# Decoding the Populist Message: A Linguistic Comparison of Populist Radical Right and Mainstream Political Speech in the Netherlands

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**Abstract**

In recent decades, Europe has seen a rise in the popularity of Populist Radical Right political parties. This thesis investigates how PRR parties in the Netherlands (PVV and FvD) use language in their political speeches, and whether it is significantly different from mainstream parties. The study examines how PRR language has looked across Europe, followed by a new analysis using the computational tool Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). With this tool, 52 speeches from across the Dutch political spectrum are analyzed and compared. Key LIWC categories such as pronouns, emotional tone, certainty and informal language were examined to find patterns. The differences were tested using statistical tests. The results showed that the Dutch PRR parties did not use a significantly higher frequency of words related to common PRR strategies, such as the us vs. them narrative and informal language usage. However, it was found that Forum voor Democratie (FvD) uses significantly fewer positive emotion words and more certainty-related words, which suggests a rhetorical strategy centered on rational authority and conviction. The results suggest that PRR language in the Netherlands could be less rhetorically extreme than often portrayed and more aligned with mainstream discourse than expected, at least in quantifiable linguistic terms.

**Decoding the Populist Message: A Linguistic Comparison of Populist Radical Right and Mainstream Political Speech in the Netherlands**

Populist Radical Right (PRR) politicians are known for their unique communication styles (Ekström et. al, 2018), and can use public speeches strategically. Political speech can be a significant tool of persuasion and power, and is a reflection of the speaker's ideological stances (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). Speeches by politicians are often not used to inform the audience, but rather to influence them. This is why it is important to be aware of the linguistic strategies used by politicians; to not be too easily influenced and instead be able to critically examine what a politician is saying. Populism specifically is a particular style used to influence people, where a politician has the direct purpose to align themselves with the regular people, and therefore speaking more effectively to them (Ekström et. al, 2018). While political speech of PRR politicians has been thoroughly researched in the past, gaps can be identified. Especially in the context of the Netherlands in the past decade, there is not much to find about how politicians' speech has formed. In this thesis, the strategies radical right wing populists use will be examined through literature review. This is done with the purpose of comparing it to the Dutch case, which will be assessed through an analysis of political speeches using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software. Speeches by parties across the political spectrum will be compared to gain a broad understanding of if and how PRR parties differ. From this analysis and literature review, conclusions could be drawn about how language and political speech have been used by PRR parties to affect the public in the Netherlands, and gain popularity.

Since the 1990s, the Populist Radical Right (PRR) has been gaining massive popularity in Europe (Aktas, 2024). This upsurge is a deviation from the ideas present right after the second world war, when far-right ideology was mostly condemned, and European integration was in full swing (Beauchamp, 2024; Atlas, 2024). Now, in many countries including Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, far-right populists have been rising in the polls (Lewis et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be explained by a multitude of factors. First of all, globalization and recent crises have had an effect on how voters look at politics (Rooduijn, 2015; Aktas, 2024). For example, the economic crisis of 2008 affected the European Union's

economy, leaving many people doubting the EU's capabilities and strength (Aktas, 2024). Additionally, migrants have been coming to the EU in the last decades, which reached a peak in 2015 (Casella Colombeau, 2020). This was labeled as the 'migrant crisis' and led to many people being wary of the supposed consequences of migration, especially after a number of terrorist attacks in Europe. Anti-immigration sentiments rose high, and became a center debate in national politics (Aktas, 2024). However, the traditional political parties as well as the EU were unable to properly deal with these issues, leaving voters dissatisfied and less loyal to the mainstream parties. That is when populist parties were able to emerge as valid alternatives (Rooduijn, 2015; Aktas, 2024). The combination of unemployment and immigration served as a context where PRR parties could grow (Rooduijn, 2015). These parties vocalized values and fears that were relevant for people who felt left behind by the cultural and economic effects of globalisation. The PRR politicians offered straightforward and quick solutions, and promised to preserve the national culture by pushing back on immigration, with strong borders and national security (Rooduijn, 2015). They would solve the problems of migration, the economy and security without the often bureaucratic and slow paced processes of governments, which makes the PRR parties attractive to voters (Aktas, 2024).

This momentum also reached the Netherlands, where the populist Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) has won the 2024 elections by an overwhelming majority. The party has existed since 2006 and has always been known for its anti-islam position (Silva, 2018). Its leader, Geert Wilders, is often described as the 'Dutch Trump' (Boztas, 2023), because of his white hair and controversial statements. The far right has been on the rise in the Netherlands for a while, with new radical parties entering the political sphere. An example is Forum voor Democratie (FvD), founded by Thierry Baudet in 2016, when they immediately gained seats in the next election (University of Groningen, 2024). What started out as a party focused on referendums and national sovereignty, expanded to emphasizing cultural nationalism and anti-elitism (Crum, 2024). The party aims to protect 'western civilisation' and is often associated with racist and anti-semetic rhetoric. As moderates have left the party since these shifts, the party has been able to radicalize (Crum, 2024). Today, FvD still has 3 seats in the parliament, which is significant (Tweede

Kamer, n.d.). The PVV and FvD share anti-establishment, anti-immigration, Eurosceptic, and nationalist views, and both have dominant leaders (Crum, 2024). However, PVV has been able to be much more successful and consistent.

In order to find out how PVV and FvD use language differently than mainstream parties, four other parties will be used for the analysis. Two of those will be center-right parties, namely Christen Democratisch Appel (CDA) and Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD). CDA is a christian democratic party, and is economically centrist. VVD is a right-wing liberal party, focused on economic growth and freedom. Additionally, two progressive-left parties will be used for the analysis; Democraten 66 (D66) and Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA). D66 is a social-liberal party with progressive views, for example on climate change. PvdA is a progressive, social democratic party, and strives for equal opportunity and sustainable development. By collecting data for these parties and comparing them, the following research question will be answered:

*Do the discourse strategies used by PRR politicians differ from those of mainstream political parties in the Netherlands?*

Before the question is answered, a theoretical framework needs to be established, including necessary concepts. Additionally, a literature review will be created, with relevant background information on the topic. After the establishment of relevant previous research, methods will be clarified and then the analysis will be conducted using LIWC. Subsequently, all the collected data and results will be interpreted and connected in the discussion section. Finally, conclusions can be drawn regarding research question.

## Theoretical framework and literature review

In the following theoretical framework and literature review, key concepts are outlined which are essential for the clarity of this thesis. There is a wide array of definitions and interpretations of what Populist Radical Right means, which is why the section will start with a definition of this concept. This definition will be applied throughout the paper. Next, the significance of political speech will be

identified, to emphasize the importance of understanding linguistic choices of politicians specifically. Then, previous research will be used to outline the way in which language has been used by PRR politicians in the past, and in other countries. This can be used as a comparison to the Dutch case, which will be addressed in the results chapter. Lastly, other studies using LIWC will be employed in order to understand the purpose and utility of the program.

## Theoretical framework

### *Definition of Populist Radical Right and mainstream parties*

The far right parties gaining traction in Europe are often described as populist radical right (PRR) (Aktas, 2024). *Radical* right in this case means that these parties want to reform the current political system (Mudde, 2019). They accept free elections, but oppose certain other elements of liberal democracy. In addition, they oppose violence. This is different from *extreme* right, since extreme right parties are completely against the system, and want to revolutionize it. Extremists are also anti-democracy and sometimes support violence as well. PRR parties are not considered extremist, but rather radical. There are three important characteristics of the PRR, namely populism, nativism and authoritarianism. Mudde (2004) describes populism as: …"a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be separated into two groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people." The PRR parties claim to be against the political elite, instigating an us vs. them attitude, which creates polarization (Hirth, 2009). While they help to create polarization, they also benefit and grow from it, since people tend to shift to more extreme views in times of mass polarization. This means that a vicious cycle is created: Increased polarization → PRR parties' success → even more polarization. When it comes to populism, there are multiple different viewpoints. Hameleers (2017) describes the binary opposition between the in- and out-group as the essence of populism. There are two ways in which this opposition can be characterized: horizontal and vertical. Vertical opposition is the relationship between 'the people' and 'the other'. In this case, 'the other' is a separate group which is threatening the ordinary hard working citizens from above. Within the vertical

opposition, there are different perspectives as well. The four subcategories are: anti-establishment, anti economic elites, anti-experts and anti-media. Horizontal opposition is the opposition between the people and social out-groups living amongst them. These can be immigrants, asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, and welfare-state profiteers in the case of right-wing populism. Here, there are three different types of communication: in-group superiority populism (superiority of native culture and traditions), exclusionist populism (blaming the out-groups for societal problems), and welfare state chauvinist populism (division between hard working taxpayers and people on welfare).

Another important feature of PRR parties is that they have 'nativist' ideas (Hirth, 2009). Nativism is an ideology which holds the belief that only the native people of a country should be allowed to live there, and therefore immigration is wrong. This is different from nationalism, because that does not inherently have this xenophobic aspect, it is merely national pride. PRR parties use this point of view to identify the enemies of the nation, like immigrants and ethnic minorities or even organisations like the EU, which challenge national sovereignty. The last main characteristic of PRR parties is authoritarianism (Hirth, 2009). This refers to the desire for social order with strong centralized leadership, where the priority is national security. The government has to be decisive, without a strenuous political process. The Dutch party PVV is an example of such a party, and is led by its founder, leader and only official member Geert Wilders. Wilders' style of leadership and politics is strongly oppositional, radical and populist (Van Gent et al., 2014). In addition, the party's core identity is built on nativism, since they are mainly known for their anti-immigration and anti-islam positions. They create a horizontal populist us vs. them narrative, where 'us' includes the native Dutch population, and 'them' refers to muslim immigrants. In addition, the party is strongly against the established political elite, which is believed to not stand up for the regular people. Lastly, the party fits the authoritarian characteristic too, which is embodied by Wilders as the charismatic leader which the voters look up to (Traub, 2017).

This particular type of political party is different from the established, mainstream parties. Mainstream parties are not well defined in literature, but usually characterized by a few components (Ignazi, 2021). Firstly, they are well established, meaning they have existed for a relatively long time, and

have internal institutions and structures. Secondly, they are relevant within the national government, meaning they compete for seats and hold power on a regular basis.

## Literature review

### *The significance of political speech*

Oftentimes, the words which politicians use have certain hidden strategies and meanings behind them. Van Dijk (1991,1995) has established a number of tools which can be identified when critically analysing political speech. These tools are specifically designed to analyse style, meaning and rhetoric behind the lexical choices of the politicians. The tools are called ‘discourse strategies’, and are going to be useful as a qualitative interpretation of the quantitative nature of LIWC analysis, which will be the main analytical tool of this thesis. Kadim (2022) has compiled all the strategies in a list:

1. *Implication.* This means that politicians or media will imply something, without directly saying it. Van Dijk (1991) uses the example of headlines, where a big event is summarized in just a few words, leaving it up to the reader to imply what it means. For example, using the word ‘riot’ to describe a protest in a headline implies the occurrence of violence, but ignores social causes. A more representative word could be ‘revolt’, which implies the effect of a cause. Which word is used could depend on the writer's view on the protest, and therefore their political stance on the matter.
2. *Presupposition*. This is an assumption by the speaker about what the audience already knows. The speaker will mention a concept or event without explaining it, assuming the audience understands. This can be used as manipulation, as it leaves no room for questioning, and presents certain beliefs as given and true.
3. *Hyperbole* is used by politicians when they want to exaggerate a specific point in order to emphasize it or draw more attention to it. Additionally, it can be used to add humour or achieve

political aims. The previous example of the word ‘riot’ can also be used as hyperbole to exaggerate a protest if the speaker using it does not agree with said protest.

4. C*ompassion move*: The speaker aims to show sympathy for civilians affected by ‘wrong’ political actions of others. This is done to diminish the political opponents and achieve political interests of the speaker.
5. N*egative comparison* is relevant when the speaker uses their language to emphasize the bad actions and qualities of the political opponents. This makes the speaker look better in comparison and helps them create an us vs. them narrative, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section ‘Existing research on PRR speech’.
6. The *blaming the victim* strategy is used to shift the blame onto a political opponent. Commonly used by populists, it is also a way to further an us vs. them narrative, and for the politician to align themselves with the public rather than the established political elite.
7. C*ontrast and division* is also used to diminish the political opponent. It aims to present the speaker as ‘good’ and the opponent as ‘bad’. It can also be used to compare social and/or ethnic groups, furthering polarization and supporting the nativist perspective (van Dijk, 1991).
8. *Actor description* refers to the way in which one ideologically describes an actor. In this case, the actors belonging to the in-group are represented positively, and the out-group is presented negatively.
9. *Number game*. Politicians tend to present numbers and statistics in order to seem credible. It can also help them to ‘objectively’ prove their point or perspective.
10. *Metaphors* are strategically used to represent certain groups or issues through the ideological lens of the speaker.
11. *Repetition* is a powerful tool when representing the in- and out-group in a beneficial way. The more something is repeated, the better the audience will remember it.

12. P*ronouns* are placed strategically in speeches. When a politician uses the “I” pronoun a lot, they could be trying to make the speech feel personal and responsible. On the other hand, using “we” can be used to create unity and avoid personal accountability.

Subtle differences like these can shape a speech to serve the moral and ideological beliefs of the political party, which is why language can be such a powerful tool. The style of the language like formal vs. informal is also important, since informal usually connects more with normal people, whereas formal is used to establish authority (Sharififar, Rahimi, 2015). Therefore, language in politics can never be neutral, as it is always used to establish some sort of power or reinforce ideology. By analysing text, it is possible to become aware of these strategies and see through them, which is important when choosing a leader to vote for and to see through linguistic manipulation.

***Existing research on PRR speech***

Right-wing populists are often characterized by their unique ways of communicating to audiences (Ekström et. al, 2018). Research shows that this is an effort to make the public relate to them and see them as regular people, rather than elitist politicians. The communication style is also connected to their political stances, and used to gain popularity. In addition, populism is not just about *what* is being said, but also about *how* it is being said. A frequent assumption among researchers and media is that right wing populists use simple language in order to portray themselves as one of the people. While this can be true for individual cases, it is not generalizable to right wing populism as a whole. McDonnell & Ondelli (2022) analyzed speeches from politicians globally, such as Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen. The research found that the speeches of right-wing populists are not significantly less complicated in language than those of traditional politicians. In addition, the research states that there is a difference between simple arguments and simple language. Populists are frequently accused of simplifying nuanced issues, but that does not necessarily accompany simple language. From this, one can conclude that there needs to be a less simplified understanding of right-wing populist speech, as it is more complicated than it seems.

Ekström (2018) aims to understand right-wing populist speech by highlighting the main strategies of the Greek far-right party Golden Dawn (GD). Their core strategy is to switch between language styles during speeches, and even amid sentences. They do this by switching from formal to slang language. With the use of formal language, they convey moral and cultural superiority, and through slang they connect to their audience. This is a 'heteroglossic' strategy, as it mixes elite and popular speech. The Greek right-wing populists in this case do not merely simplify their language, but choose meticulously when to use the right vocabulary.

Another method GD politicians use in their speeches is using language which aims to blame and evaluate another party. This was also identified as one of van Dijk's discourse strategies in the previous section 'the significance of political speech' (number 6). This language is most frequently directed at political elites, immigrants and the media. It often includes name-calling and other forms of pushing judgement onto an actor or a situation. This use of language by GD is, at times, considered as 'bad mannered' or 'inappropriate'. However, it is pure strategy, since the breaking of norms separates them from the political elite. In addition, by identifying the 'corrupt' out-group and elevating the 'pure' in-group (GD and the native Greek population), they serve their "us vs. them" narrative, which is prevalent in populist rhetoric in general. By effectively blaming one group, such as the political elite, immigrants or other social out-groups for major societal issues, GD is able to absolve responsibility for the in-group.

Ekström (2018) also uses the British politician Nigel Farage as an example of populism. He aims to represent the people by talking and behaving like them. One of his strategies is to claim to be speaking the truth, unlike the political elite who, in his view, do not. In this way Farage is able to criticize the elite politicians and institutions. He allegedly says what people really believe, and with that tries to cater to his audience. This makes him seem relatable and trustworthy for regular people, as well as brave compared to other politicians. He uses phrases such as "come on, let's be honest", in order to call out whoever he is debating, as well as to shift the conversation to his truthful perspective. Therefore, it can also be seen as a

strategy to defer from the question at hand. In addition, Farage uses blunt language to break the political norms and therefore separate himself again from the political elite.

Austria's PRR party FPÖ uses right wing populist strategies in their speech and communication as well (Forchtner et al., 2013). Like the GD, this party discredits political opponents by labeling them as the 'corrupt political elite'. The FPÖ empathizes with the Austrian people, who, according to them, have been betrayed by this political elite by supporting refugees and migrants. The party uses the strategy of shifting blame, and personally attacks specific politicians in speeches to gain political power. The us vs. them narrative is again present in the party's rhetoric, and they use metaphors to communicate their political perspectives on, for example, culture. An important aspect of their strategy is the use of crises to instill fear in the public. For example, they frame the influx of refugees as a national crisis by using hyperbolic language such as "collapse of state order" and "a flood of migrants". This can then be used to undermine the established parties and to further villainize the refugees. The crisis is not seen as temporary, but rather as an ongoing problem which requires extreme measures.

Kadim (2022) uses the speeches by American president Trump as an example of PRR speech. The analysis shows a clear usage of the us vs. them narrative, in this case the native, christian American population vs. Muslim immigrants. The Muslims are repeatedly portrayed as dangerous and violent. He uses a similar strategy when talking about the political elites, which was Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama at the time. Pronouns like "we" and "them" are used frequently as well to reinforce the narrative. He also uses the strategy of blaming these actors for the problems in the United States, and frames himself as the solution. On the other hand, he sympathises with Christians, who are, as Trump says, victims of the immigration and previous administrations. Trump also uses hyperbolic speech in order to make the problems related to Muslims seem bigger to the audience, creating a crisis narrative. By using emotional language, he is able to avoid any nuance.Trump creates a clear common enemy for the 'regular people' and puts himself on their side as the one who will save them from the crisis. He also frames himself as one of the regular people by frequently using informal language rather than political correctness.

Bos et al. (2013) notices similar patterns among right wing populist parties. Their research states that populists frame themselves as ‘reluctant politicians’, they are only in politics because they are needed, due to a crisis. This can be interpreted as another way for them to align themselves with the public rather than with other politicians. Bos et al. calls it ‘dramatization’, because the politicians emphasize that without their defence, the community would fall to this crisis. Other techniques mentioned by Bos et al. are ordinariness, straightforwardness, simplicity and clarity. They also refer to ‘man in the street communication styles’ and ‘friend verses foe rhetoric’, as discussed earlier in this section. Another point they make is the emphasis of populist parties on a strong, charismatic leader, which holds the party together and often has authoritarian traits.

For the case of the Netherlands, Talay (2019) compared the speaking styles of PRR party leaders Thierry Baudet (FvD) and Geert Wilders (PVV). What he found was that while the two parties have similar policy goals, especially when it comes to nationalism and culture, Baudet’s relatively new party was able to attract voters away from Wilders. This happened partially because of the different style Baudet was able to adopt. Wilders is known as a blunt, direct and aggressive speaker, using language in an attempt to resonate with regular people. Baudet, on the other hand, applies intellectual, poetic and subtle language to come across as more respectable. He often uses more sophisticated references to culture and art in his speeches to create his nationalist arguments. In addition, Baudet focuses on constructing a Dutch in-group, defined by cultural and historical pride. On the contrary, Wilders explicitly focuses on the out-group, which is usually Muslims, and identifies them as a threat. Wilders is openly islamophobic whereas Baudet is more subtle. Therefore, they are using different methods to create the us vs. them narrative. To legitimize their arguments, the leaders also use different strategies. Baudet appeals to people by creating hypothetical futures, and using statistics and quotes from philosophers as expert perspectives on the arguments. Wilders makes use of crisis narratives and induces moral panic to justify his stances. This makes Wilders seem more emotional than Baudet, who instead positions himself as future oriented and rational. This research is helpful in identifying how both leaders want to present themselves, which may or may not correspond to their choice of words in speeches. However, it is

important to note that Talay's analysis was written in 2019, which was before the covid-19 pandemic. During that period, the political climate changed, and Baudet's rhetoric radicalized, moving away from his rational image (Crum, 2024).

From these examples of previous research, it can be concluded that modern PRR politicians do have certain strategies in their speeches which are unique to them. These strategies include the us vs. them narrative, shifting blame, strategic use of formal and informal language, sympathizing with the 'regular people', hyperbolic and emotional language and crisis narratives.

### *LIWC in previous research*

For the analysis of this thesis, I will be using the software programme LIWC, which has been used for many other analyses before. For example, Tumasjan et al. (2010) used the programme to analyze political sentiment on Twitter. For the analysis, they used approximately 100.000 tweets, and analyzed them using LIWC based on 12 categories. The categories they used were future orientation, past orientation, positive emotions, negative emotions, sadness, anxiety, anger, tentativeness, certainty, work, achievement, and money. These were chosen because they can be related to political sentiment to some extent. They used the analysis to identify how German politicians were perceived emotionally by twitter users. For example, they found that more polarizing politicians were often connected to angrier tweets.

A second example of an LIWC analysis is the one conducted by Yu, Kaufmann, and Diermeier (2008). This study analyzes the degree to which emotional language is used in US congressional debates, by comparing them to movie reviews and news articles. In order to find this out, they used all senatorial speeches from the period 1989-2006, 130,000 news articles and 2000 movie reviews. They used the categories overall affect, positive feelings and negative feelings. This is because these three categories specifically identify emotionally charged words. They found that congressional speeches use more emotional language than news articles, but far less than movie reviews. They concluded that congressional speech has a low degree of emotional speech.

Koutsoumpis et al. (2022) use LIWC analysis to study what language use says about someone's personality. In the article, they explain that words are not chosen at random, but they reflect underlying personality traits. For example, people who are more extraverted tend to speak more, and use social-related and positive emotion words more frequently. If someone is more agreeable, they usually use less swear words. Less frequent use of negative emotion words indicates emotional stability. In their own study, they used 52 LIWC categories, and related them to personality traits. They did two comparisons: the first one was of LIWC text analysis and self-proclaimed personality traits, and the second was about LIWC analysis and personality traits perceived by others. The study concludes that linguistic patterns can indeed say something about someone's self-proclaimed personality, and it can also be a tool for others to infer someone's personality. Between these two, the correlation between linguistic patterns and others' perception of someone's personality was higher. Out of the LIWC categories, 20 correlated strongly with personality traits. For example, linguistic categories with a negative trait (swear words, anger, negative emotions) had a large effect on how others judge someone's personality. This means that during first impressions, people tend to notice negative traits more than positive ones.

## Methods

For my analysis, I have used speeches by politicians across the Dutch political spectrum. I compared center(right) and progressive-left parties to the Populist Radical Right, to see how much the rhetoric differs. The parties I chose for the analysis are: PVV and FvD (populist radical right), VVD and CDA (center/center-right), D66 and PvdA (progressive/center-left). These parties are among the most prominent, established and significant ones in the Netherlands, gaining the most seats in parliament in recent decades (Parlement, n.d.). Since this research focuses on the rise of the populist radical right in recent years, I have used recent speeches.

The time frame I chose is 2019-2025. I chose this timeframe based on significant events during these years. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic escalated in 2020 and divided audiences. Additionally, important events included the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2021, and the early elections

of 2023, which resulted in a historical win for PVV (Parlement, n.d.). The last significant event would be PRR politician Donald Trumps' return to presidency, who was elected in 2024. This affects Europe in many ways, considering the significance of the US' power (Politico, 2024).

To access the speeches I have used an official government website which archives all parliamentary debates on video (Debat Direct, n.d.). During these debates, speakers from parties are able to hold around five minute pre-written speeches. I will also take speeches outside of debates from YouTube. All of these speeches will be by Dutch politicians and are therefore in the Dutch language. I will record these speeches and transcribe them using the transcription package Whisper by OpenAI in programming software Python. For the six parties, I will find and transcribe around ten speeches each. I have created my own public dataset which is open to review (Brandsma, 2025).

After transcribing enough speeches, I analyzed them using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). This is a computer software program which analyzes word use in a text, to reveal the psychological context and social concerns behind it (LIWC, n.d.). The programme is based on decades of scientific research and has been used for numerous previous studies, meaning it is a reliable source. The reason why I use LIWC is because of its ability to categorize words used in speeches. I will be able to identify which word categories were mostly used, which then says something about the psychological intention behind the words. With categories such as 'pronouns' and 'emotion' I could recognize if there are discourse strategies present in the speech. I will also be able to compare different parties to each other, which will show whether certain parties use specific word categories more than others. The approach behind the method is essentially the scanning of the text and tallying up the words used in it (Boyd & Schwartz, 2021). Words are counted and categorized based on their psychological meanings. The over 80 categories they are divided into are pre-set in dictionaries created for the programme, and they are based on psychological theory. The dictionaries are collections of words that make up the specific category (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). There are several versions of LIWC dictionaries, which are translated into different languages. Since the data is in Dutch, the dictionary I have used is the Dutch version of LIWC2015, created by Peter Boot. Upon analysis, the frequency of each category then reveals key

aspects of someone's thought process, personality, life experiences, culture and societies (Boyd & Schwartz, 2021).

The categories are expressed in percentages (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). For example, if the output on one category is 5.05, this means that 5.05% of the words in the speech are a part of this category. Then, this number can be interpreted and analyzed based on previous research. The most basic assumption that can be made relates to where a person is focusing their attention. For example, if someone is speaking or writing with their family in their mind, they may refer to and mention them a lot. For the purpose of this research, there are certain categories which are more useful than others. The category *pronouns* which includes *i, you, we, them and she/he* could be useful for a number of reasons. Significant usage of *us* and *them* could signify an us vs. them narrative, whereas the usage of *I* indicates focus on the speaker themselves. Additionally, there are clear politics related categories such as *power, risk, reward* and *affiliation.* Other useful categories are *focuspast, focuspresent* and *focusfuture* which show what the speaker is focused on in terms of time: the past, present or future. Emotional categories like *posemo* and *negemo* show the emotional state of the speaker, or the negative or positive emotion they are trying to convey. Since a political strategy can be to use informal language, the category *informal* could be used to measure this. Finally, cognitive categories such as *certain* can say something about the thought process and intention of the speaker.

In the results, parties are compared across relevant categories. The results will be visualised in charts, which will be made in Rstudio programming software. The graphs will be analyzed and discussed based on the literature review. Additionally, a statistical test was run in order to test for significance. The ANOVA test was used for this purpose, due to its ability to test multiple groups at once, which is necessary in order to test all six parties in the dataset. Additionally, ANOVA gives reliable and interpretable results which can be followed up with a post-hoc test for further analysis. The post-hoc test Tukey's HSD was used to examine which parties differ exactly.

## Results

In the following section, the results from the LIWC analysis will be shared in the form of charts created using Rstudio. Additionally, ANOVA tests were ran on relevant variables, which included *we, they, posemo, affect, affiliation, focuspresent, focusfuture, focuspast, informal* and *certain.* For ANOVA testing, a normal distribution as well as equal variances is required. The variables were tested for normality and variables which are not normally distributed include: *we, posemo, affiliation, informal* and *certain.* Variables were also tested for homoscedasticity, which revealed that variables which does not have equal variances is *focuspresent.* Additionally, two variables were only borderline equal in variances. These were *focuspast* (.075) and *certain* (.091). Since not all variables pass the requirements for ANOVA, these results need to be interpreted with caution.

The categories shown are based on relevance to political speech. The LIWC score represents the percentage of all words that fall within each category. Categories can overlap, and some categories have more words than others.

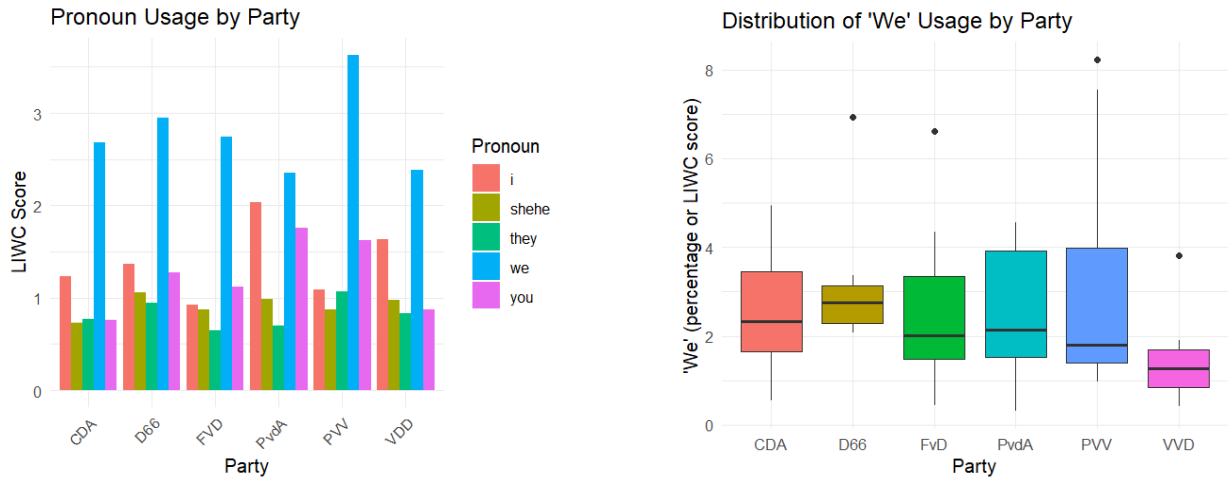


**Figure 1** Left: Bar chart showing the average scores per party for Pronoun categories. Right: Box plot of 'we' usage per party.

The bar chart in figure 1 shows the extent to which each party uses pronouns in their speeches. The Y-axis shows the percentage of how much a pronoun is used. In this case, the numbers are all

between 0 and 3.6%. Each party uses ‘we’ the most. The pronouns that are used the least are she/he and they, this varies only slightly across parties. To test the significance of the effect of the party on the frequency of the pronoun *we*, an ANOVA test was performed. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the frequency of the *we* pronoun between at least two parties ($F(5, 47) = 0.82$, $p = .541$). A one-way ANOVA for the pronoun *they* revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the use between the political parties, $F(5, 47) = 1.172$, $p = .337$.

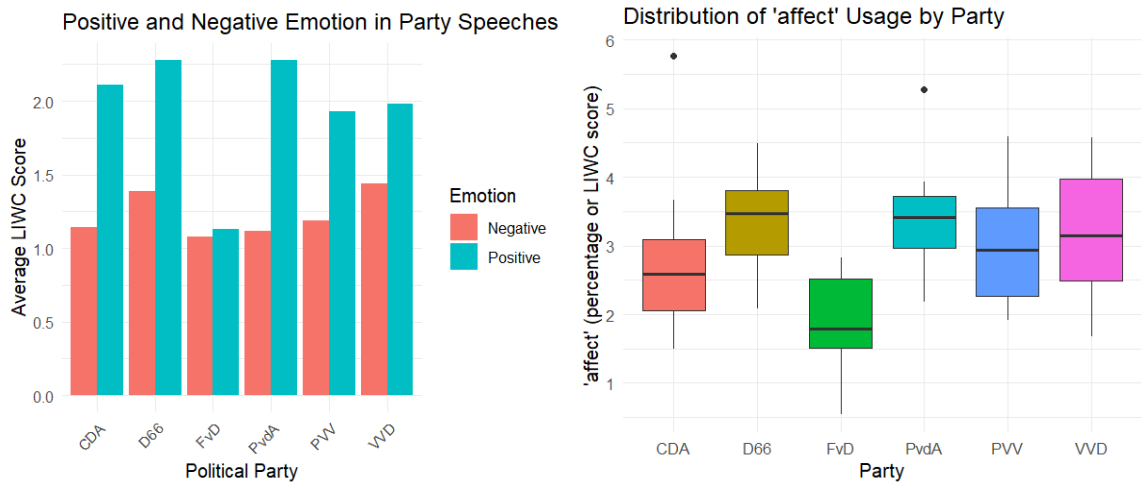


**Figure 2** Left: Bar chart of average scores per party on positive and negative emotion words. Right: Box plot of emotion words distributions per party.

Figure 2 shows the usage of words related to positive and negative emotions. The average LIWC scores are between 0 and 2.5% of the total words used. Each party uses positive emotions more than negative ones. D66 and PvdA use the most positive words, and FvD the least. FvD is also the only party which uses almost balanced positive and negative emotions, and the fewest emotional words in general. PvdA has the largest difference between positive and negative words. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to see whether there were differences in the use of positive emotion words between the six political parties. The results showed a significant difference ($F(5, 47) = 2.918$, $p = .022$). To find out where the differences were, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test was performed. This test showed that only the difference

between PvdA and FvD was statistically significant. Specifically, PvdA used more positive emotion words than FvD (mean difference = 1.16, $p$ = .020). All other differences between party pairs were not statistically significant. To test if there was an overall difference of emotion words used per party, another one-way ANOVA was conducted. For this test, the category *affect* was used, which includes all emotional words of the LIWC dictionary. The analysis showed a significant effect of parties on the use of emotional words ($F(5, 47) = 2.976$, $p$ = .020), indicating that emotional language differs somewhat between parties. A Tukey HSD post-hoc test was used to explore these differences further. The results showed two statistically significant pairwise differences: FvD used significantly fewer emotional words than D66 (mean difference = –1.44, $p$ = .034) and PvdA (mean difference = –1.45, $p$ = .024). All other comparisons between parties were not statistically significant.

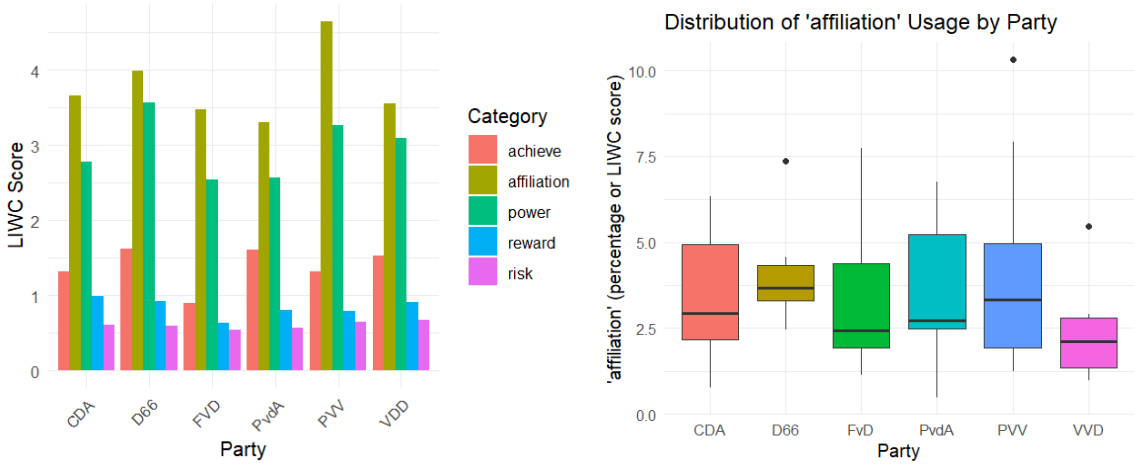


**Figure 3** Left: Bar chart showing the average LIWC scores of various categories related to drive. Right: Box plot of distribution of affiliation related words.

Figure 3 shows the category *drives*. There are 5 different subcategories, which overlap frequently with one another. Within *achieve* are words related to achievements. *Affiliation* has words which relate to affiliation to other people or institutions such as alliance, loyalty and brotherhood. *Power* words are

related to superiority and authority. The final two categories are *risk* and *reward.* The frequency of the categories is between 0 and 4,1%. Affiliation is the most important word category for every party, and PVV uses it the most. Risk and reward are consistently the least used categories. However, A one-way ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in affiliation between parties ($F(5, 47) = 0.595$, $p = 0.704$).

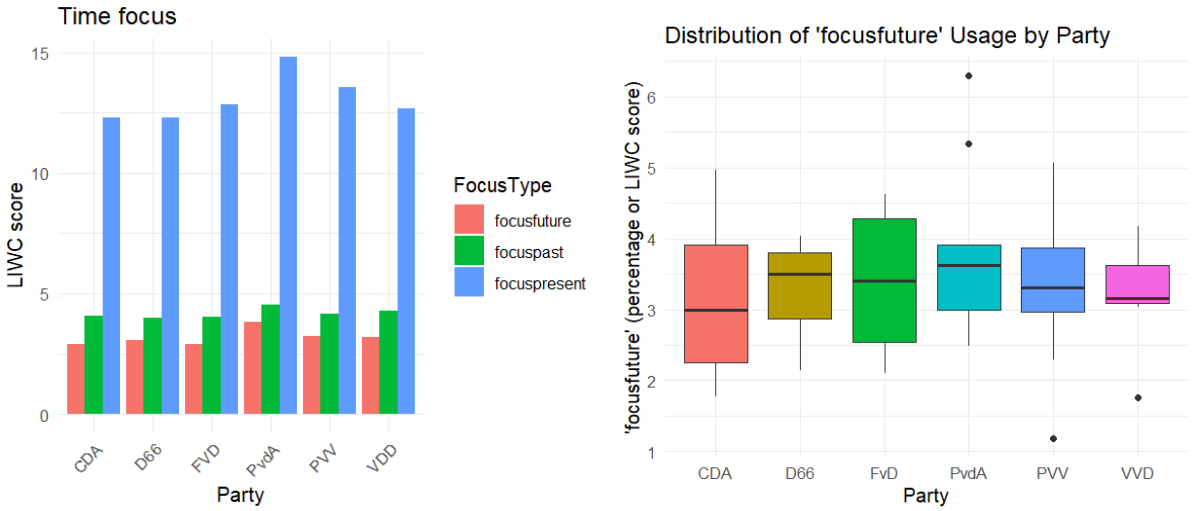


**Figure 4.** Left: Bar chart showing the average LIWC scores of temporal focus. Right: Box plot showing distribution of words related to parties' focus on the future.

Figure 4 compares the focus of the speakers on the present, past and future. The LIWC score is between 0 and 15%. All parties score the highest in the *focuspresent* category; PvdA has the highest score. The other variables are relatively equal. A one-way ANOVA test reveals that the difference between the parties in the variable *focuspresent* is statistically significant ($F(5, 47) = 2.96$, $p = 0.021$). A Tukey HSD post-hoc test then indicated that PvdA emphasizes the present significantly more than FvD ($p = 0.048$). Additionally, significance was approached between PvdA and VVD ($p = 0.071$) and between PvdA and CDA ($p = 0.080$). The rest of the differences were not statistically significant. The results for *focusfuture* revealed no significant differences between parties ($F(5, 47) = 0.55$, $p = 0.739$). The analysis

for *focuspast* also showed no significant effect of party differences ($F(5, 47) = 1.33$, $p = 0.268$). This confirms that parties do not differ significantly in usage of time related words.

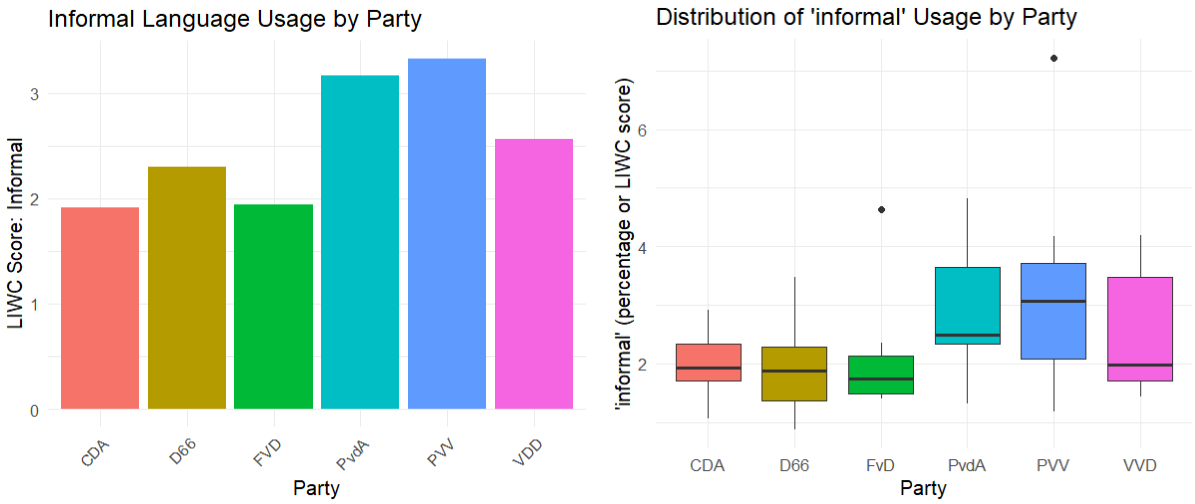


**Figure 5** Left: Bar chart showing average LIWC scores of informal language use. Right: Box plot showing distribution of informal language usage.

Figure 5 shows the usage of informal language by the parties, it includes all the words included in LIWC subcategories of the *informal* category. The average frequencies are between 0 and 3,3%. PVV has the highest frequency of informal language closely followed by PvdA, and CDA the lowest. A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether there were differences between political parties in the use of informal language. The results were not statistically significant ($F(5, 47) = 1.87$, $p = 0.118$).

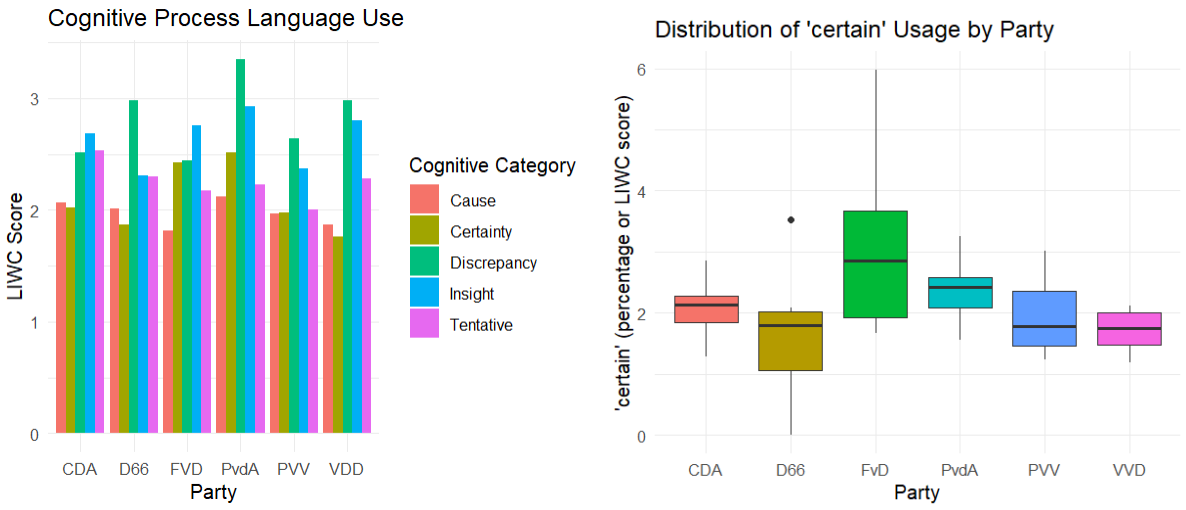


**Figure 6** Left: Bar chart showing the average LIWC scores of cognitive process words. Right: Box plot depicting the distribution of the word category *certain.*

Figure 6 shows the average LIWC scores in cognitive process categories, which can reveal the thought process of the speaker. The frequencies are between 0 and 3,4%. PvdA has the highest average frequency in both discrepancy and insight. However, the only category which showed a significant difference in one-way ANOVA tests, was the category *certain* ($F(5, 47) = 3.43$, $p = 0.010$). Afterwards, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test was run, which showed that FvD used significantly more certainty words than D66 ($p = 0.015$) and VVD ($p = 0.034$). The difference between FvD and PVV was close to being significant ($p = 0.051$). The *certain* category includes words which show the degree to which a speaker is convinced and certain in their statements (Corley & Wedeking, 2014). Many *certain* words in a speech can make it more convincing.

In general, these results from comparing all the parties show perhaps a more harmonious image than one might expect. Even though the parties are all very different in content, their word choices seem to be similar in a lot of ways. Overall, it can be seen that in each category, the biggest and smallest subcategories are more or less the same. However, this could possibly be due to the fact that certain categories simply have more words in them, meaning they would naturally have a higher frequency.

Additionally, there are some differences in word usage. PVV and PvdA seem to stand out the most in terms of highest frequencies.

## Discussion

In the following discussion, the LIWC results reported above are interpreted and connected to previous research on PRR parties found in the theoretical framework and literature review sections. The central research question guiding this thesis is: *Do the discourse strategies used by PRR politicians differ from those of mainstream political parties in the Netherlands?* This question will be answered through subsections derived from the results: us vs. them rhetoric, emotional language, informal language and certainty in language.

### Us vs. them rhetoric

Figure 1 shows the average pronoun usage of each party. The usage of pronouns *we* and *them* could be related to the populist tendency among PRR parties to create an us vs. them narrative, with an in-group and an out-group. The creation of this narrative is seen among PRR parties and politicians across the world, such as Donald Trump (Kadim, 2022), the Greek party 'Golden Dawn' (Ekström et. al, 2018) as well as Austria's FPÖ (Forchtner et al., 2013). The pronoun 'we' can be used to create the in-group, which in the case of the PVV, for example, includes themselves and other native Dutch people. It would make sense for a party like PVV to use the 'we' pronoun frequently, however, an ANOVA revealed that they actually do not use it to a statistically higher degree than other parties. This could be because of Talay's (2019) findings about PVV on this subject, which is that they tend to focus more on creating and targeting the out-group rather than the in-group.

The other PRR party, FvD, does not use 'we' to a higher extent either. Instead, they use it at a similar rate as the mainstream parties, seemingly going against the assumption that they aim to create a common identity. However, Talay (2019), found that while FvD does construct an in-group, they do this very subtly. FvD utilizes references to cultural and intellectual heritage to create a strong sense of national

pride, which could explain the comparative lack of ‘we’. It is likely that they use other words for the same purpose. One example of this can be found in a speech by Theirry Baudet during his campaign tour of 2024 (Brandsma, 2025):

*“Nederland is een heel bijzonder land. De verlichting is hier begonnen. Kapitalisme is hier begonnen. De Verenigde Staten zijn in feite opgericht vanuit Nederland. Nederland heeft eeuwenlang een daadwerkelijke gidsrol gespeeld”*

*“The Netherlands is a very special country. The enlightenment started here. Capitalism started here. In fact, the United States was founded from the Netherlands. The Netherlands played an actual guiding role for centuries.”*

This quote encapsulates the way in which a national identity is created without the use of pronouns, but rather through historical examples.

Another pronoun which is relevant to the us vs. them narrative is *they*. This pronoun could be used to create and refer to the out-group. While PVV is known for creating an outgroup, there was no statistically significant difference found between any of the parties. This could be explained by the fact that PVV tends to be quite aggressive in their language (Talay, 2019), meaning they are likely to call the out-group out by name, like in these examples from the speeches (Brandsma, 2025): *“links-liberale slokkers van D66”* “*left-liberal sluggers from D66*” (Geert Wilders, 2023), “*Aan de immigranten, aan de islam, aan de bureaucraten van de Europese Unie*.” “*To immigrants, to Islam, to the bureaucrats of the European Union*” (Geert Wilders, 2022), “*Afrikaanse en Arabische stemmers”* “*African and Arab voters”* (Geert Wilders, 2022). The PVV approach in this case is comparable to Donald Trump’s narrative, especially when it comes to bluntly creating a ‘dangerous’ outgroup (Kadim, 2022). What also stands out for this category is that, in figure 1, FvD uses the pronoun *them* the least. This is in line with the findings of Talay (2019), which states that FvD is more focused on the in-group rather than the out-group,which may explain their limited use of *them*.

In figure 3, the category *affiliation* includes words that affiliates actors to one another, such as *alliance, loyalty* and *brotherhood.* By using many of these types of words, a group feeling can be created.

However, there was no statistically significant evidence found that any of the parties use these words more than others.

Going back to the research question, this subsection has shown that, according to LIWC, the PRR parties FvD and PVV do not use pronouns related to the us vs. them rhetoric more or less than mainstream parties.

**Emotional language**

Of van Dijk's discourse strategies, there are a couple which relate to emotions. Specifically, *hyperbole* and *compassion move*, likely include emotional language since they are employed to cater to the audience's emotions. Therefore, emotional language can be a strategic tool in political election cycles. Based on the LIWC data on emotional language in figure 2, it is evident that progressive parties exhibit a slightly higher frequency of positive emotional language, but the differences are minimal, as all parties show a relatively high frequency of positive emotions. This indicates an overall absence of fear mongering by any of the parties, which could have been present if there was a majority of negative emotion words. According to Koutsoumpis et al. (2022), the usage of positive emotion words indicates extraversion, agreeableness and sociability. These are all good qualities when trying to win political support, and to get other actors on your side. Generally, audiences perceive someone who uses a high frequency of positive emotion words as indicators of positive personality traits. In general, none of the parties overly use emotional language on average.

The one outlier for these variables is FvD, which is the only one that uses almost the same amount of positive and negative emotion words. This indicates that they have a balanced emotional tone in their speeches, meaning they are not overly positive, nor overly negative. A one-way ANOVA test confirmed this, since there is a statistically significant difference, specifically between FvD and the progressive parties (PvdA and D66). The progressive parties use more emotional language overall than FvD does. While FvD's score is also lower than the other parties, this difference was not statistically significant. The reason for FvD's lack of emotional language can be explained by their intention to come

across as rational and intellectual rather than emotional (Talay, 2019). This could be in line with a PRR strategy to frame themselves as being above the other politicians, who lie and are emotional. Nigel Farage is a notable example, since he represents himself as a truth-teller, unlike other politicians (Ekström et. al, 2018). He often claims to 'say it how it is' instead of beating around the bush. FvD does this too with the intellectual and rational framing, setting them apart and perhaps enhancing their perceived credibility. Evidence of FvD seeing themselves as more honest and intelligent can be found in Baudet's speeches as well (Brandsma, 2025):

*"Er is geen enkele partij die zegt, 'het hele verhaal deugt niet'. Het moet gewoon fundamenteel anders. Nederland kan beter, Nederland moet een heel ander land worden."*

*"There is no party that says: 'the whole story is wrong'. It just has to be fundamentally different. The Netherlands can do better, the Netherlands must become a very different country."*

Baudet asserts that no other political party is addressing the fundamental problems facing the Netherlands. He argues that the country requires a complete transformation and positions his own party as the sole political actor both willing and able to recognize this need and speak truthfully about it. Therefore, Baudet is portraying his own party as the rational and truthful one.

This subsection has confirmed that the PRR party FvD does use less emotional language than mainstream parties, in order to come across as more rational and intelligent. The other PRR party, PVV, does not employ this same strategy, making it in line with the mainstream parties.

**Informal language and metaphors**

The usage of informal language is a key strategy for many PRR political actors. The Greek party GD uses it interchangeably with formal language in order to present themselves as both relatable and intellectual (Ekström et. al, 2018). They choose strategically when to use informal language, for example when they are pushing blame onto another party. While other parties may consider it inappropriate, it is a method to break with the political norms and show anti-elitism, and therefore stand out to voters. FPÖ from Austria does this too, because they blame and personally attack specific politicians (Forchtner et al.,

2013). Nigel Farage is another politician who speaks and behaves like regular people in order to present himself as one of them, instead of as an elite politician (Ekström et. al, 2018). This humanizes the speaker, and the informal language increases expressiveness, persuasiveness and emotionality of the speeches (Havryliuk & Borymska, 2023). Figure 2 suggests that PVV is employing this strategy to some extent, since they have the highest LIWC score on informal language out of all the parties. However, an ANOVA test suggests that the difference is not statistically significant ($F(5, 47) = 1.87$, $p = 0.118$). This indicates that PVV actually does not use significantly more informal language than the other parties. This goes against Talay's (2019) findings as well, who noted that PVV's leader, Wilders, uses blunt, direct and aggressive language in an attempt to resonate with regular people. This strategy would construct a more authentic image which would be relatable to voters who may feel disconnected from elitist political discourse. However, since Talay's research was from 2019, it is possible that Wilders' and PVV's strategy has changed since. Regardless, there are still examples from the more recent speeches which show that informal and blunt language is still used by the party, although it may be more rare now than before. An example of the way in which Wilders uses informal language can be found in his speech at a farmers' protest in 2023:

*"Niet de veestapel, maar D66 moet woensdag worden gehalveerd. En het grote probleem van Nederland is niet de hoeveelheid stikstof per hectare, maar de hoeveelheid idioten in dit kabinet."*

*"Not livestock, but D66 should be cut in half on Wednesday. And the Netherlands' big problem is not the amount of nitrogen per acre, but the amount of idiots in this cabinet."*

In this quote, Wilders attacks progressive party D66 and the cabinet of that time through informal language such as name-calling. He does this to turn the audience against the mainstream parties and to emphasize his allegiance to the people. He portrays the mainstream parties as the root of the problems, and poses himself as the alternative. Much like Golden Dawn, it absolves him and his party of any responsibility, since he is not a part of this political elite (Ekström et. al, 2018). This also furthers polarization, which PRR parties benefit from (Hirth, 2009), and the us vs. them narrative, as it draws a line between 'good' and 'bad' politicians. However, since other parties do not use this type of language to

a lesser extent, it can be concluded that PRR parties are not the only ones taking advantage of this strategy.

According to the data, FvD also diverges from the PRR parties that use informal language as a strategy. This makes sense, considering their desired image of an intelligent and rational party. Instead, other ways of standing out are employed, for instance by using unique metaphors or quotations and overly complicated words (Talay, 2019). FvD therefore does not try to cater to the regular voter by acting like them, but aims to gain credibility by using formal language in the way Golden Dawn does (Ekström et. al, 2018). The intellectual references and wording is to come across as authoritative and express cultural and moral superiority. Especially party leader Baudet uses metaphors and references a lot, like in his famous 2021 speech about "*the owl of Minerva spreading its wings*". A second example can be found in a parliamentary debate of 2024 about demographic changes (Brandsma, 2025):

*"Acht und achtzig Professoren, Vaterland, du bist verloren. Dit beroemde citaat van Otto von Bismarck uit de negentiende eeuw had ooit betrekking op falende pogingen vanuit de academische wereld om de Duitse natie en identiteit te vatten en het is vrees ik ook vandaag weer van toepassing, maar dan op het rapport van de staatscommissie demografie dat we hier bespreken."*

*"'Acht und achtzig professoren, Vaterland du bist verloren.' This famous quote by Otto von Bismarck from the nineteenth century once related to failed attempts from academia to grasp the German nation and identity, and it is, I fear, applicable again today, but to the report of the State Commission on Demography that we are discussing here."*

In this quote, the discourse strategy *presupposition* is applied, meaning Baudet assumes the audience understands the reference without providing further historical context. The historic example is then used to shed a negative light on the report discussed in the debate. This rhetorical move presents the comparison as self-evident and rational, which undermines the report and portrays it as a misunderstanding of the nation and culture. In doing so, the reference functions as implied evidence to support Baudet's argument that the report misrepresents issues regarding demographic changes.

From this subsection, it can be concluded that PRR politicians do not use informal language more or less than mainstream parties. However, informal language may be used in different ways or other ways of standing out are employed, such as the use of metaphors.

**Certainty**

The category certainty, shown in figure 6, includes words that indicate how sure and how convinced a speaker is. The category includes words such as *absolutely, definitely* and *sure.* Language like this can make a speech more persuasive, because it conveys confidence, assertiveness and authority. It shows that the speaker is sure of their position, which means the audience is more likely to accept what is being said (Corley & Wedeking, 2014). In addition, certainty words make the speaker seem knowledgeable and trustworthy to the audience. The words also decrease ambiguousness, which makes the statements of the speaker seem like the one logical or acceptable conclusion. For politicians specifically, this can be helpful to use, since they want to convince the audience of their positions. For PRR politicians, certainty fits with their tendency to oversimplify issues, and pose their position as the sole solution (McDonnell & Ondelli, 2022). Certainty words convey the solution as the truth, which helps to convince audiences. Additionally, since certainty words help to convey authority, it can solidify the PRR politicians superiority over the political elites. By expressing certainty, the audience will be able to trust them.

It is likely that this style of communication has helped the FvD in recent years to convey their message, since the ANOVA test for this variable shows a significant difference between the FvD and the parties D66 and VVD. This means that FvD uses significantly more words that express certainty than D66 and VVD do. There was no other party that had a significant difference, meaning FvD is the only party using this strategy in their speeches from this dataset. As mentioned in the previous sections of this discussion, FvD presents themselves as an intellectual, rational party, and as superior to the other, mainstream, parties. Therefore, their usage of certainty words makes sense, as they wish to come across as the logical alternative to these mainstream parties. However, it does not necessarily mean they use this

strategy on purpose. The usage of these words could also mean that they are truly convinced of what they are saying, but that does not change the effectiveness of the word choices on the audience. One example of FvD using a certainty word is in the following quote by Baudet from a parliamentary debate on nitrogen in 2019 (Brandsma, 2025):

*"Er heerst in de beeldvorming een bizar en geheel naast de feiten staand misverstand over stikstof, namelijk dat het slecht zou zijn voor de natuur. Het tegenovergestelde is waar. (...) Het zorgt dus absoluut niet voor minder natuur, maar slechts voor andersoortige natuur."*

*"There is a bizarre and completely beside the fact misconception about nitrogen in the perception that it is bad for nature. The opposite is true. (...) So it absolutely does not cause less nature, but only different nature."*

The underlined words in the quote are certainty words as identified by LIWC. These words make this baseless quote, which contradicts popular beliefs about nitrogen, sound very convincing. This statement is meant to undermine arguments of the other political parties, and offer an alternative truth. In this way, Baudet is able to depict his views as facts, and leaves the audience with little room to question the statements.

This subsection implies that PRR party FvD uses more words related to certainty, meaning they may be using this strategically, to make their arguments more convincing and trustworthy.

**Limitations and suggestions**

Overall, the discussion above highlighted some new findings regarding speech of Dutch PRR parties within the period 2019-2024. The findings go against assumptions made about PRR parties in the literature review, and instead show that PRR parties could be more similar to mainstream parties than assumed. This could mean that the PRR politicians of the Netherlands do not use such strategies to a high degree, or it means that Dutch mainstream politicians have adopted the same strategies as the PRR parties. Additionally, the findings show that there are significant differences among the PRR parties

themselves. This confirms the notion that the speech of PRR parties is multidimensional and plural, the results of one party can not be generalised to others.

However, this study has some limitations, which highlight the need for further research. Firstly, there are limitations regarding the data. The first data limitation is the speakers used in the dataset. While each party has many members, only ten speeches were chosen per party. Additionally, some parties have certain members which are more prominent than others, and therefore will emerge more frequently in the dataset. Suggestions for future research can be to either add more speakers to create a more representative image of the party, or choose one speaker which is the main representative of the party. A second data limitation is the time frame of the data. Since there are only around ten speeches per party, and the time frame is five years, there are around two parties per year, which may not be representative. Suggestions for future research would be to choose more speeches per year, for example one each month per party, or even per speaker. This would create a more accurate timeline which could even be connected and compared to political events and changes. Changes in linguistic approach might be identified per party, or per speaker. Additionally, with the usage of a larger dataset, a much larger timeline could be created, starting in or before the 1990s, when PRR parties were on the rise. This could show how the parties and politicians changed as they became more popular.

Secondly, there are some methodological limitations to the study. First off, LIWC has limitations attached to it, which are outlined by Tausczik & Pennebaker (2010), who helped create the software. The main limitation is that LIWC categorizes words by themselves, and therefore ignores context of the sentence, such as sarcasm and idioms. This means that certain words may be put into a category, even though it was meant differently by the speaker. Another limitation for the methodology is that certain requirements for the ANOVA test were not entirely met for some variables. This means the results should be interpreted with caution.

## Conclusion

Populist Radical Right (PRR) political parties have been on the rise in the last few decades throughout Europe. This thesis aims to evaluate how the political speech of these parties is used to persuade audiences and win votes. The focus of the research is on the Netherlands from 2019 to 2024, since research on this tumultuous period in the country is limited. For populists, an important aspect of their political style is the language and rhetoric they use.

An analysis was conducted using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), a computer software program which analyzes text by counting words and sorting them into categories. Two PRR parties, two center right parties and two progressive parties were used to conduct the analysis, and to compare to each other. The frequency of usage of certain categories were compared using bar charts, box plots and one-way ANOVA tests for statistical significance. The results showed no significant difference between the parties for pronoun categories *we* and *them*, as well as the category *affiliation* which could have indicated the us vs. them narrative. Therefore, LIWC analysis does not identify this common assumption about PRR politicians. Similarly, no significant difference was found for the variable *informal* either, which indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in informal language use between parties. This again is a common strategy among European PRR parties, who use informal language to relate to the audience. One of the categories where a significance was found, was in the category *posemo* which identifies words related to positive emotions. PRR party Forum voor Democratie (FvD) used these significantly less than some other parties. In general, The analysis showed that FvD uses less words related to emotions (LIWC category *affect*). This relates back to the parties desire to be a rational, intellectual party. Therefore it makes sense that they would be less likely to use emotionally charged words. Lastly, a significant difference was found for the category *certain*. This category includes words which make the speaker sound confident and convinced of their statements. It helps in convincing the audience of your points, whether those are factual or not. In this category, it was found that FvD differs significantly from at least two other parties. This means that they use these types of words more, and therefore are able to make their position sound more convincing.

To conclude, the research shows that according to LIWC analysis, PRR language is not as different from mainstream parties as originally assumed, at least not in quantifiable linguistic terms. In the Netherlands, linguistic strategies of PRR and mainstream parties appear broadly similar, with a few exceptions. This means that PRR parties in the Netherlands may not rely on discourse strategies as much to shape their argument, or that their language is more context-sensitive and complex than word-count tools alone can fully capture. Overall, PRR language should be recognized as nuanced, and understanding it fully is essential for grasping the persuasive power of political language in an increasingly polarized world.

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