

The Effect of Anti-European Position on speech-making in the European Parliament

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Abstract

Speech-making in the Parliament is a significant tool for representatives to signal their positions to party leadership. Proksch and Slapin(2010) argue that some Members of the European Parliament(MEPs) are more likely to give speeches than other MEPs if their voting defections increase. In this replication study, I replicate their findings and look at whether some MEPs are more likely to give speeches than others in order to not only signal party leadership but also their constituencies and increase their visibility. I have found that anti-European MEPs make more plenary speeches than other MEPs. Furthermore, I have found that voting defection has a positive effect on speech-making only if MEPs come from a party that has a centralized election mechanism.

Introduction

How the parliamentarians use the means they have in the parliament in terms of legislative acts? Could some specific indicators be stemming from institutional settings that explain the behaviors of deputies? In this study, I, firstly, replicate the study of Slapin & Proksch (2010) and look at a different explanatory factor that can shed light on variation among members of the European Parliament(MEPs) in terms of the number of speech-makings. This study shows that not only the behavior of MEPs specific position depending on both their national party and European parliamentary group but also variation among MEPs position on how they approach European Union and integration explain differences of the number of speech-making. While studies of legislative behavior are mainly dominated by roll-call voting analyses, speech making is also an important signaling means for Members of Parliament(MP) to their stance on specific issues. MPs by making speeches can show their positions to both their party leadership and constituents. Furthermore, party leadership cares about party unity in the voting behavior of MPs since voting is the most critical mean to pass or oppose a proposed bill. However, party leadership may make sacrifices from party unity in speeches to please some voters opposing the voting decision of the party. Therefore, we can expect different kinds of behaviors and mecha-

nisms that organize voting and speech-making separately depending on the incentives of both party leadership and MPs (Proksch & Slapin, 2012). European Parliament has both similar and different features from national parliaments. As in the national parliaments, “left-right politics is the main dimension of contestation in the European Parliament”(Hix et al., 2007, p.10). However, the legislative agenda mainly controlled by Commission and MEPs are lack agenda-setting power. Furthermore, all the bill does not have to be applied by the European Parliament. Some bills required only the consent of the European Council. Furthermore, while the electoral resources of MEPs are controlled by national parties, legislative resources are controlled by European Parliamentary groups (Hix et al., 2007, p.136). Therefore, we can expect different kinds of calculations from both MEPs and party leadership in terms of legislative acts. In this study, I argue that MEPs who are against European integration are more likely to speak than other MEPs who are for EU integration or have a neutral stance to EU integration. To increase their visibility in the politics and their disadvantageous position regards to policy-making because of their harsher political stance against the EU, speech-making in the European parliament presents more incentives for anti-European MEPs. Therefore, I expect to see more speeches by Anti-European MEPs.

Legislative Action in Parliaments

One of the main parts of politics is policymaking. While parties and representatives try to connect directly with their constituents, legislative and executive actions consist of an essential part of the politicians. In the end, politicians could sound the diverse voices of citizens on politics and could bring changes in politics in the best way by conducting legislative and executive behaviors. The legislature is especially an essential part of politics for both government and coalition. Legislative behavior can be summarized by two essential responsibilities which are voting and speech-making in the parliamentary. It can be assumed that party leaders are more sensitive to voting defections(Proksch & Slapin 2014) since it is the most effective way to have a say in policymaking. Parties have an incentive to minimize voting defections to provide strong cohesiveness of the party and

hinder a risk of internal divisions within the party (Sieberer 2006, Kirkland and Slapin 2018). While we expect a general incentive to protect party cohesion, there is also variation across the countries and the parties on voting records. The institutional settings provide different incentives for both party leadership and the representatives to care less or more about the party cohesion in voting than others (Proksch & Slapin 2012). Parliamentary parties have overall more disciplinary voting records than presidential systems since execution and legislation are more dependent because of the institutional structure of parliamentary regimes (Dewan and Spirling 2011; Carey 2009). However when we look at individual defections, “rebellions are much more likely to occur among ideologically extreme legislators when their party controls the legislative agenda” for both USA and UK (Kirkland and Slapin 2018). Furthermore, variation among parliamentary regime parties is explained by the parties’ government or opposition status or parties’ size in the legislature. (Sieberer 2006).

While weighting of voting could be more than speech-making in the calculations of representatives, speech making is an indispensable part of the legislature. “MPs use floor speeches primarily to communicate policy positions to other members within their party, to members of other parties, and, most importantly, to their voters” (Proksch & Slapin 2014, 2). While opposition parties do not have as much effect on policy-making because of their lack agenda-setting power, they can communicate with their voters by speech-making. Furthermore, representatives can signal their ideological position to not only constituent but also party leadership. While for some regimes, opposing the party’s stance on specific legislative voting, voting rebels can use speech as a means to give a signal to their stance to party leadership and constituents (Proksch & Slapin 2014). However, the question of who is more likely to speak does not only depend on the opposing position of representative. Proksch and Slapin (2012) argue that speech making of MPs is endogenous to institutional settings and incentives of party leaders and representatives. If the party leadership cares about the personal reputation of their representative, they can give more chance for MPs to speak and trade off party cohesiveness for the personal reputations of MPs.

Speech-Making In the European Parliament

When it comes to speech-making in the European Parliament, we can expect differences in MPs' behavior between voting and speech-making. While MPs voting actions are tough to reflect left-right ideological positions of MPs, partisan division of speech making in the European Parliament is mainly shaped by EU-integration and national divisions(Hix et al. 2007, Proksch & Slapin 2010).

In the European Parliament, the decision for who is going to talk for the party belongs to the European Party group's leadership as in the national parliaments. Half of the time for plenary speech in the European parliament is divided equally for all European Party groups and the other half is distributed to the party group's relative sizes(Slapin & Proksch 2010). Therefore, we can expect similar opportunities for all-party groups. Different from national Parliaments, MEPs are subject to both national party leadership and European Party Group leadership. (Hix et. al 2007) While chances of re-election are decided by national party leadership, European Party Group leadership has the control of legislative resources such as the decision on who is going to talk in the European Parliament(Proksch & Slapin 2014,67). Slapin & Proksch (2010) argues that MEPs who defect from the European Party group in the voting are more likely to make speeches to explain their excuse of defection for the national considerations to both two leadership. Since the re-election chance is controlled by the national leadership, Parliamentary leadership can give more likely to consent for voting rebels. Furthermore, because of the conflict between MPs' national considerations and the stances of the European party group, Slapin & Proksch (2010) expect European party leadership is less likely willing to be seen as a cohesive unit. In addition to that, they also expect to increase in speech making of voting rebels when the MEPs' chance of re-election is governed by the more centralized mechanism.

Besides "the strategical interaction between parties and their members"(Proksch & Slapin2014, 1) in order explain the variation between the number of speeches of MEPs, I argue that stances of MEPs on European integration explains why some MEPs more likely to give speeches than other MEPs., I claim that MEPs who are against European integration

are more likely to speak than other MEPs who are for EU integration or have a neutral stance to EU integration. The reason for this result can be summarized by the specific setting of the European parliament and its results on anti-European MEPs. Besides the classical left-right dimension, one of the main issues of the European Parliament legislative making naturally is decisions on European integration(Hix et al 2007; Proksch & Slapin 2010) Anti- European parties can gain the advantage of issue entrepreneurship to increase their visibility(De Vries & Hobolt 2012). It is argued(Schulte-Cloos 2018), anti-European parties' success and use of European parliament have positive effects on the national elections. Anti-European parties, by increasing their visibility, increase their chances of in the national elections. Since their main tool to attract voter is their anti-European position rather than their stance on the left-right dimension(Wagner 2012), we can expect anti-European MEPs can use speech-making more actively than their other counterparts. Furthermore, while MEPs have two main activities which are voting and speechmaking as in the national parliaments, for some MEPs one of these activities can overweight the other depending on their position on EU integration. The main motivation for the establishment of the European Parliament is to provide further integration with the representation of the European constituency. While parties can have different positions on issues about social, economic bills depending on their left-right policy positions, anti-EU parties mainly oppose most of the activities since most of the EU legislation bills aim to improve integration by the power of the European Commission's pro-European agenda-setting power. While voting seems an important tool for all MEPs, for anti-Europeans utility from speech-making, could be more important than other MEPs since their power on voting is restricted because of their small numbers and lack of controlling agenda-setting power. Therefore, speechmaking seems a more precious resource for anti-European MEPs to gain visibility and show their constituents that MEPs pull their weight. Therefore my hypothesis is that :

The number of Speeches given by Anti-European MEPs will be more than both numbers of speeches given by pro-European MEPs and MEPs who have a moderate stance on European integration.

Research Design and Data

The main part of my data, the dependent variable, two independent variables and all the control variables come from Slapin and Proksch (2010). My main independent variable EU position comes from Chapel hill 1999 survey presented by Bakker et al. (2020) and finally I take the alternative main independent variable “Party Manifesto” from Volkens et al. (2020). The main dependent variable is the count of speeches given by MEPs during the 5th term of European Parliament which took place between 1999 and 2004. The main independent variable is named “EU position” and shows the position scores of national parties from given by the experts on the EU integration issue ranging from 1 to 7. I use this variable as a proxy for the position scores of the MEPs on the EU integration issue as I expect that the MEPs hold similar positions related to this issue as with their national parties. The alternative for this variable comes from the party manifests. Volkens et al. (2020) calculate pro and anti EU sentiment score for parties from their manifests. The “party manifest” variable shows the difference of pro-EU sentiment score and anti-EU sentiment score of each party. Again, I use these scores as a proxy for the MEPs position on the EU integration issue. For my main analyses I am going to use Chapel Hill survey data because expert opinions on party positions are more likely to be related with voters’ opinion on party positions than party manifestos (Ezrow and Somer 2014). Figure 1 shows the mean of the number of speeches that MEPs near that EU position gave in the 5th term of EP and the number of MEPs who are near that EU position. The plots show some preliminary support for my hypothesis as more anti-EU MEPs are given more speeches even though they are the minority in the EP.

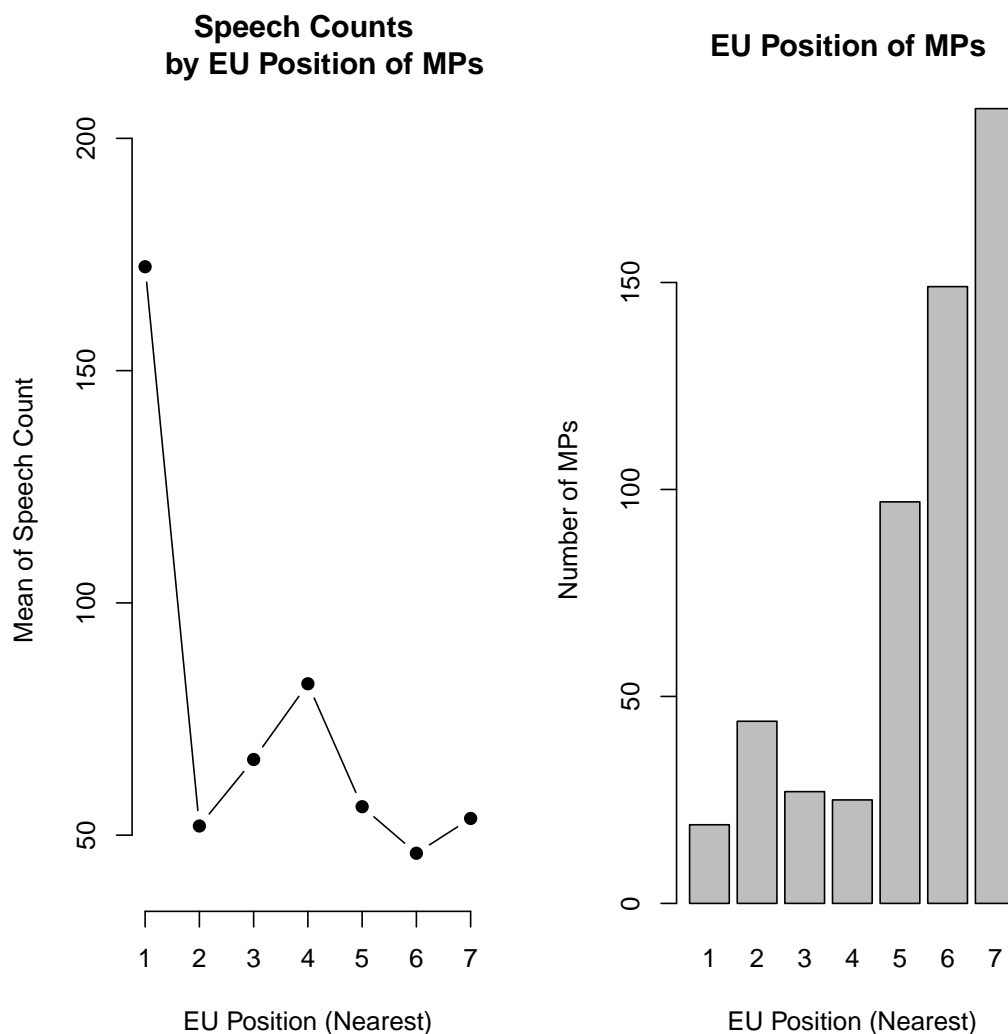


Figure 1: Preliminary Look to MP Speeches and EU Positions

Two independent variables “National Rebel Defection Score” and “European Group Defection Score” come from Slapin and Proksch (2010) and ranges between 0 and 1. Higher scores show more defection from the main party line. Both variables are clustered between 0 and 0.2 in our data with very few high scores. Finally, I control for several other variables that likely to affect how often MEPs speak. First of all, I control for the length of parliamentary tenure of each MEP as more senior MEPs may be expected to participate in the debates more often. I also control the absences of each MEP from the roll call votes. In this case, more absences may also mean giving less speeches. I include the number of rapporteurships held by each MEP and expect that the MEPs who held more rapporteurships will speak more often. As larger political groups are allotted more

time for their MEPs, I include the size of the MEP's political group and the relative size of each national party delegation within each political group. I have two dummy variables to control for the MEPs leadership position , political group or EU leadership, as leaders may give more speeches. Lastly, I include controls for the number of committee roles of MEPs including both the number of chairs they are holding and the number of assignments they have if any.

Analyses and Robustness Checks

Table 1: Negative binomial regression: Explaining the allocation of speaking time

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Speaking Time (Speech Count)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
EU Position			-0.338** (0.157)	-0.563*** (0.186)
EU Position Squared			0.025 (0.017)	0.049** (0.019)
National Rebel Defection Score	2.859*** (0.747)	0.134 (1.110)	0.390 (0.961)	-2.886** (1.382)
European Group Defection Score	-3.078** (1.357)	-3.024** (1.359)	-2.506 (1.985)	-0.469 (2.063)
Centralized Candidate Selection	0.103 (0.101)	0.260 (0.288)	0.119 (0.104)	0.172 (0.305)
National Rebel Score x Candidate Selection	1.474 (1.177)	3.262** (1.378)	1.661 (1.185)	4.649*** (1.467)
Tenure	0.0001*** (0.00002)	0.0001*** (0.00002)	0.0001*** (0.00002)	0.0001*** (0.00002)
Voting Absences	-0.001*** (0.0001)	-0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.001*** (0.0001)	-0.0005*** (0.0001)
Rapporteurships (number)	0.062*** (0.011)	0.067*** (0.010)	0.066*** (0.011)	0.065*** (0.010)
EP Group Leader	0.368*** (0.126)	0.502*** (0.121)	0.378*** (0.125)	0.481*** (0.120)
EP Leadership	0.050 (0.114)	0.075 (0.108)	0.039 (0.112)	0.058 (0.107)
Committee Assignments	0.124*** (0.034)	0.125*** (0.033)	0.119*** (0.034)	0.128*** (0.033)
Committee Chairs	-0.037 (0.071)	-0.009 (0.066)	-0.032 (0.070)	0.001 (0.066)
EP Political Group Size	-0.004*** (0.0005)	0.005 (0.012)	-0.003*** (0.001)	0.012 (0.012)
National Party Relative Size	-1.785*** (0.506)	-0.904 (0.798)	-1.587*** (0.503)	-1.191 (0.841)
(Intercept)	4.404*** (0.180)	4.013*** (0.680)	5.412*** (0.393)	5.482*** (0.830)
Theta	1.441*** (0.086)	1.676*** (0.103)	1.496*** (0.091)	1.715*** (0.107)
Observations	563	563	553	553
Log Likelihood	-2,748.557	-2,705.900	-2,692.270	-2,654.748
EP Political Group Dummies	NO	YES	NO	YES
Country Dummies	NO	YES	NO	YES

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

My dependent variable is a count of speeches therefore I estimate a negative binomial regression model. I estimated four models, two models without EP group and member state dummies and two models including those dummies. All the models are presented in Table 1. First two models are the replications of the models that were presented in Slapin and Proksch (2010). The third model adds EU position and the squared version of EU position to the first model. Finally, the fourth model which is my main model includes all the variables including EP group and member state dummies. To take into consideration the specific factors that can be resulted from EP groups and states, I am going to use model 4 for my analysis. In addition to state and EP groups dummies I also control for size of EP groups

Looking into my main model, model 4, the coefficient of my main independent variable “EU position” is negative and statistically significant, meaning that MEPs with lower EU position scores which correspond to a more anti-EU members, participate more in debates. The coefficient of the squared version of the same variable is also significant which supports my initial expectation of a non-linear effect of the EU position on the number of speeches.

Following on, it can be seen that addition of the EU position scores into the model changes the coefficient of “national rebel score”. Now the coefficient of “national rebel score” is still significant but negatively signed. On the other hand, the interaction between the national rebel score and candidate selection is positive and significant. These mean that MEPs with higher national rebel scores participate less in debates if they do not come from a centralized candidate selection system but if MEPs are coming from a centralized candidate selection system, the contrary is true that a higher national rebel score means participating more in debates.

The signs of the coefficients on the control variables are in the expected direction except the committee chair variable which is negatively signed but not statistically significant. It can be seen that three other control variables have no statistically significant effect either. Which means that European group size, relative size of national party or being a part of EU leadership have no significant effect on giving speeches on European Parliament. On the other hand, the number of rapporteurships is significant and posi-

tively correlated with speaking time and being absent more often from roll call votes is also significant but negatively correlated. Finally, MEPs that are EP group leaders or have a committee assignment are expected to participate more in debates as the coefficients of the variables that represent these situations are both positively correlated with number of speeches and statistically significant.

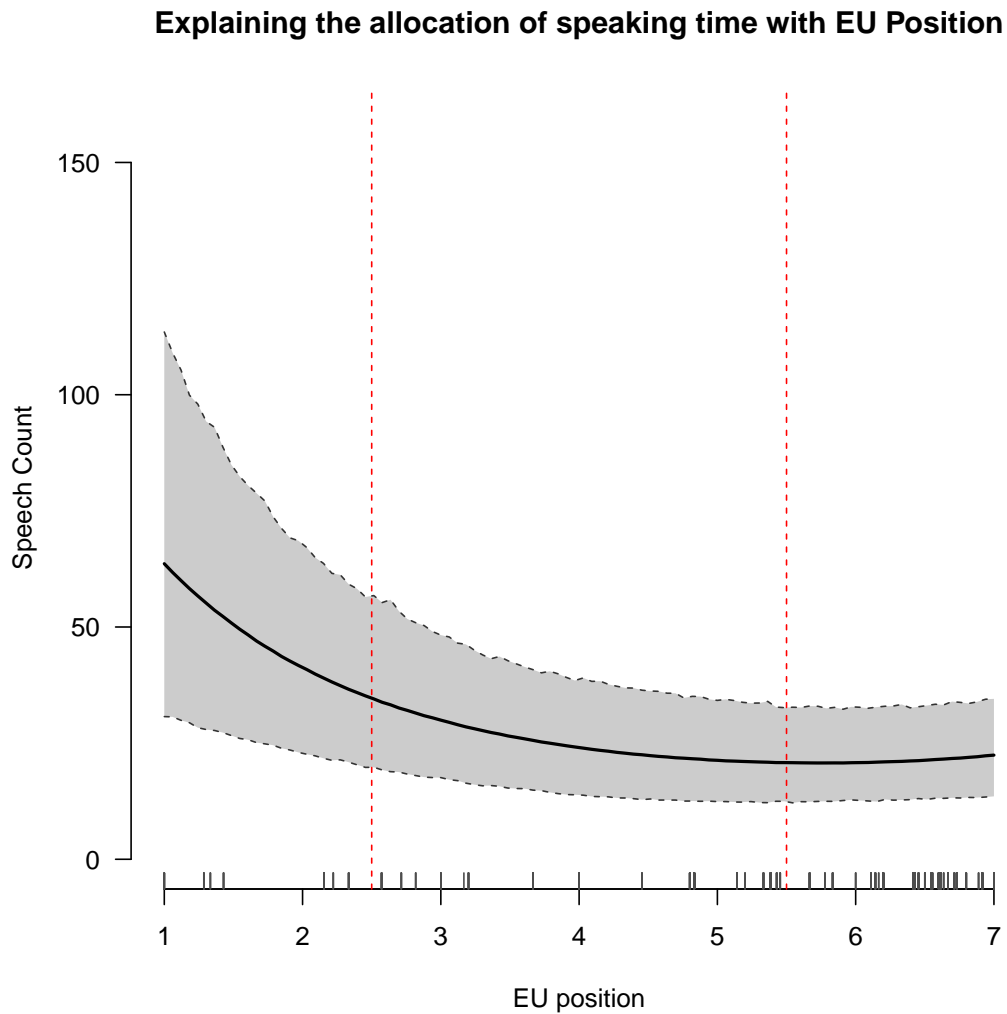


Figure 2: European Parliamentary Speech and EU Position

As sometimes it is a little difficult to interpret the true meanings of the raw coefficients, I simulated expected values of speech counts for several different scenarios. Figure 2 and Figure 3 visualize these simulated scenarios. First of all, I simulated expected values of speech counts in the range of my main independent variable which range between 1 to 7 as 1 being the most anti-EU. In the scenario of this simulation, I take the

mean of every continuous variable and the most occurring value of dummy variables. For the country, I choose Belgium which sends MEPs to the EP from both sides of the EU position scale. I choose the EU political group as Socialist group randomly. Lastly, for the candidate selection system, I choose the MEPs that come from centralized candidate selection systems as these MEPs are the majority in the EP. In Figure 2, the x axis shows the EU positions of MEPs and the y axis shows the speech counts. The ticks on the x axis shows the real MEP's EU positions. The solid line shows the mean and the dashed lines show the 95 percent confidence intervals. It can be seen that, as expected, the effect of EU position on speech counts is not linear. Supporting my hypothesis, the MEPs in the lower end of the EU position scale which correspond the most anti-EU positions give more speeches. The number of the speeches decrease through the upper middle of the EU position scale and then increase minimally in the end with the MEPs that most support EU integration. I also take the difference of expected values of speech counts of two imagined MEPs that simulated with the same scenario above but one of the MEP's EU position score being 2.5 and the others being 5.5 which are shown by the red dashed lines in the Figure 2. Results show that the difference between these MEPs are statistically significant and the more anti-EU MEP whose EU position is 2.5 give 13 (4 - 26) more speeches in EP on average. This result clearly supports my hypothesis. It also shows that when MEPs position becomes more anti-EU, difference of between the number of speech-making for Anti-European MEPs and MEPs who have a moderate or positive stance on EU integration increases.

Difference of Candidate Selection in a Range of Rebel Defection

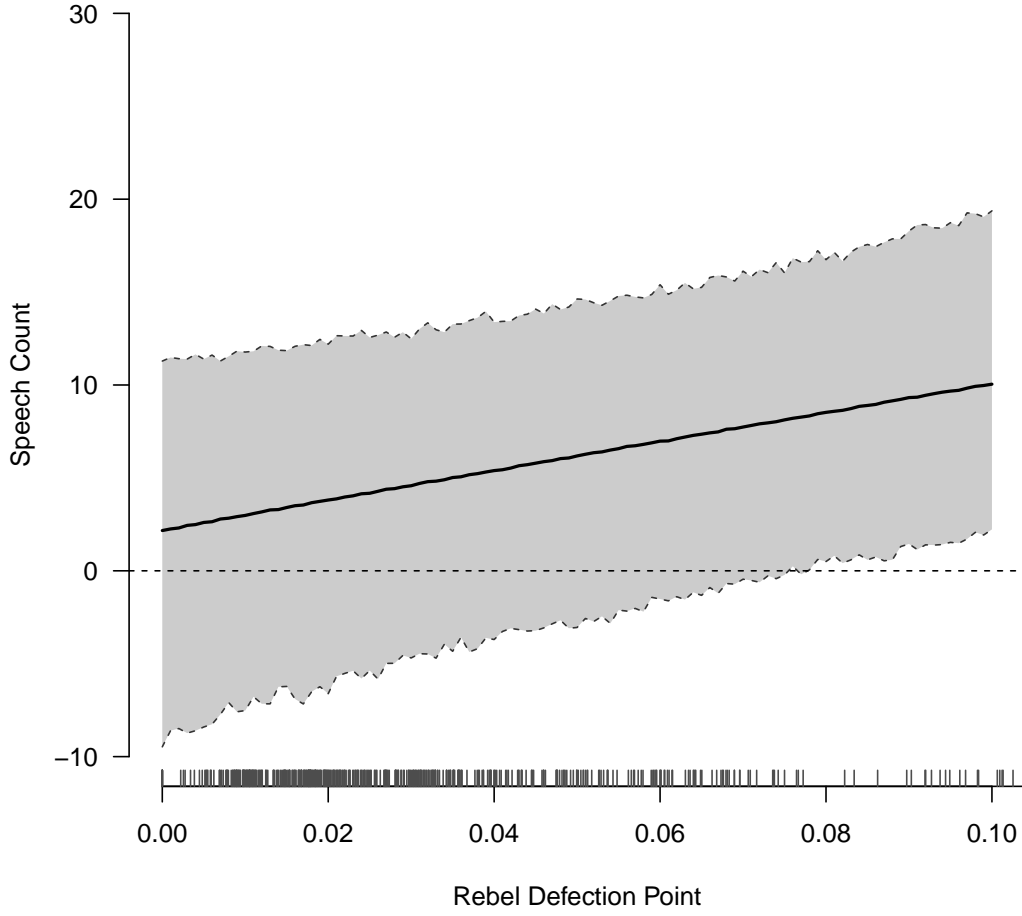


Figure 3: First Difference

Secondly, I also simulated the difference between two imagined MEPs that one supposedly comes from a centralized candidate selection system and others do not in the range of national rebel defection scores which range between 0 and 0.1. For this simulation, I also used the same above mentioned scenario with taking the mean of EU position and changing the national rebel defection scores with a range. In Figure 3, the x axis shows the national rebel defection scores of MEPs and the y axis shows the speech counts. The ticks on the x axis shows the real MEP's national rebel defection scores. The solid line shows the mean difference and the dashed lines show the 95 percent confidence intervals. As it is expected, it can be seen that the difference between these two MEPs becomes significant with the highest points of rebel defection scores. It means between two MEPs

with high rebel defection scores, the MEP that comes from a centralized candidate selection system gives significantly more speeches. Finally, I made several changes on my main model to test the robustness of my findings which were shown to be robust at the end of every test. Firstly, I reestimate my model with robust standard errors following Slapin and Proksch (2010) and my results stay the same. Secondly, I change my main independent variable “EU position” with the alternative “EU party manifest” and reestimated my main model. The new variable comes less significant but this is expected as the previous studies show that the party manifesto’s are not always showing the real positions of the parties. Finally, I cross validate my results by estimating my main model ten times, each time randomly selecting two thirds of my data and taking the mean of all the coefficients and the standard errors come from these ten estimations. The result shows that my results are highly robust.

Conclusion

In this study, I replicate the study of Proksch and Slapin(2010) and look at another factor to examine variation in the number of speech-making in the European Parliament. Similar to original analyses, I have found that when the MEPs’ voting defections from their European party group for the national considerations increase, they become more likely to give speeches if the MEPs come from national parties having a centralized election mechanism. Furthermore, I have found that anti-European MEPs make speeches more likely than their colleagues who have moderate or pro-European stances on European Integration.

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