When comparing former President Donald Trump and current President Joe Biden, it is evident the differing policy decisions and ideals of the country, but that begs the question: do such differences translate to contrasts in analysis of linguistic trends and word choice. In order to identify potential variance, two collections of transcripts will be analyzed by looking at a frequency distribution of both individual words (Voyant Tools) and common phrases known as n-grams (AntConc). The first collection includes a comparison of an early Donald Trump Covid-19 press briefing taking place on March 14, 2020, and an early Joe Biden Covid-19 press briefing as president taking place on January 21, 2021. The second collection attempts to normalize findings by adding 4 additional campaign speeches for each candidate delivered at similar timeframes prior to the 2020 election.

Starting with the Covid-19 press briefing collection, utilizing Voyant Tools, Figure 1.1 (Biden) and 1.2 (Trump) display a word cloud in which more frequently used words are shown in larger text size. Both Figure 1.1 and 1.2 show the top 35 words used by each president. In Biden’s, words such as “pandemic”, “covid”, “health”, and “plan” are some of the most common, whereas Trump places little emphasis on such words with only “coronavirus” being used and is far less frequently mentioned compared to Biden. These begin to display fundamental differences between candidates: one that takes a far more aggressive approach towards Covid-19 and another than is much more relaxed about it.

While some of this may be contributed towards a lack of information known about Covid-19 on March 14, 2020, it is also important to note that the World Health Organization (WHO) had already declared a pandemic 3 days prior to his briefing. This can be seen by Biden’s concordance plot for “pandemic” showing he consistently used the phrase (Figure 1.3) and Trump’s lack of the word (Figure 1.4), using it 0 times. This once again feeds into the ideology of the contrast between the two presidents’ approaches. In addition to this, as demonstrated in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2, Trump characteristically uses self-complimentary terms such as “tremendous”, “good”, and “great” whereas, Biden lacks any phrases in that manner.

Referencing AntConc, it becomes apparent another key difference between the 2 presidents: Biden often references internal ability and responsibilities, whereas Trump focuses heavily on using external, third-party reasoning to back his own thoughts. For n-gram size of 3-5, one of Trump’s most used phrase is “you look at” and Biden’s most common is “next one is”. While on the surface, this may not have much meaning to the claim, looking further at the concordance view of AntConc reveals, Biden (Figure 1.5) talks about his plan in order to further prevent the spread and ideas that are within his control to make a difference. Trump’s view in AntConc (Figure 1.6) references other countries, private corporations, and banks.

In order to further increase the reliability of findings, the second collection increases the number of transcripts and speeches utilized. In which, key trends can still be identified including differences in partisan policy beliefs and internal, emotional speech versus external, logic-based speech.

As shown by Voyant Tool’s word cloud in Figure 2.1 (Biden) and Figure 2.2 (Trump), while both often use “we’re”, Trump often uses more external thoughts after this often referencing “they’re” in order to argue for reasoning why people should vote for him. Looking further into this with AntConc, Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4 displays the concordance view of the phrases “they’re going” and “they want to” for Donald Trump, and Figure 2.5 display the concordance view of the “I’m going” for Joe Biden. Similar to earlier conclusions, Biden is more likely to take an active role in his speech talking about items he wishes to accomplish to convince voters, compared to Trump who uses the statement of others talking about what would happen if he were not elected in an attempt to win over voters. Further evidence to this can be seen in Figure 2.6 in which Trump uses several phrases such as “sleepy Joe Biden” and “fake news” which heavily carry a negative connotation.

One can also take note of the emotions portrayed from words used by either president. Figure 2.7 shows a concordance view the phrase “win” for Joe Biden and Figure 2.8 shows top n-grams used for Donald Trump of size 3-5. Biden often uses the phrase much more sparingly, and when he does it often tries to inject a morale responsibility to vote for him citing “we have to win this together.” A stark comparison to Donald Trump boasting “we are going to win” to his supporters.

It was interesting that “Make America Great Again” was not ranked highly on Figure 2.8. In fact, it did not appear on the list until the 66th spot for size 3-5 phrases. I would have expected this to be higher due to the prevalence and emphasis usually placed on the phrase.

My Notes:

Biden Cam 1-4, Trump 1-4 N-gram 3-5

Conclusions:

* Trump refers to the history of the country more often
* Biden and Trump frequently use we’re going to xyz, but Biden often throws in I’m going to, whereas trump uses they’re going to
* Biden refers to the middle class
* Trump states he is going to win, Biden rarely uses the word win, when he does it is much less direct, more a cry to rally (we have to win)
  + Consistently
    - Cord Plot
* Trump frequently uses “they want to” to put down others, Biden never does such
* Trump frequently references “fake news” to put others down
* Trump frequently references “sleepy joe Biden”