"When You're a Star":

Analysing Accusations of Sexism and Misogyny against President Donald Trump

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Abstract

Donald J. Trump is unarguably a controversial United States president for a number of reasons, and one of these is that he has attracted widespread criticism from the media and elsewhere with regard to comments he has made about specific women, or women in general. As a result, some commentators have claimed his statements are indicative that he is misogynistic and/or sexist. This essay will analyze a selection of some of what may be considered the most egregious examples from two linguistic perspectives: pragmatics and sociolinguistics. It is concluded in this essay that, while Trump may have been expressing bigoted views of women in the utterances analysed, the criticisms have, willfully or otherwise, failed to consider both social context and speaker intention. A linguistic analysis shows that, when accounting for such contextual factors, the possibility of less malign interpretations emerges. In addition, by presenting Trump in that manner, the commentators and the media outlets in which they are published or broadcast may be revealing more about their own political agendas, or hostility to Trump, than about the President's own prejudices. In order to understand and uncover media bias, linguistic approaches, such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics, are perceived as useful tools in order to achieve that.
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1. Introduction

At the time of writing this essay, Donald Trump is undoubtedly a public figure with massive global influence and is possibly even the most powerful politician in the world. After the 2016 presidential election debates between him and Hillary Clinton, Trump has subsequently and frequently been confronted by critics on his style of politics and, in particular, the nature of the utterances he has made, by the media. As a result, the media appear to question whether his moral character is such that he is fit to hold the office of President of the United States. Some elements in the media may be hostile to him personally, and to his political positions in general, and are willing to highlight any behavior and statements he has made which they believe could decrease the possibility of him being re-elected president in 2020. Trump is criticized for, among other things, his comments in relation to women, and some of these have been characterized as sexist, and even misogynistic.

While it is not possible to establish Trump's character in a research project such as this, it is worthwhile to investigate whether at least some of the claims of sexism and misogyny are entirely supportable from a strictly linguistic perspective. Therefore, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. **To what degree is it fair to describe some of the most notorious of Donald Trump's utterances as misogynistic and/or sexist?**

2. **Do these utterances justify labelling him as a misogynist and/or sexist and, if so, why?**

3. **How much are such utterances explainable by stereotypical male speech behaviour, as described by linguists?**

The above questions will be considered by the application of linguistic theoretical approaches relating to context and speaker intention and, particularly, the influence of gender in speech acts in the Theoretical Background and Research chapter. The approach by which the data will be selected will be described in the Methodology chapter, and this data will be outlined and analysed in the Results and Analysis chapter. The quotes selected as
data will be assessed from a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective in order to determine the full context and the speaker's intended meaning. This objective linguistic analysis will be compared with the criticism of the comments found in both media and academic articles in order to assess whether they are fair or not.

Thereafter, in the Discussion chapter, the implications of the findings of this study, including Trump's utterances in respect of the context in which they occurred, his possible intended speech acts, and factors relating to gendered speech, will be explored. This will be followed by an evaluation of the legitimacy of the interpretation of Trump's comments to establish whether they conform to assertions about male speakers by sociolinguistic scholars on gender and language. Finally, the essay will be summarised in a Conclusion chapter and will terminate with suggestions for further research.
2. Theoretical Background

This chapter will focus on male and female speech and behavior as well as on the relationship between duets and duels, as explained by Locke (2011). Additionally, the importance of status and connection will be emphasized. Speech acts and Grice's theory of conversational implicature are linguistic theories that will also be included in this chapter. Finally, this chapter will focus on Trump's life, his manner of speech prior and after his entrance into politics, the relation between him and Hillary Clinton in terms of speech and the reactions of academia on his gendered speech.

2.1 Characteristics of Male and Female Speech

Speech patterns develop during the earlier life stages of the children, creating the male-associated speech and the female-associated speech (Meditch 1975). Meditch (1975) explains that: "contrary to cultural beliefs, role expectations influence children's development of sex-specific speech more than biology" (Meditch, 1975: p. 421). In addition, developing the paths of sex-oriented speech are not similar for both sexes and adopting a sex-oriented speech pattern requires more time for girls than it does for boys (Meditch 1975). At the age of three, both sexes start to identify themselves with the sex-oriented speech (Meditch 1975). Meditch (1975) continues by emphasizing the distinction between male and female speech by characterizing sex-differentiated speech as the reason of the different speech patterns. In addition, it is explained that male and female speech are formed after the anthropological and cultural stereotypes of a society during the earlier stages of life. Furthermore, Meditch (1975) states that male and female speech differ due to the existence of sex-appropriate role behaviors. As a result, sex defines the pattern of speech that men and women inherit through culture and learn to practise (Meditch 1975).

According to Holmes (1991), "Before the second half of this century, descriptions of speech differences between women and men were relatively sparse, and they tended to treat male forms as the norm for a language" (Holmes, 1991: p. 207). This refers to the stereotypes of gender speech behaviors during the 20th century, as male speech behavior was perceived as
the stereotypical manner of speech for both genders as well as being the superior gender in societies between 1900-1950 (Holmes 1991).

Early linguistic studies present evidence of differences in male and female speech behavior, according to Holmes (1991).

2.2 Distinguishing Male and Female Speech Behavior

According to Locke, "men and women talk differently" (Locke, 2011: p. 1). Locke (2011) argues that the interactions between the sexes face challenges in making a connection. This leads to the lack of opposite-sex interactions, but also to the choice of same-sex conversations (Locke, 2011). Same-sex conversations are preferred by both sexes as they occur more naturally because humans communicate, integrate and, therefore, understand their own sex better (Locke, 2011). Furthermore, Locke (2011) advocates that culture should not be considered to be an attribute that affects male and female speech behavior as there is no evidence to support this argument. Conversely, biology affects the human speech behavior due to the fact that men and women, biologically speaking, have "unequal bodies and brains, developmental paths, and patterns of behavior" (Locke, 2011: p. 2). As a result, human biology dictates the kind of speech behavior a human adopts and represents in interactions with both sexes in societies (Locke, 2011). In addition, Locke (2011) highlights that the characteristics in the male and female speech behaviors are different and that there is not a uni-sexual manner of using language in order to communicate effectively with the other sex.

Regarding cross-sex communication, Monaghan et al (2007) emphasize the fact that men and women do not "play the same role in interaction, even when there is no apparent element of flirting" (Monaghan et al, 2007: p. 162). In general, women prefer to ask questions in order to maintain a stable flow of a conversation. In addition, women are willing to provide questions and utterances that will force or encourage answers and, therefore, conversations to continue [ibid]. Women are also more likely to signal agreement and deliver short, quick responses to the speaker than men. Furthermore, when interrupted, women need time before they become a part of the conversation again. As a result, they
remain silent until they feel it is appropriate to speak again. Finally, women commonly use the pronouns *we* and *you* in order to make the other speaker feel included in the interaction (Monaghan *et al* 2007).

Men, on the other hand, are more likely to interrupt women and question the other speaker's statements. In addition, and generally speaking, men appear less inclined to comment on a statement made by a female speaker. As a result, men either do not respond or, if there is a response, then it is likely to lack motivation. Men are inclined to attempt to control the scope and extent of a conversation, or to lead a conversation towards a new topic. Finally, men are more likely to make statements or declarations; in other words, men are willing to present their opinions or suggestions more often than women (Monaghan *et al* 2007).

Locke (2011) explains that there are also specific interactions that engage both opposite- and same-sex relationships to act in a certain manner. These he refers to as *duets* and *duels*, where duets are defined as the harmony found in an interaction between two humans, and duels as "a war between two" (Locke, 2011: p. 4). Additionally, Locke (2011) mentions how, during male-to-male and female-to-female interactions, a speaker focuses on one of the following elements in order to create connection: "sex, including the things we do to get and keep mates; and dominance, or social status" (Locke, 2011: p. 4).

Locke (2011) explains that, in male speaking practices, there is a higher likelihood of the interruption of another male speaker, exchanging information, using humour as a source of connection, challenging the story of the other speaker by providing a better one, creating a hierarchy in which one commands and the other leads and using insults or utterances to indicate superiority and enhance their relative status and power. In contrast, female same-sex speaking practices provide a high possibility of mutual agreement, politeness and the willingness to collaborate with the other speaker. In addition, according to Locke (2011), women will attempt to prevent any intervention that disturbs the harmony in a same-sex group, as harmony is perceived as a valuable contributor in this particular group. Conversely, men "do what is necessary to be seen as the most wonderful anything-from strong and
knowledgeable to brave and resourceful—whether that means building yourself up or tearing everyone else down" (Locke, 2011: p. 7).

According to Trousdale (2010), language changes over time, and societal factors play a key role in driving that change. As a result, men and women use language in a manner that is perceived as acceptable within the society and according to gender norms and expectations. Language changes occur in two directions: either from above (top down) or from below (bottom up). Above refers to the social class that is of a higher hierarchy and the below to the opposite, to language changes that originate from a group of a lower significance in a hierarchical structure (Trousdale 2010). In researching the connection between linguistic changes in a language in relation to male and female speech, sex and gender are considered as important attributes [ibid]. According to Trousdale (2010), there are two principles that can explain this relation: the first principle considers the fact that men are likely to be less frequent or meticulous users of the standard variants of a language (standard versions of a language, for instance, Standard British English and Standard American English), regarding sociolinguistic variations (variations of language use within a society), whereas women adhere more closely to the standard variants (Trousdale 2010). As a result, men adopt dialects or present varieties in their speech that differ in relation to the standard variants of languages in societies. In addition, a subpart of this principle argues that women appear to seek to adapt the language changes that occur from above, which is something that men seem less inclined to do (Trousdale 2010). According to Cravens and Gianelli (1993: p. 111), "Females are more likely to adopt prestigious forms associated with the societal mainstream, while males are more likely to employ non-prestigious options bearing the brand of local allegiance". In other words, middle-class women attempt to adopt the speech of a higher social class in order to be associated with it, and thereby engage in overt prestige. Cravens and Gianelli (1993: p. 105) argue that "women use more standard forms, responding to the overt prestige associated with them". Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be concerned with covert prestige and thereby emphasise equality, "local solidarity" (Cravens & Gianelli, 1993: p. 106) and the similar use of language. The second principle argues that women are the innovators of a language when language changes occur from below (Trousdale 2010).
2.2.1 Duets

Locke (2011) states that duets also "involve an honest exchange of emotion and intimate experience" (Locke, 2011: p. 160). In addition, Locke (2011) explains that, if the relationship between the people in this duet becomes affected negatively, then these personal exchanges can be used against one member of the duet. Furthermore, it is explained that men do not commonly duet and this can be attributed to the fact that the male hormone testosterone "normally increases competition, boosting the value of social vigilance" (Locke, 2011: p. 160). In other words, men are more competitive and therefore do not seek to become perceived as vulnerable in relation to other men due to biological factors. Along with that, it is stated that men are more innovative in their speech in order to create connection with other speakers without enraging them (Locke, 2011). Women, on the other hand, are social creatures and duet more frequently than men and, therefore, the possibility of being involved in threatening duets is increased for women (Locke, 2011).

2.3 Status and Connection

Tannen (1990) explains that there are terms of significance that affect the social interactions between the genders, namely status and connection. According to Tannen (1990), status and connection are terms that a speaker may include in his/her speech. Connection is a speech method used to create sympathy between the speaker and the receiver. Empathy is achieved via numerous channels, such as common backgrounds, ethnicity, interests and languages [ibid]. In order to exemplify connection, Tannen (1990) states:

"If you are from the same town as the plumber's receptionist, or if you are both from the same country or cultural group, you may engage her in talk about your hometown, or speak in your home dialect or language, hoping that this will remind her that you come from the same community so she will give you special consideration" (Tannen, 1990: p. 15).
The desired outcome of using connection as a communicative method is the increased chance of the speaker's transformation from a stranger to an individual who is valued and trusted by the receiver (1990).

In addition, status and the difference in status between individuals is another factor that may affect an interaction (Tannen 1990). When a speaker includes status in his/her communicative interactions, he/she seeks to imply a superiority and attempts to create a difference in the dynamics of the conversation. Status is therefore included in interactions in order to create advantages for the speaker [ibid]. Furthermore, Tannen (1990) exemplifies this with a situation where a person may declare that he/she is familiar with a famous person which, in the eyes of the receiver, may be interpreted in several ways. For instance, this information may create the feeling of inequality between the receiver and the speaker. However, another interpretation may create a negative impression of the speaker, as the receiver may not be impressed by the speaker's attempt of creating divergence. The consequence of the second interpretation may result in an increased distance between the individuals, as the speaker may be perceived as untrustworthy (Tannen 1990).

Tannen continues by explaining the relation between status and connection: "You are playing on connections, in the sense that you bring yourself closer to the people you are talking to by showing you know someone they know of; but to the extent that you make yourself more important by showing you know someone they have only heard of, you are playing on status" (1990: p. 15). She provides also an explanation of the practical meaning of connection and status to the human genders respectively. In order to describe the behavior of men, Tannen (1990: p. 16) argues that: "Men are more often inclined to focus on the jockeying for status in a conversation: Is the other person trying to be one-up or put me down? Is he trying to establish a dominant position by getting me to do his bidding?". Describing the behavior of women, Tannen [ibid] argues that: "Women are more often attuned to the negotiation of connections: Is the other person trying to get closer or pull away?". The difference between the genders is therefore the choice of the implementation of either status or connection during an interaction. The reason this occurs is, she states, that both connection and status are present during all interactions between humans and
every human focuses on topics and issues that are conventionally associated with his/her gender.

2.4 Speech Acts

Grundy (2009) defines speech acts as exploring "the performative nature of utterances, or the way in which what we say to each other has 'force' as well as content" (Grundy, 2009: p. 82). Additionally, he suggests that speech acts "alter the prevailing context in a way that the succeeding speaker will need to take into account" (Grundy, 2009: p. 82). Context is defined as a tool that helps "in determining the meaning of an utterance" (Grundy, 2009: p. 21). In order to exemplify speech acts, Grundy (2009) provides possible explanations to the following statement: I'm here now. According to him, this statement is a speech act, since it can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context in which it belongs. For instance, by being late to a meeting, expressing this statement acts as an apology. In addition, by finding out that one's children are not doing their homework, this statement becomes a warning. Similarly, by travelling to a hospital after receiving the information that a loved person has been taken there, the same statement could possibly be perceived as a "comforting reassurance" (Grundy, 2009: p. 30).

In addition, speech acts are categorized differently and this depends on whether the statement that is made is a direct or an indirect speech act. Direct speech acts describe occasions in which the statement's form matches its function, and these constitute locutionary acts. Indirect speech acts account for utterances whereby the statement's form does not match its functions, and there is thus a disparity between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act. The forms of direct, grammatical speech acts are declarative, imperative or interrogative. The functions could either be assertion, order/request or question (Grundy 2009). The following questions "Could we have some more coffee?" (Grundy, 2009: p. 94) and "Is this a spare place?" (Grundy, 2009: p. 94) are both questions that could function as, and could be interpreted as, either direct and indirect speech acts. This is possible due to the fact that both questions are grammatically interrogative, and therefore can operate as questions with a possibility of a yes/no answer if the speaker simply wants to know what the other person knows. On the other hand, these questions
could be intended as a request to be supplied with more coffee by the waitress/waiter and whether a person is permitted to occupy a chair. As a result, these questions can also be indirect speech acts, and possible appropriate answers to both questions could be: "Yes, I will be back with more coffee" and "Yes, this is a spare place, feel free to sit".

2.5 Grice's Theory of Conversational Implicature

Grundy (2009) explains that Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature relies on categories, such as, implied meaning, Grice's cooperative principle, flouting maxims, implicature and entailment and generalized and particularized conversational implicature, among many. According to Grundy (2009), Grice argued that human conversations are a cooperative act and that there are different reasons for them not to occur successfully.

Grundy (2009) claims that there is an implied meaning in statements, that may have different interpretations based on the context and the relationship between the actors of this conversation. As a result, it may be difficult to instigate a correct assumption about a statement where the difficulty increases when the other person in this conversation is a stranger or not known well enough by the speaker. Grundy (2009) further explains that, in order to understand the nature of cooperation within human conversations, Grice developed the cooperative principle which seeks to account for how people interact sustainably in order to create, maintain and develop relationships between humans via conversations. In this cooperative principle, four rules or maxims, have to be fulfilled in order for a conversation to be successful. The four maxims are:

1. **Quantity** - one's contribution to the conversation must be as informative as it is required, not more or less.

2. **Quality** - Truthful statements must be made. Do not make statements for that you lack evidence of truthfulness or know are false.

3. **Relation** - Be relevant (to the conversation).
4. *Manner* - Be orderly, be brief.

Flouting a maxim implies that one of the actors attempts to generate an additional implicature, a new meaning beyond the words used, in the specific conversation (Grundy 2009). For instance, the following statement "What are you doing?" asked of a parent to his/her child who is evidently using a computer and is answered with "I am just on my computer" may flout the quantity maxim, as the child’s response is not sufficient, and thereby not cooperative enough in order to interact sustainably with the parent. The child would have generated a new meaning where the intention and implication of this answer were intended to be interpreted as if he/she wants to be left alone and unbothered, or is doing something private.

2.6 Trump’s Life - a Summary

Before becoming the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump had a successful career mainly as real estate agent and a TV-persona (Ott 2019). Along with that, he is the owner of numerous casinos in Atlantic City. He also owns a chain of hotels, the most famous of these is the Trump Tower, located in central New York city. Trump attended the New York Military Academy during his teenage years. Several years later, he first attended Fordham University, and subsequently decided to transfer to the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania where he received a diploma in economics (Ott 2019). During his earlier career, Trump worked alongside his father, Frederick Trump, who was a real estate developer. His interest in real estate grew rapidly and he became a famous business man, primarily in New York and, later on, throughout the United States. Trump became politically active in the year 2000, where he initially ran for the presidency. After several years of searching for the right political identity, Trump registered as a Republican in 2012, where he helped Mitt Romney’s\(^1\) presidential campaign (Ott 2019).

\(^1\) Willard Mitt Romney was a presidential candidate that represented the Republican party in 2008 and 2012, [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1797713/](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1797713/), 2019
2.7 Trump's Manner of Speech Before and During Politics

According to Begley (2017) since entering politics, Trump's speech has changed from how it was before his political career. It is stated that Trump used more erudite language and more complex sentence structures before. However, his ability to use, or tendency to use, more intellectual speech styles seemingly disappeared and these were replaced by more simplified English-speaking styles [ibid]. According to Begley (2017), Trump's brain appears to have suffered a linguistic decline which may have been the result of prolonged anger, fatigue or stress. As a result, during his time in politics, Trump's vocabulary decreased and his subsequent style has since relied more on repetition, hyperbole and the emphasis specific words [ibid].

2.8 Trump Versus Clinton - the Presidential Debates

According to Bloomfield and Tscholl (2018), Trump's manner of speech makes causes him to be perceived as an idealist, preoccupied with what he can achieve as a politician in the (near) future, either by himself or with the people. Owing to his lack of political experience, Trump focuses on manipulating the emotions of the audience in numerous ways. For instance, he attempts to establish himself as the driver of social change yearned for by the American people by focusing on promises of action (for instance, the building of the border wall with Mexico) and to decrease the influence of the other speaker to the audience. In his opinion, his adversary is the politically corrupt system of which he claims Hillary Clinton² is a part (Bloomfield and Tscholl 2018). This contrasts with Clinton who, on the other hand, uses an agency-agent based rhetoric in a pragmatic manner; in other words, she uses a style of speech that focuses mainly on what can be achieved now (Bloomfield & Tscholl 2018).

2.9 Reactions to Trump's Gendered Speech

In order to provide an explanation of the consequences of Trump's utterances, Darweesh and Abdullah (2016) present various utterances in which they claim sexism is emphasized through various linguistic forms, such as metaphor and similes. They analyze the following utterance made by Trump on Carly Fiorina's appearance: "Look at that face! Would anybody vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president? I mean, she is a woman, and I'm not supposed to say bad things, but really folks, come on. Are we serious?" (Darweesh & Abdullah, 2016: p. 91). By analyzing this utterance, they concluded that: "This requires no context. It is just a terrible, sexist thing to say about a woman politician" and "Here, Trump illogically attacks women and his arguments are groundless because both men and women naturally complement each other and neither of them claim responsibility over the other" [ibid]. In addition, the following utterance made by Trump: "Hillary is not tough enough to face Russian president Vladimir Putin or ISIS. She is a lying bitch" led them to surmise: "Trump not only insinuates that Hillary is weak, but he accuses her of being a lying bitch. He thinks that women should not nominate for election just because they are women and for him being a woman equals being weak. Trump uses the insult term "bitch" to describe Hillary Clinton. Such term is sexualized; it incites violence towards and abuse of women" [ibid].

Lamont et al (2017), argue that Trump attempts to be identified as the "protector" of women, when he proclaims that he wants to "be a voice for all people who are oppressed, including the millions of women being oppressed by radical Islam" (Lamont et al, 2017: p. 172). According to Sherman (2009), this statement provides evidence of Trump exhibiting discrimination and oppression, as proclaiming to be the protector of women is a common masculine attribution as "that is central to working-class men’s concept of masculinity" (in Lamont et al, 2017).

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3 A Republican presidential candidate in the 2016 presidential election, [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2c1e/b5f831c39424c2f70cca4bb5b68e84d189ae.pdf](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2c1e/b5f831c39424c2f70cca4bb5b68e84d189ae.pdf), 2016
3. Methodology

3.1 Collection of Data

The collection of data occurred by searching for, considering and including, several of Trump's most notorious utterances and comments on women and the critique these utterances have gained by the media, as well as from the academia, in terms of journal articles and papers. In addition, the counter-critique made by a particular civil rights activist, Diana Davison, on how the media portrays Trump and their desire to establish several of his utterances as misogynistic and/or sexist was also included in order to present an alternative perspective on the topic. The particular quotes were selected due to their significant popularity and attention, which was something that Internet search engines could confirm.

Once collected, lexicological and semantic definitions of "sexist" and "misogynistic" were applied to the data, along with pragmatic theories, which examined context and speaker intention, and thereafter sociolinguistic approaches focusing on gendered language were applied to the data. The goal was, by utilizing these definitions and theories, to arrive at an objective conclusion as to whether the critiques of Trump's comments were fully objective from a linguistic point of view.
4. Result and Analysis

4.1 Incidents

4.1.1 Incident 1

According to the Washington Post, October 8, 2016, "Donald Trump bragged in vulgar terms about kissing, groping and trying to have sex with women". This occurred during a conversation with a correspondent for the US TV show, Access Hollywood, Billy Bush⁴, in 2005. The conversation was recorded and Trump was heard to say: "when you're a star, they let you do it". He made further comments during this conversation, including how he unsuccessfully attempted to persuade a married woman to have sexual intercourse with him, and that "And when you're a star, they let you do it"... "Grab them by them p---y... You can do anything" (Fahrenthold 2016).

Nina Bahadur (2017), a writer and editor that covers news for SELF⁵, among many other websites, in subjects such as health and sexual assault, refers to several incidents in which Trump has commented women in different manners. Regarding this incident, she explains that there is a tape from 2005, where Trump "was heard making vulgar comments about women" (Bahadur 2017) which he shared to Billy Bush. Several of the quotes stated by Trump regarding women in this tape include: "You know I'm automatically attracted to beautiful - I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait" (Bahadur 2017) ("beautiful" refers to women).

4.1.2 Incident 2

Jessica Estepa (2015), an editor of USA TODAY, covered this incident and explains that Trump made a comment on the appearance of Carly Fiorina, who was his opponent for the

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⁴ An American television host, former radio host and son of the 43th president of the United States, George W. Bush, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1129362/, 2019

⁵ A magazine for women, covers topics such as health, style and beauty, https://www.self.com/, 2019
Republican Party presidential nomination in the 2016 election. This occurred while he was collaborating with *Rolling Stone* magazine, and he said: "Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?!” (Estepa 2015). This incident gained the attention of media, as this statement, along with a picture of Trump, covered the next edition of the *Rolling Stone* magazine (Estepa 2015). Another journalist, David Lawler of the *Daily Telegraph*, claims Trump went on to say "I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not s'posedta say bad things, but really folks, come on. Are we serious?" However, Lawler (2015) explains that, in his attempt to clarify his comment on Fiorina, Trump defends himself by claiming that he was speaking about her persona and not her physical appearance.

4.1.3 Incident 3

Jesse Byrnes, associate editor of the American newspaper *The Hill*, wrote an article in which he explained that Trump, during his phone interview with the American TV news station CNN, made a statement about Clinton: "I think she's an embarrassment to our country" and "She doesn't have the strength or the stamina to be president" (Byrnes 2016). In addition to this statement, according to Sophie Tatum, who is a reporter and producer, Trump also made a comment on Clinton's appearance, stating: "I just don't believe she has a presidential look, and you need a presidential look" and "She doesn't have the look" (Tatum 2016).

4.2 Trump's Utterances Gain Critique

4.2.1 The Reaction to Incident 1

Amanda Carpenter, who works for the CNN as a contributor, published an article for *Time*, an American topical magazine, titled: "Trump's Treatment of Women Was His Original Abuse of Power". In this article, Carpenter (2019) states: "Perhaps now, in light of the impending impeachment proceedings, is an apt moment to reflect upon the mindset of an abuser. What does it mean when a man who believes "when you are a star they let you do it" becomes President? Sexual assault is, at its core, an abuse of power. Only a person full of
entitlement and lecherous self-interest and devoid of morality preys on others in such a manner. Only someone who views women as vessels from which something gratifying can be gained, whatever the cost to their humanity. Someone who believes that some people's lives matter less than others" (Carpenter 2019).

4.2.2 The Reaction to Incident 2

Sophia Tesfaye (2015), the Deputy Politics Editor of *Salon*, an opinion-oriented website that covers news on numerous fields, such as politics, published an article, titled: "Donald Trump's sexist attack on Carly Fiorina: "Look at that face" (Tesfaye 2015). In this article, Tesfaye (2015) explains that Trump denies any accusation of him purposefully seeking to insult Fiorian's physical appearance, as he attempts to convince people that his utterance referred to her persona and not looks. In addition, she cites this incident as an example which emphasizes how: "Trump has shown virtually no restraint for attacks against other women" (Tesfaye 2015).

4.2.3 The Reaction to Incident 3

Melissa Chan, an American journalist, presented Clinton's response to Trump's allegations of her lacking stamina, during their first presidential debate of the 2016 presidential election, where she explained that: "As soon as he travels to 112 countries and negotiates a peace deal, a cease fire, a release of dissidents, an opening of new opportunities in nations around the world, or even spends 11 hours testifying in front of a congressional committee, he can talk to me about stamina" (Melisa Chan 2016).

4.2.4 Commentaries and Analysis from Academia

Knuckey (2019) insists that Trump's "grab them by the pussy" comment establishes Trump as a sexist and that the manner in which this comment was emphasized during the 2016 presidential election, led to the conclusion that: "Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy inevitably raised the prospect of gender stereotyping and sexism" and that "sexism played a
major role in shaping vote choice in the 2016 presidential election above and beyond other determinants of the vote" (2019: p. 347).

Darweesh and Abdullah (2016) consider that Trump's comment on Fiorina's appearance has a sexist character with the purpose of undermining the person referred to on the basis on their sex. In addition, they claim that Trump has an illogical and irrational manner of speaking about women, since "both men and women naturally complement each other and neither of them claim responsibility over the other" (Darweesh & Abdullah, 2016: p. 91). Regarding Trump's statement on Clinton's lack of stamina and his claim that she is an embarrassment for the United States, the full quote is: "I think Hillary is an embarrassment to our country. She does not have the strength or the stamina to be president. Hillary needs to be trashed at every opportunity that presents itself! This bitch must be stopped" (Darweesh & Abdullah, 2016: p. 92). Darweesh and Abdullah (2016) criticize Trump's utterance, stating: "Once again Trump says that Hillary is weak and she is not competent to be a president. He implies that women should not nominate for presidency" (Darweesh & Abdullah, 2016: p. 92).

4.3 The Critique on the Critique Regarding Trump's Utterances

In her analysis of the American presidential election campaign in 2016 between Trump and Clinton and the scene in which Trump made this comment, Davison (2017), who refers to herself as: "a civil-rights activist focused on helping people falsely accused of assault or sexual assault to prove their innocence" (Davison, 2017, 00:00:00 - 00:00:09), argues that people perceive Trump as a misogynist and sexist due to media corruption. This accusation stems from the media knowingly publishing inaccurate material about Trump and what he has supposedly said and done, and thus manipulate the American presidential election in Clinton's favour. This is, she claims, proved by the fact that the first two questions that Trump received during the second public debate from the moderators were the same question rephrased in two different manners and that both attempted to make him look untrustworthy and to accuse him of sexual assault. According to Davison (2017), Trump's "grab them by the pussy" comment is "a general comment that stars get away with obnoxious behavior and he is right, he is right, he is laughing at how women fawn over
celebrities and finding it stupid at the same time" (Davison, 2017, 00:11:43-00:11:56). Davison (2017) also points out that this statement attracted attention from many commentators and was seized upon by the press who used it to portray him as a misogynist, and even as someone willing to commit assault on women (Davison, 2017). Along with the media, Davison (2017) claims that the political system is also corrupt, which explains why Clinton is not in jail and able to run for presidency, when she "is guilty of one of the biggest security breaches in US government history" (Davison, 2017, 00:03:08 - 00:03:11).

It has not been possible to find any critical perspectives that attempt to challenge the media's interpretation of Trump regarding his comment on Fiorina. In addition to that, Brian Stelter\(^6\) (2015) argues that there is a low likelihood that a magazine of the status of *Rolling Stone*, that included Trump's utterance and an image of him as the cover, could have misinterpreted his statement, that "Look at that face!" (Estepa 2015) refers to Fiorina's appearance and not to her persona, as Trump claims (*CNN*, 2015).

### 4.4 Linguistic Analysis

Prior to the analysis of Trump's manner of speech, it must be remembered that there is a distinction between the literal and contextual meaning of words. Therefore, these fields will be analyzed separately due to the fact that the interpretation may vary depending upon whether the word is considered in isolation, or whether it is viewed in the context of the situation and the intention of speaker.

Regarding the literal meaning of words, Trump evidently chooses, on occasion, to utter words that seek to undermine other people, such as politicians, and women, in particular. This can be seen in his word selection, where the word "bitch" may have two different meanings, and therefore, two different possible interpretations. The main denotation of "bitch" is female dog, but there is a common metaphorical usage and that is to describe a

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\(^6\) A writer. Guest at the CNN report regarding Trump's comment on Fiorina's appearance, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm4526964/, 2019
woman as spiteful or unpleasant (Oxford, 2019). It is this latter interpretation which is unarguably the one intended when directed at Clinton.

In addition, analyzing phrases such as Trump's comment on Fiorina: "Look at that face!" first, in terms of speech acts, this is an imperative structure - an instruction - rather than a declarative comment (Grundy 2009). It directs the hearer to do something and the implication is that, from so doing, they will be able to draw a particular view about the referent that the speaker himself holds. It is, however, a phrase that invites multiple interpretations, including:

- Carly Fiorina, according to Trump, is ugly
- Carly Fiorina, according to Trump, is beautiful
- Carly Fiorina's face, according to Trump, reveals Fiorina's stupidity

The speaker intention cannot be established from the words alone. Some interpretations have a higher probability of corresponding to the speaker intention than others and consideration of the context is essential in recovering speaker meaning. Context in this case is contingent upon pre-existing and shared knowledge possessed by Trump and his audience, and about the referent, Fiorina; without such shared knowledge, the meaning is uncertain (Grundy 2009). It is only possible to create an assumption about the implied meaning of Trump's statement, but does not guarantee any particular interpretation to be more likely to be reliable. However, it can be argued that Trump is seeking to imply something and it is not clear what it is. He is seemingly flouting the quantity maxim by not explaining why people should look at her face and thereby leaving the hearer to calculate the implicatures and draw their own conclusion of what he is asserting Fiorina's face reveals.

By analyzing Trump's statements and comments based on the contextual meaning of words and utterances, it can be argued that Trump's speech conforms to one of the speech behaviors described by Locke (2011) as typical for male speakers and untypical for females - and is therefore gendered speech. This is evident, firstly, by the way Trump, as a male, makes declarative statements and expresses a direct and unqualified opinion regarding a topic or a person, such as Fiorina's appearance and Clinton's "lying" character (Monaghan et
In addition, by being decisive, Trump appears to challenge any possible connection regarding cross-sex communication. However, cross-sex communication does not solely relate to how males speak to females, but also to how females address males. Furthermore, a possible argument of Trump's manner of speech could be culture and environment. Trump had performed military service, worked closely with his father in real estate and has been involved within politics since the year 2000. This means he has operated in a number of different working environments and social cultures which are likely to have been male-dominated and in which some level of machismo was routinely expected and exhibited. Some may posit that he had become accustomed to, and normalized, the speech he encountered and used on a daily basis and was unaware of any reason to modify his communication habits at the time, or since the start of his political career. However, according to Locke (2011), culture is not an element that affects male and/or female speech, or at least there is no concrete evidence that it is. Trump thus exemplifies Locke's (2011) hypothesis that cross-sex communication lacks collaboration to the same degree as same-sex interaction. According to Locke (2011), women generally seek and respond to kindness, agreement, harmony and solidarity within same-sex communication, while men seek and respond to humour, challenges, hierarchy and information exchange. As a result, cross-sex communication occurs unnaturally for, and by, both sexes and this difference in the primary communicative aims of the sexes when speaking can result in an absence of mutual understanding and integration. However, Locke (2011) recognizes that such difficulties of cross-sex communication are not inevitable in all interactions; communication may still be effective and mutual understanding may still occur in spite of the different dispositions of the speakers depending upon the particular individuals and circumstances.

Regarding Trump's "grab them by the pussy" comment, Davison (2017) provides the full context of the interaction and argues that this shows his comments were in no way indicative that he was inclined towards committing sexual assaults on women. The media, according to Davison (2017), misrepresented the comment by omitting the full context and that was in order to invite a particular interpretation of it, namely that Trump was akin to a self-confessed rapist or, at the very least, a man who sexually abuses women. Davison's (2017) argument was that the recordings of the conversation indicate the reverse. The
comment "they let you do it" showed that he was talking about touching them with consent, and she emphasises this issue of consent. Therefore, she claims, this would not be assault.
5. Discussion

This essay attempts to investigate, by critical analysis and using sociolinguistic and pragmatic approaches, whether and to what degree some of Donald Trump's utterances can fairly be described as misogynistic and/or sexist, that he can be labeled as such, and therefore his fitness to hold the office of President of the United States is brought into question. In order to achieve that, linguistic aspects, such as context and gendered speech patterns, have been included in the Analysis chapter above, along with Trump's utterances regarding women, as well as their interpretation by the media and critics of the media. Through examining these and conducting an analysis, the aim is to provide definitive answers to the questions of this essay.

By analyzing Trump's manner of speech, and the criticism it has received, it can be argued that the media attempts to present a one-sided picture of Trump, and that is of a man prone to making misogynistic and/or sexist remarks which reveal his character and prejudices. This can be argued from the way that the media attempted to frame his "grab them by the pussy" comment, without presenting the utterance's full context. By not including the context of utterances, the media narrative omits essential information which would reveal the context and thereby the speaker's intention. When the offending utterances are considered having regard to the contextual information, a different picture of Trump's statements, and his attitudes and motivations, may emerge. In the case of the first incident described, the media tried to present this comment as evidence that he sexually abuses women. However, this impression was conveyed by excluding significant details, such as the particular situation, and also other comments that would reveal far more about his actual intention when making the comments and what he was seeking to achieve by making them. Therefore, this utterance is arguably misrepresented by the media and thereby risks projecting a false impression of Donald Trump. One commentator, a Canadian civil rights activist called Diana Davison, deconstructs the interaction in which this utterance was made by showing it in its context and by applying a strict and literal interpretation of the words used.
Another utterance that was made at the same incident as "grab them by the pussy" was "when you are a star they let you do it". The second mentioned quote was examined by Carpenter (2019), who solely focused on the utterance's meaning and not its context, which creates a potentially misleading and unfair assumption of Trump's possible character as a misogynist and/or sexist. Carpenter (2019) attempts to provide a possible explanation and proof that labels Trump's utterances as misogynistic and/or sexist, by presenting selective quotes outside their context. She chose to disregard him saying "they let you do it", which Davison (2017) argues indicates he would only touch them with consent, and accused him of "abuse" and "sexual assault". Carpenter's (2019) use of this incident may be an attempt to make political capital out of an unguarded and stereotypically male boast made in a genial, male-to-male, conversation many years previously and long before Trump embarked upon a political career. This could be because she works for a media outlet, i.e. CNN, which may be perceived as politically hostile to Trump, or at least traditionally politically and liberal in the American context (Ackerman, 2001).

The case of Fiorina shows how multiple interpretations of what he said would be available, yet the one chosen by Trump's critics again suggest they were sexist/misogynistic. In addition, the media may be said to be endorsing the criticism aimed at Trump by his opponents, in this case, Fiorina and Clinton, by focusing more on Trump's actual words rather on his behavior and manner of speech. As a result, by twisting Trump's words and presenting them outside their context, it can be argued that the American people gain an incomplete or misleading impression of this man and his character. In addition, as shown by Tesfaye (2015) (the "Look at that face" comment), Trump is portrayed as one who victimizes others by his direct language use. Therefore, it can be concluded that the perception of Trump's utterances, and the consequent accusations made against him in respect of them, may or may not be entirely and objectively justifiable. This is because the context of those utterances is not included and the media may be suspected of harbouring politically motivated bias which favours female political rivals such as Fiorina and Clinton. However, people may still believe that his approach is indicative of that of a sexist and/or misogynist.

Furthermore, from a linguistic point of view, Trump appears to rely upon his celebrity status, since he attempts to ingratiate himself with his audience by commenting his political
opponents, such as Fiorina and Clinton (Tannen 1990). In that manner, he shows that he is a person that is associated, in varying contexts, with influential people. In addition, by relying on his own status, Trump arguably hints that there is a difference in status as well, as his comments on, for instance, Fiorina and Clinton, provide evidence that he seeks to project himself as superior to his political opponents (Tannen 1990). As a result, by using status in his speech, Trump attempts to gain more (political) recognition and respect by the people (Tannen 1990); this is typical for male speech.

Tannen (1990) reports that males tend to speak in a humorous and decisive manner. The reason they speak in this manner is due to their desire of being perceived as dominant male figures within interactions with other people, both male and female, and because these attributes can help them achieve that. In Trump’s case he, as a male figure, makes comments and utterances in a decisive and, arguably, strident, manner, and which can also be argued to be perceived as jocular to some, such as the "Look at that face" and "grab them by the pussy" comments. However, some may not perceive his comments and utterances in the same, humorous, manner, as they would regard such comments as offensive, or at least they claim to find them offensive in order to justify denouncing Trump because they disagree with him politically, resulting in damage to his popularity and the respect that he gains from people. This is related to what Tannen (2019) suggests is male gendered speech, which is more accepted within interactions between males rather than in cross-sex interactions. Trump’s motivation can then be attributed to his gender, background and possibly some degree of immaturity, as opposed to being an example of sexism (Darweesh & Abdullah 2016) and/or misogyny (Carpenter 2019). The centrist and liberal media in the US have, however, chosen to interpret Trump’s utterances in the sexist and/or misogynistic way and this may (or may not) be because they are pursuing their own political agenda which is hostile to Trump, his style of presidency and his political position.

Furthermore, Trump appears to become involved in both duets and duels (as defined by Locke, 2011). Regarding duels, the metaphorical "war" between two individuals or groups, Trump evidently provides comments arguably intended to show his superiority in relation to the other person. He is therefore dueling his opponent; in other words, he expresses his thoughts on a person where the other person responds. This type of interaction occurred
between Fiorina and Trump, as Fiorina responds to Trump's comment on her appearance. Regarding duets, the harmony between the interaction of two humans, Trump attempts to duet his interaction with both the media and Fiorina, as he explained that his utterance referred to her persona, and not her looks (Locke, 2011).

Moreover, depending on the circumstances, the goal that he seeks to achieve varies. For instance, it can be argued that Trump attempts to decrease his opponents' public esteem. This is achieved by his imperative and decisive statements that secure him the attention he craves, such as "Look at that face". Such statements in the circumstances described may be regarded as attributes common to male speech, in other words, challenging the other speaker, that one is better that the opponent, may be perceived as strong, dependable and statesmanlike (Locke, 2011). However, there is a complexity in understanding, and being able to calculate, the likelihood of Trump's utterances being fairly judged as misogynistic and/or sexist due to the fact that it is unclear whether he behaves in a particular manner in order to play a certain role in the environment of the politics, or if he behaves according to his own beliefs and ethical standpoints. This dichotomy may actually make Trump more popular among certain sections of the public, as the attention of the media does not stop him from behaving in a similar manner by, for example, including disrespectful and perhaps offensive words or expressions in his critical utterances that are directed at other people. An argument that could support this hypothesis is the fact that he was a television personality, that people may have found his personality to be entertaining to watch and that the media portrays him as a colourful character.

To conclude this discussion, an effort will be made to answer the research questions in turn as detailed in the Introduction:

1. *To what degree is it fair to describe some of the most notorious of Donald Trump's utterances as misogynistic and/or sexist?*

Due to the combination of a lack of contextual information, the possible multiple interpretations of his mindset or intentions, and the possible motivations of his opponents to discredit him or portray him as a bigot and unfit to hold the Office of President, the
accusations that his utterances were sexist and/or misogynistic in character are not fully proven. This is not to suggest that Trump does not hold views that are sexist and/or misogynistic, but rather that it is dangerous and potentially unfair to assume he is from the evidence presented in this essay.

2. **Do these utterances justify labelling him as a misogynist and/or sexist and, if so, why?**

By referring back to the previous answer, it is explained that the allegations about the utterances may be indicative, but they do not amount to conclusive proof. The fact that some people have said something many years previously which may be considered sexist and/or misogynistic in a particular context does not necessarily justify labelling them as sexists and/or misogynists as though they were immutable personal characteristics. The same might apply to someone telling a lie; one would not label anyone who has ever told an untruth to be thereafter branded a liar for the remainder of their lives.

3. **How much are such utterances explainable by stereotypical male speech behaviour, as described by linguists?**

Locke (2011) and Tannen (1990) explain that Trump's male speech behaviour is perceived as stereotypical. This is due to the focus on status and connection (Tannen 1990) and his preference for dueling as opposed to duetting with the opponent (Locke, 2011). In addition, Locke (2011) explains that men seek power and hierarchical status in a manner that they will challenge people to become perceived as dominant male figures, which is readily apparent in Trump's utterances.
6. Conclusion

6.1 Synopsis and Concluding Remarks

The goal of this essay is to determine whether it is justifiable, from a strictly linguistic point of view, to label some of the most infamous comments made about or directed at particular women, or women in general, by President Donald Trump as being misogynistic and/or sexist. In order to achieve that, several linguistic approaches have been included and considered in this essay, such as Locke's (2011) theory on duets and duels, Tannen's (1990) perspective on the genders relying on status and/or connection, Grundy (2009) and the speech acts and Monaghan's et al (2007) theory on cross-sex interactions. The essay considers media articles that related the statements made by Trump and attempted to use them as evidence that he, as an individual, holds views that are sexist and/or misogynistic and, by implication, he is unfit to hold such an office of President of the United States. Numerous academic articles have also commented on these statements, one of which is referred to in his essay, and are similarly critical of Trump's character.

While Trump unarguably said what was alleged, these comments were presented both by certain media outlets and some academics as being sexist and/or misogynistic. While it is possible that Trump may indeed hold derogatory views of women, presenting these utterances as conclusive proof that he does hold such views disregards the context. The evidence of this lies in two respects: firstly, the pragmatics of what he said in terms of the fact that some of the quoted utterances were qualified by additions to the most quoted aspect (e.g. "they let you do it") or by the ambiguity (e.g. "look at that face"), and secondly, the speaker's intention as it relates to male gendered speech, i.e. utterances made for the purpose of impressing, or showing solidarity with, other males when interacting with them (e.g. boasting "when you are a star").

By excluding significant elements that could be considered as insightful or critical in order to understand the meaning behind Trump's utterances and comments, the media appear to be selective in what is presented and their interpretation of it while disregarding or de-emphasising essential factors such as context and speaker intention. It may thus be
suggested that, in doing so, readers and viewers are invited to draw unwarranted negative perceptions of Trump's character. However, it is possible to say that the media depictions of him based on their interpretation of the utterances may reveal more about their own hostility to Trump, and their political leanings, than of the President himself. There is also an argument that both Tannen's (1990) and Locke's (2011) notions of what constitutes gendered male speech are exemplified not by young boys or immature youths, but by a man who holds the most powerful political position in the world. In other words, this is simple showing off to another man rather than him expressing sincerely-held prejudices.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research and Studies

Further research and studies could focus on and investigate the role of the media when presenting news and what is worth considering in order to determine whether they manipulate or omit context in order to pursue political agendas. Particular interests can, for instance, be the purposeful misrepresentation of utterances while excluding their context, the manner in which the news is presented, utterances made against people who have a political leaning that stands in opposition to the media as well as ignoring or not using the whole context, speaker intention and other significant elements against them.

This study can be further developed by investigating the specific type of information management and news publication of media outlets with global influence, such as CNN and the BBC, their relations to influential people and their position globally. For instance, the relationship between a media outlet and a specific country can be questioned. This is significant, as it may deliver an increased degree of understanding, connection and explanation of how a media outlet functions in relation to the audience it attempts to reach, and to emphasise the reason that news is portrayed in a particular manner. Furthermore, it has to be emphasized that this study may relate exclusively to Trump, but the implications extend to other influential individuals or anyone else choosing to express views, under the right of free speech, but which fall outside the mainstream. Similar examples of alleged media distortion have occurred, notable among them are the case of the Canadian psychologist, Professor Jordan B Peterson, who was depicted as transphobic when he
resisted a proposed law relating to the use of newly-invented pronouns for certain transgendered people (Cossman, 2017).

In addition, studies and further research may investigate the role of linguistic theories and to what extent these enable media criticisms of people in the public eye to be evaluated. As a result, the determination on whether these examples strengthen and inform theories on gendered speech might clarify the relation between linguistic theories and the practical use of language by the media.
7. References


