), and (vii) exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H).

9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will compare the major findings between the U.S. and H.K. corpus in Section 9.1 to address the research question "How do U.S. politicians use RhQs compared to H.K. politicians?" I will also reiterate the significance and contributions to the theoretical, methodological and cultural gaps in Section 9.2, and the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research in Section 9.3.

9.1 Comparison of major U.S. and H.K. findings

In this section, I will compare between the U.S. and H.K. findings by summarizing their similarities and differences in (i) frequency distribution of RhQs, (ii) syntax of RhQs and (iii) pragmatics of RhQs.

Frequency distribution of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs

In both U.S. and H.K. corpus, 'non-prime' candidates tended to ask more RhQs than 'prime' candidates in the debates. Compared to the U.S. findings, where there is no clear frequency difference found across different debate formats, there is a notable difference between the first and second H.K. chief executive debates. Specifically, all chief executive candidates asked RhQs frequently in the first debates in 2012 and 2017, which were of "more interactive" format. However, 'prime' candidates profoundly reduced their number of RhQs in the "less interactive" second debates in 2012 and 2017.

These patterns suggest that H.K. 'prime' candidates only engaged frequently with their opponents and audience in the "more interactive" debates, but they did not favour the use of RhQs in the "less interactive" debates. In contrast, H.K. 'non-prime' candidates used RhQs as a recurrent pattern to actively engage with their opponents and the audience in political debates. A further difference can be found in terms of

'non-prime' candidates' experience as a politician prior to the election campaigns. More specifically, in both U.S. and H.K. election debates, the more inexperienced 'non-prime' candidates did not decrease their frequency of RhQs in the "less interactive" debates to the extent that the more experienced 'non-prime' candidates did. This finding suggests that the more inexperienced 'non-prime' candidates were less aware of the interactivity of different debate formats and tended to remain aggressive with the frequent use of RhQs.

Syntax of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs

In terms of **sentence structure**, both H.K. and U.S. 'prime' candidates delivered their own claims and arguments through longer rhetorical questions in a more developed manner compared to the 'non-prime' candidates.

Regarding the use of **pronouns**, there is a clear contrast between the 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates in the U.S. debates. Specifically, both Obama and Clinton, the two 'prime' candidates, used inclusive "we" most frequently within the pronouns in their RhQs, aiming to create a sense of unity with the voters. In comparison, both Romney and Trump, the two 'non-prime' candidates, used the exclusive "you" most frequently within the pronouns in their RhQs, aiming to shorten the interpersonal distance with their opponents and put them in the role of accused. From a theoretical perspective, this also indicates that US candidates' pronoun use were influenced by the different conceptual world views that the Democratic Party and Republican Party holds. More specifically, while Democratic candidates' frequent use of inclusive pronouns reflected their partisan values of nurturance and empathy, Republican candidates tended to use exclusive pronouns to express their values of strength and authority (see also: Lakoff, 1996; 2002; Ahrens & Lee, 2009).

For the H.K. findings, however, there is no such a clear contrast between the

'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of pronouns. Specifically, both H.K. 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates used the exclusive "你" [you] predominately to attack their opponents, and the exclusive "我" [I] create a unique and favourable political identity for themselves. Overall, the use of pronouns in the H.K. chief executive debates revealed more personal and mud-slinging rhetoric compared to the U.S. presidential debates. Also, the lack of contrastive patterns in pronouns use among the non-partisan HK chief executive candidates highlights the difference between the US and HK electoral systems.

In terms of **question types**, both H.K. and U.S. candidates used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs most frequently among the five question types. U.S. 'prime' candidates tended to use *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs in their own speaking turn to facilitate their claims and arguments, which require no cooperation from their opponents. In contrast, U.S. 'non-prime' candidates more often used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs to require an immediate answer from their opponents, which is always against their opponents' political interest.

A similar pattern of the use of *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs was found in the H.K. corpus. However, in their own speaking turn, H.K. 'non-prime' candidates more often used *wh*-RhQs and *yes/no* RhQs to refer to the issues that the 'prime' candidates were reluctant to answer, aiming to induce doubts in the audience's mind towards the opponents.

Pragmatics of 'prime' and 'non-prime' candidates' use of RhQs
Regarding **addressee types**, in the U.S. corpus, while the 'prime' candidates addressed the audience predominantly with their RhQs, 'non-prime' candidates, included relatively more RhQs to address their opponents. These patterns reveal that 'prime' candidates tended to communicate with the audience while avoiding direct

interaction with their opponents, while 'non-prime' candidates were more likely to create a direct interaction with their opponents. From a theoretical perspective, this shows how candidates can manipulate the "direct recipient" of their RhQs and alter the degree of face damage towards their opponents by making reference to them directly or indirectly.

In contrast, in the H.K. corpus, 'prime' candidates tended only to target the other 'prime' candidates, but neglected the 'non-prime' candidates. Also, while the H.K. 'prime' candidates reduced their use of RhQs in the "less interactive" debates, H.K. 'non-prime' candidates strived to create a certain degree of interaction by frequently addressing the audience in the "less interactive" debates through the use of RhQs.

In terms of **face threats**, in the U.S. corpus, while 'non-prime' candidates gradually increased the proportion of face-threatening RhQs across the first and second debates, there is no consistent proportion pattern between the two 'prime' candidates' use of face-threatening RhQs. However, compared to the 'non-prime' candidates, 'prime' candidates tended to maintain a certain interpersonal distance and avoid direct conflict with their opponents when using RhQs.

In the H.K. corpus, 'prime' candidates predominately used face-threatening RhQs to attack their opponents but mitigated the face-threats by asking relatively more non-face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience. In contrast, 'non-prime' candidates asked more face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience.

It is interesting to notice that in both U.S. and H.K. corpus, the more experienced 'non-prime' candidate reduced the use of face-threatening RhQs when addressing the audience, while the more inexperienced 'non-prime' candidates continued with their face-threatening rhetoric to attack their opponents when addressing the audience.

In addition, regarding RhQs politeness and impoliteness devices, I found that

only a small portion of candidates' RhQs still follows the mechanism of Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theories, with their deployment of mitigation strategies. However, in overall, the use of RhQs is still an impoliteness device for candidates to cause face-damage to the opponents in a deliberately aggressive manner with the recurrent amplification of face-threats (i.e. Bousfield, 2008; García-Pastor, 2008; Culpepper, 1996; 2011; Murphy, 2014).

9.2 Contributions and implications

9.2.1 Methodological contributions

Given the current lack of systematic analytical framework to identify and categorize rhetorical questions (RhQs) in debate studies, this study extended the analytical levels of identifying RhQs by including both syntactic and semantic, pragmatic and contextual levels, with the added focus of identifying and examining the discourse factors in political debates that influence candidates' use of RhQs,

To examine how candidates may manipulate their use of RhQs at the more micro syntactic and semantic level, I proposed the following parameters: (i) sentence length and interrogative structure, (ii) use of pronouns, and (iii) question types.

At the more macro pragmatic and contextual level, I proposed the parameters of (i) addressee-types, and (ii) the degree of face-threats, with the aim of understanding how candidates manage the interpersonal distance and face work in political debates. For all of the above parameters, I provided detailed criteria by referring to the empirical data with the context in my corpus, as well as applying both discourse and conversation analytical tools to cater to the highly-contextual nature of RhQs.

In sum, this study aims to provide future research with a more concrete and systematic analytical framework to identify and categorize rhetorical questions from multiple perspectives in political debates.

9.2.2 Theoretical contributions

First, as existing debate studies have mainly adopted more "macro" top-down approaches, they could not show us clearly to what extent candidates' use of rhetorical questions is influenced by different discourse factors. Therefore, I identified from the literature the following three major factors, including *candidates' standing in the polls*, *personal and political background* and *debate format*. Using both quantitative and qualitative analyses, I interpreted the relationship between rhetorical questions and these contextual factors.

Second, this study examined the realization of politeness and impoliteness through different mitigation and amplification strategies in candidates' RhQs, with an added focus of analyzing the impact of the complex participant relationships, which contributes to a better understanding of politicians' genuine intent and considerations of face management in political debates.

9.2.3 Cultural implications

This study contributes to a better understanding of to what extent the cultural difference in candidates' personal and political background and electoral systems influence their communication and rhetorical question strategies. Specifically, this study examined how candidates' RhQ strategies and certain syntactic and pragmatic patterns were influenced by the different conceptual world views that their political parties hold, as well as the constitution of audience due to the different election processes between the US and HK.

9.3 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

Given the limits of time, this study could only conduct both quantitative and in-depth qualitative analysis to examine a relatively small corpus size, which includes only ten political debates in total. Although I have identified similar usage patterns of rhetorical questions shared by candidates under similar circumstances (e.g. standing in the polls, debate formats), a more comprehensive understanding can be obtained through examining a larger corpus.

Also, as mentioned in the methodology sections, the relatively low Cohen's Kappa for RhQ identification in the US and HK corpora may be due to two reasons. First, the over-generalization of 'unanswerable' questions as RhQs, that is, even if a question was initially framed by the candidate(s) as 'unanswerable', it is debatable whether the question should be considered rhetorical if the opposing candidates managed to answer it. Second, the over-interpretation of a question's influence on the addressee, that is, based on the working definition of this study, an RhQ enables the addresser to influence the opponents' or the audience's recognition (e.g. urging the opponents to answer, persuading the audience, etc.); however, the relevance with the opponents or the audience in some of these questions is unclear.

To increase the reliability of the RhQ identification, a clearer distinction between the genuine 'unanswerable RhQs' and the non-RhQ type (i.e. the one appeared to be 'unanswerable' yet was answered by the opposing candidates) should be drawn. The influence of the addresser's RhQs on the addressee(s) should also be defined clearly.

Another limitation of this study is that the interpretation of the message, functions and implications of candidates' use of rhetorical questions were mainly determined from one analyst's interpretation. Although a more in-depth and comprehensive consideration of the contextual and generic environments at different levels (e.g. direct and thematic addressee types, different phrases during the political

debates, etc.) was involved, it will be useful if the audience's perception of these rhetorical questions could also be considered as a comparison to the analysts' interpretation. It will also help us to understand the impact of candidates' use of RhQs in terms of frequency and aggression and in what way the rhetorical questions can be used as an effective strategy for candidates to win over an audience.

Also, as identified in this study, the more complex participant relationship in a political debate (e.g. the number of candidates on the stage, as well as their different backgrounds and standing in the polls) may influence candidates' rhetorical question strategies, both syntactically and pragmatically. It would be interesting for future research to examine electoral debates that involve a greater diversity of participants (e.g. candidates, audience and participants) and compare the inter-relationship among them.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of examining the gender impact on politicians' use of RhQs and (im)politeness strategies, especially when there were two female candidates (i.e. Hillary Clinton in the 2016 US election and Carrie Lam in the 2017 HK election) participating in the debates.

It will also contribute to our more comprehensive understanding of politicians' use of RhQs if we take into consideration the conditions (e.g. topic) under which different kinds of RhQs are used in the debates, the influence of formats (e.g. involvement of moderator and studio audience), and the impact of cultural differences (e.g. linguistic implications, such as sentence-final particles in Cantonese).

Appendix 1: Summary of Dailey, Hinck & Hinck (2008)'s politeness schema

Level 1: Strategies that directly threaten the other's face.

A. Speaker explicitly states that the other person exhibits poor character and/or
B. leadership competence.
    Speaker explicitly expresses concern over the poor policies and proposals
C. followed or offered by the other.
D. Speaker asserts explicitly that the other person is responsible for the problems
E. currently experienced.
    Speaker directly asserts that the other is engaging in the incorrect use of data.
F. Speaker directly states that he is in strong disagreement with the feelings, ideas,
    and/or policies of the other.
G. Speaker explicitly acknowledges the other is using inappropriate campaign
    tactics.
    Speaker explicitly ridicules the other individual, his/her plan, or his actions.

Level 2: Strategies that indirectly threaten the other's face.

A. Speaker claims that poor character and/or leadership competence is present
    without directly attributing this to the other.
B. Speaker expresses concern over poor policies and proposals without directly
    associating these with the other.
C. Speaker asserts some entity is responsible for the problems currently
    experienced without attributing these directly to the other.
D. Speaker claims some entity is making incorrect use of data.
E. Speaker states that there is a disagreement between him and the other without
    explicitly stating that he directly and strongly disagrees with the other.
F. Speaker acknowledges the use of inappropriate campaign tactics without
    attributing these to the other.
G. Speaker uses ridicules without directly focusing on the other.

Level 3: Strategies that balance both threatening and supportive implications of the statements uttered.

A. Speaker asserts that the other possesses both positive and negative personal
B. characteristics.
   Speaker provides excuses, sympathy, concern, or understanding for the other's ideas, but also points out the negative consequences of the same ideas.

Level 4: Strategies that support the other's face.

A. Speaker reveals that he shares common feelings and ideas with the other.
B. Speaker claims that a common identification demonstrates how he and the others are similar.
C. Speaker provides excuses for other or alternate interpretations of a situation, giving the other benefit of the doubt.

Level 5: Speaker directly approves the face of the other.

A. Speaker explicitly states that the other exhibits good character and/or leadership competence.
B. Speaker explicitly expresses praise and optimism for the poor policies and proposals followed or offered by the other.
C. Speaker explicitly praises past good efforts by the other.
D. Speaker agrees that the other is using reliable information in making a point or argument.

Appendix 2: Summary of Carlin et al. (2001)'s clash and non-clash strategies

6 Clash Categories

(i)   Analysis of position-self: An analysis of a candidate's own position or character issues, including also reasons or explanations for them.

(ii)   Analysis of position-opponent: An analysis of an opponent's own position or character issues, including also reasons or explanations for them.

(iii)   Extension of position-self: Further development or elaboration of the analysis of a candidate's own position or character issues.

(iv)   Extension of position-opponent: Further development or elaboration of the analysis of an opponent's own position or character issues.

(v)   Comparison of position: Candidates contrast and compare the positions of both self and opponent.

(vi)   Statement to the opponent: Candidates' statement directed to the opponent.

2 Non-Clash Strategies

(i)   Policy statement: A statement that offers a candidate's or opponent's position or a desired future direction, without analysis supporting that position.

(ii)   Ritualistic statement: Statements that function to follow the ritual of debates.

Appendix 3: Brown and Levinson (1987)'s positive and negative politeness

strategies

Positive politeness
Do FTA on record plus
redress to:
H wants [S wants H's wants]

5.3.1 Claim 'common ground'
(S & H ∈ {A} who want {X})

Convey 'X is admirable, interesting'

1. Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)
2. Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
3. Intensify interest to H

Claim in-group membership with H

4. Use in-group identity markers

Claim common — point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, empathy

5. Seek agreement
6. Avoid disagreement
7. Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
8. Joke

5.3.2 Convey that S and H are cooperators

Indicate S knows H's wants and is taking them into account

9. Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants

Claim reflexivity

If H wants ⟨H has X⟩ then S wants ⟨H has X⟩
If S wants ⟨S has X⟩ then H wants ⟨S has X⟩

10. Offer, promise
11. Be optimistic
12. Include both S and H in the activity
13. Give (or ask for) reasons

Claim reciprocity

14. Assume or assert reciprocity

5.3.3 Fulfil H's want (for some X)

15. Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

Negative politeness
Do FTA x
(a) on record
(b) plus redress to H's want to be unimpinged upon

5.4.1 Be direct — Be direct
— clash —
1. Be conventionally indirect

5.4.2 Don't presume/assume — Make minimal assumptions about H's wants, what is relevant to H
2. Question, hedge

5.4.3 Don't coerce H (where x involves H doing A)

Give H option not to do act

Be indirect
Don't assume H is able/willing to do A
Assume H is not likely to do A

3. Be pessimistic

Minimize threat — Make explicit R, P, D values

4. Minimize the imposition, Rx
5. Give deference

5.4.4 Communicate S's want to not impinge on H

6. Apologize

Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement

7. Impersonalize S and H: Avoid the pronouns 'I' and 'you'
8. State the FTA as a general rule
9. Nominalize

5.4.5 Redress other wants of H's, derivative from negative face

10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

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