

“Most voted women” – Representations of gender in the Portuguese media coverage of the 2021 Presidential elections

Rita Faria*

Abstract

This study examines how media discourse represented the two women candidates in the coverage of the 2021 Presidential elections in Portugal. Resorting to Van Leeuwen’s Social Actor Network model (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 1996), the methodology is of a qualitative nature, incorporating elements of corpus linguistics. The main findings are that gender was not the main motivation for the representation of the different candidates but it was a central facet in the media coverage of the elections. The fact that women tended to be more functionalised than men and that the male far-right candidate was more appraised than others point to a need to further explore how gender intersects with other factors (ideology, class) in the discourse of public affairs.

Keywords: Gender; media discourse; social actors; representation.

Introduction

This study examines the media representation of women politicians in the Portuguese press with a view to understand whether there are differing linguistic practices in how media discourse represents gender. The focus of this research is the 2021 campaign for presidential elections in Portugal, in which five men candidates, including the incumbent President, faced two women candidates of opposing political fields, Ana Gomes and Marisa Matias. The study analyses the coverage of the presidential campaign in the run-up to the

* CECC – UCP

election by extracting reports from a number of print media outlets (for the sake of comparability and viability, the media selected were traditional, print media – Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020 – namely the established Portuguese broadsheets *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*).

By conducting an examination of media discourse focusing on women Presidential candidates, this study attempts to offer a snapshot of how women politicians are seen and represented in public discourse so as to gauge their participation in the public sphere. The key research questions the study attempts to answer are thus: how were women politicians discursively represented in the Portuguese press during the presidential campaign? Secondly, did the press cover men and women politicians differently during the campaign?

In order to gauge the representation of women politicians in the Portuguese media, a corpus of 288 articles on the presidential campaign has been constituted, comprising 243,158 words and 285,928 tokens. Drawing on Van Leeuwen's Social Actor Network model (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 1996), the methodology combines a qualitative analysis with a relative quantitative dimension afforded by corpus linguistics (Baker, 2012), using the concordance and Word Sketch affordances on Sketch Engine, and annotation on MaxQDA.

The following section is a review of the most relevant scholarship supporting our research, whereas section 2 presents the methodology and the data collected. Section 3 proceeds to analyse and discuss the ensuing results and is followed by concluding remarks.

1. Literature Review

Examining media coverage focusing on women is relevant because “print and television news texts illuminate the relationships that women have to socioeconomic power” (Vavrus, 2002: 26). Media discourses about women are thus a good indication of the extent to which women participate in the public sphere and public power – in representing women politicians and making the necessary linguistic choices to do so, the media construct and disseminate their own vision of women and their role in the public sphere. As Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) highlights in his examination of sociosemantic and ideological representations of social actors and their respective linguistic realisations, the

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

media is instrumental in creating social meanings despite “the careful stance of neutrality” (Van Leeuwen, 1996: 69) they often put forward.

In this sense, the media discourses about women politicians conjure up and disseminate particular ideological meanings concerning the identity, the role and the policies pursued by these women, mostly due to the “signifying power” of media discourse – the “power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values (...)” (Fairclough, 1995: 2) which plays a “central metadiscursive role in mediating between politicians and the public” (Walsh, 1998: 199).

As Fairclough (1995) further elaborates, the language of the media is imbued with power because it is also imbued with a presupposed authority extending to the media’s own representation of the world and what to include (to foreground) and exclude (to background) from that representation. Media discourse therefore draws on representations of the world shared by its target audience and adds to these representations, operating on a truly dialogical platform in the Bakhtinian sense:

... any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances – his own and others’ – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (...).
(Bakhtin, 1986: 69)

Language is dialogical in the sense it is relational and interactive – the voice of the media not only responds to previous media representations of social actors and of the world but it also puts forward particular representational meanings “tied to specific linguistic or rhetorical realisations” (Van Leeuwen, 1996: 34). In the particular case of this study, to examine how women politicians have been portrayed by the press during Presidential elections is also to obtain an idea of how media discourse envisages women’s role in politics. Due to the authoritative voice of the press, its readership is construed as one which will align with the particular representation of the world put forward by media discourses (see Martin & White, 2005 for an analysis of evaluative language and the dialogical resources of alignment or misalignment employed by the media in the linguistic representation of events and social actors) – hence the relevance of examining the discursive representation of women in the media.

Although this study does not focus on gender bias specifically, it must pinpoint potential discursive differences and determine whether such differences were motivated by gender.

As early as 1979, Tuchman et al. noted the pervasive stereotypical roles attributed to women by the media (wife, mother), accompanied by the derision of so-called 'career' women, an observation later reinforced by Fowler (1991), who explained how the lexicalisation of terms used to describe women ("lady-doctor") signalled "society's prejudicial sense of the irregularity of the idea of a woman practising a profession" (Fowler, 1991: 94). Kahn (1994) offered a seminal contribution by demonstrating that the press did cover male and female candidates running for public office differently, with bias in favour of men, who not only gathered more coverage but were also the subject of more positive coverage, which in Kahn's opinion hindered women's chances of winning elective offices. Walsh (1998) offered similar findings, leaving a cautionary note against systematic "masculinist" media bias effectively working against women candidates.

More recent studies have shown variegated results, perhaps because the identification of media bias motivated by gender is in itself a sensitive and potentially contentious issue. As Van Der Pas & Aaldering (2020: 7) explain, "[i]n order to distinguish journalistic bias from mere differences in reporting that are not due to gender, the political actors under scrutiny need to be comparable on everything but gender," which is notoriously difficult to demonstrate; Walsh (1998: 200) herself had already acknowledged as much when she stated that it "is not always easy to isolate the influence of gender as a separate variable on press coverage." Furthermore, recognition of intersectionality and how the category of gender intersects with other factors (race, age, nationality, etc.) can influence discursive representations of women, thus highlighting that "different aspects of identities are foregrounded or backgrounded to navigate shifts in salience in sometimes conflicting identity/ies" (Hunt & Jaworska, 2019: 1). If individuals cannot be categorised "in terms of one identity component" but rather in terms of an intersection of several categories, then attributing particular linguistic realisations to sole sociosemantic categories such as "gender" is challenging.

This difficulty may explain why so much of the literature available is permeated by mixed results, despite the fact that evidence for gender bias has become more diluted since Kahn's and Walsh's studies. The useful meta-analysis

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

of gender in political media coverage conducted by Van Der Pas & Aaldering (2020) highlight “not unequivocal” results, which nevertheless point to men being more often directly quoted than women, whose private lives tend to also attract more coverage than their male counterparts’. Rohrbach et al. (2020) find little evidence of gender bias and aver that the underrepresentation of women in the media “might disappear if more women ran for office” (Rohrbach et al., 2020: 14). Whilst this warrants an examination of the barriers women still face in public office, it does not constitute a case of gender bias in the media. Reinforcing reasons for a (very slight) optimism is D’Heer et al. (2019), who study the representation of women in online publications and not only do they not find evidence of bias against women, they also draw the conclusion that women are represented in more positive terms than previous research had shown.

Whether or not gender bias permeate media discourse, the representation of women in the media at large seems to be more driven by inequality than not, although again with mixed results. Baker (2014: 103) notices this trend of slight ameliorating after analysing male bias in the COHA corpus and noting “a move towards equalization” in the 20th century, somewhat countering “an overwhelming male bias in American English” in the 19th century. In 2010, however, Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, who focused on collocates of the terms “man,” “woman,” “boy” and “girl,” concluded that men were evaluated based on their “functionalisation,” that is, their jobs and their behaviour, whereas women were consistently evaluated on the basis of their appearance and sexuality.

When examining how politicians are perceived based on their verbal aggression, Nau & Stewart (2014) found that gender played little to no role – politicians resorting to verbal aggression were perceived as less competent than their counterparts who did not, regardless of their gender. However, although gender imbalances in the representation of women and men have become less clear cut, they are still firmly present. Santaemilia & Maruenda (2014) and Bou-Franch (2013) account for the representation of violence against women in media discourse, with Santaemilia & Maruenda (2014: 270) focusing on the Spanish context and pointing to “a certain objectification and institutionalization of victims” and Bou-Franch (2013) noting a “naturalisation” of violence against women. Also focusing on the Spanish context, Fernández-García (2016) establishes that gender is not the only variable accounting for different media coverage on men and women, but that the press does cover men and women politician differently, with (again) more emphasis placed on women’s private

lives. Marling's (2010) findings are notoriously more pessimistic and unveil anti-feminist bias in the Estonian media discourse due to persistent negative connotations of the notion of "feminism," and a similar point is made by Barát (2007) about the Hungarian press, which enacts "exclusionary" linguistic practices against the terms "feminist" and "feminism." Finally, an important examination of the Portuguese context, which is of particular interest to this study, comes from Baptista et al. (2016), who examine political representation and media visibility strategies of Portuguese female Members of Parliament. Their results point to an underrepresentation of women parliamentarians in the media which stems, at least in part, from a gender imbalance in prominent political roles which is then mirrored in media discourse:

The holding of important political positions within party structures, more often attributed to men, is a crucial news value as well as the agonistic and controversial relevance of political issues, usually assigned to men (...). This contributes to a differentiated horizon of expectations among journalists that do not contribute to enhance women visibility and equality in the press. (Baptista et al., 2016: 181)

The overall result is a "masculinisation of political debate" in the Portuguese public sphere. This is in line with the conclusion that Isabel Barreno had already drawn in her pivotal study of women representations in the Portuguese press as early as 1976 – that in a country such as Portugal, at the time emerging from dictatorship, women's representation and discourses were ideologically controlled by men.

In view of this backdrop, this study hopes to offer a contribution adding to the existent body of research by gathering a small corpus of media discursive representations of women politicians in Portugal and sketch out how media discourse constitutes certain subject positions for women in the Portuguese public sphere, embodied in particular linguistic realisations.

2. Data and Methodology

2.1. The constitution of the corpus

This study collected 288 articles covering the 2021 Presidential elections from the online versions of two broadsheets – *Diário de Notícias (DN)* and

Público. As mentioned before, and for the sake of comparability, the media outlets selected were mainstream broadsheets comprising traditional, print versions and correspondent online versions. This resulted in a corpus comprising 243,158 words and 285,928 tokens. When considering words and tokens, we follow the definitions offered by Sketch Engine, the software used for corpus analysis – whilst a token is the smallest unit of a corpus, and can consist of a word form but also punctuation, digits, etc., a word is a type of token beginning with a letter of the alphabet. Albeit not very extensive, this corpus is a first step for a better delineation of how women, in particular politicians, are represented in the media.

The steps leading to the collection of the articles were simple and consisted of using keywords (the candidates' names) in the search engine on each of the online broadsheets, with particular attention to the sections devoted specifically to the Presidential elections of 2021.

Because this is an individual study, its scope had to be realistically manageable and we therefore restricted our search (and consequently, our analysis) to the top four most voted candidates: Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the incumbent president who was re-elected with 60,7% of the votes; Ana Gomes, who ran as independent and gathered 12,97% of the votes; André Ventura, supported by the far-right party *Chega*, with 11,9%; and finally Marisa Matias, running for the left-wing party *Bloco de Esquerda*, who ended the race with 3.95%.³⁴ This allowed for a much welcomed symmetry in the corpus, where the representation of two men was compared with the representation of the sole two women candidates.

The corpus was then annotated and compiled using the affordances of two corpus software programmes, SketchEngine and MaxQDA, as explained in the following section.

2.2. Framework of analysis and methodological steps

The framework of analysis for this study is drawn from Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008) Social Actor Network model, which studies how social actors (henceforth SAs) and social practices are represented in discourse. It provides a framework to underpin the evaluative language used to represent the functions that participants (Social Actors) play in texts, thus lending itself to an accurate analysis

³⁴ Source: <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/presidenciais2021/resultados/globais>

of discursive representations of women in the media. It is therefore what Van Leeuwen (1996: 32) calls a “sociosemantic inventory of the ways in which social actors can be represented” which puts forward “representational choices” or categories subjected to specific linguistic realisations in texts.

Firstly, SAs can be excluded or included in discourse; when included, there is a number of discursive categories to represent their specificities – the ones of relevance to this study are summarised in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Social Actor Network model categorization scheme (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

<p>ROLE ALLOCATION: the roles that social actors play in representations – who is represented as endowed with agency, who is represented at the receiving end of an activity.</p>	<p>ACTIVATION: social actors are foregrounded and represented as the ‘do-ers’, “the active, dynamic forces in an activity.”</p> <p>PASSIVATION: social actors are backgrounded and represented as the “receiving end” of the activity.</p>	<p>Participation: the grammatical participant role is active (Social Actor is represented as active agent).</p> <p>Circumstantialisation: use of prepositional circumstantials with by or from.</p> <p>Possessivation: the use of a possessive pronoun to foreground an activity (“e.g. ‘our intake’”).</p> <p>Subjection: “Subjected social actors are treated as objects in the representation,” subjected to an activity.</p> <p>Beneficialisation: social actors are represented as a third party which benefits from a certain activity.</p>
<p>NOMINATION represents social actors by means of unique identity traits, such as their names – proper nouns and titles, for example.</p>	<p>FORMALISATION</p> <p>SEMI-FORMALISATION</p> <p>INFORMALISATION</p> <p>TITULATION</p>	<p>(optional honorific) + Surname</p> <p>proper noun + Surname</p> <p>given name only</p> <p>Honorification: honorifics, standard titles, ranks.</p> <p>Affiliation: personal, kinship, relation term.</p>

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

<p>CATEGORISATION: Actors' representation is based on identity traits they share with others.</p>	<p>FUNCTIONALISATION: Social Actors are represented based on what they do.</p> <p>IDENTIFICATION: Social Actors are represented based on who they are.</p> <p>APPRAISEMENT:</p>	<p>occupation, role, function</p> <p>Classification: age, gender, nationality, provenance, ethnicity, class, religion, etc.</p> <p>Relational identification: personal kinship, work or personal relationships of Social Actors.</p> <p>Physical identification: physical characteristics of Social Actors.</p> <p>Social Actors are represented by means of evaluative and affective language, that is, they "are appraised when they are referred to in terms which evaluate them, as good or bad, loved or hated, admired or pitied."</p>
--	--	---

After the constitution of the framework, the next methodological step was to devise a way to detect these categories in the corpus, which explains why the study incorporates elements of corpus linguistics by resorting to Sketch Engine and MAXQDA. Following Baker (2012: 248), the advantage of using corpus linguistics whilst maintaining a qualitative analysis is that the former allows us to "identify salient linguistic patterns in a corpus of texts," which can then be "interrogated in a more qualitative way via close reading of individual texts or concordance lines in the next stage." This encapsulates our main methodology – using the affordances of corpus linguistics to detect concordance patterns, which was conducted using the "concordance" feature on Sketch Engine, followed by the Word Sketch affordance, which allows for the comparison of collocations of more than one word. These concordance lines were then coded on MAXQDA, which displays a line-by-line coding system, and then analysed qualitatively following the categories displayed on Figure 1.

Concordance patterns detect collocations, a notion based on how many times words appear together (Baker, 2014). Thus, by analysing concordances

lines, we can then access the discursive environment, or the stretches of discourse, containing the linguistic realisations of the representation of SAs, that is, which collocates were used to represent Ana Gomes, Marisa Matias, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and André Ventura. Our approach to data was therefore as Baker (2012: 248) defines it – “naïve,” to the extent that “we hoped that the identification of frequent and salient linguistic patterns in the corpus would provide a ‘way in’ to the data.”

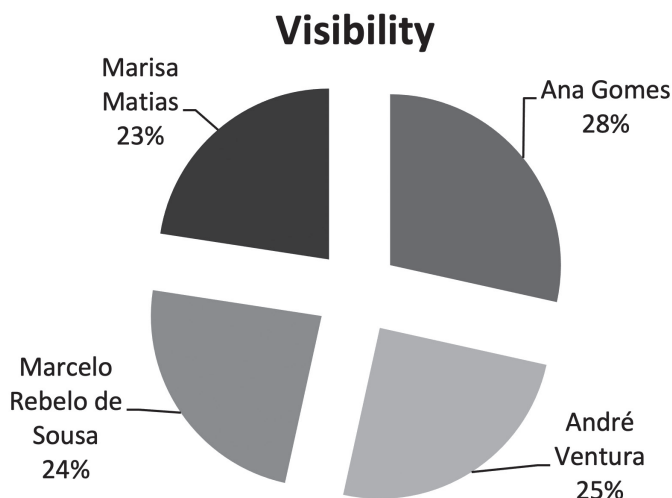
In summary, our methodology follows these steps: firstly, search for concordance patterns on Sketch Engine; secondly, analyse and code concordance lines (based on sentence) one by one using MAXQDA in order to detect the qualitative nuances involved in the categories of Nomination and Categorisation (Figure 1). This qualitative perusal is conducted at a micro-level and consists of a lexical analysis allowing us to examine not only how each SA is categorised but relational patterns too (how one candidate is categorised in relation to another, occurring in the same stretch of discourse). Further, what SAs are represented as doing and in which role is also examined (following the category of Role Allocation – Figure 1).

The last step is to detect how the voice of the candidate is incorporated in media discourse and how the latter engages with what candidates actually say – that is, whether media discourse uses either direct or indirect speech. This stems from the premise that media discourse is a “Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse” (Walsh 1998: 205) comprising primary discourse (media discourse) and secondary discourse (the discourse of the source). However, and as Fairclough (2010: 73) elucidates, meanings do not simply circulate – “as meanings move from text to text, they are open to transformation,” which is what happens when discourse from any speaker is incorporated into media discourse. The dialogic positioning taken by the reporter can be more or less engaged with the source but is usually seen “as a regime of strategic impersonalisation by which the author’s subjective role is backgrounded” (Martin & White 2005: 183). By resorting to quoting the source directly (direct speech), the stance adopted by the reporter voice is indeed one of neutral engagement with the subject being reported on – the authorial responsibility for the utterances lies with the one who has actually uttered them and endorsement of the source is kept to a minimum. The representation of the SA is therefore less committed when direct speech is used, hence the relevance of direct – indirect/reported speech to our analysis, the results of which are discussed in the following section.

3. Results and Discussion

The first aspect to note about the corpus is visibility, that is, the percentage of coverage that each SA obtained, displayed in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Visibility of Social Actors.

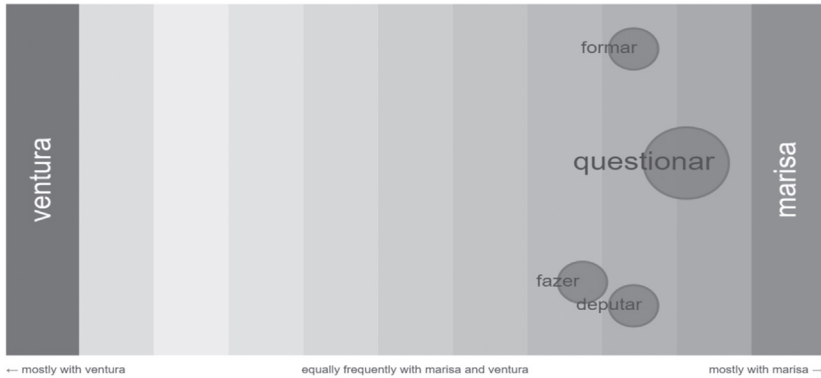


An important proviso when it comes to the visibility of SAs has to do with the individual nature of this research, which was necessarily limited in scope and quantity. Whilst a more extensive corpus could perhaps warrant different visibility patterns, the results in Figure 2 are nevertheless an interesting depiction of a slice of the media coverage applied to the four Presidential candidates.

The first aspect that stands out is how balanced the representation of SAs is, with all four candidates situated in the region of a quarter of the totality. The second aspect is the visibility of André Ventura, a relative newcomer in politics (the party he leads, *Chega*, was founded in 2019) and a first-time runner to the Presidential elections. The fact that he is the most covered after an established politician such as Ana Gomes, a well-known figure not only because of her political activity but also due to her career as a diplomat, can probably be attributed to the news value of “novelty” (Bell, 1991). Ventura’s rhetorical style is to some extent novel in Portuguese politics and thus possibly considered more newsworthy than Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, whose victory was seen as practically guaranteed, and than Marisa Matias, a second-time runner.

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

André Ventura and Marisa Matias:



Example:

Marisa Matias foi questionada sobre as novas medidas de confinamento.

Marisa Matias was asked about the new lockdown measures.

(Collocations with André Ventura as passivated subject do not occur).

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Marisa Matias:



Example:

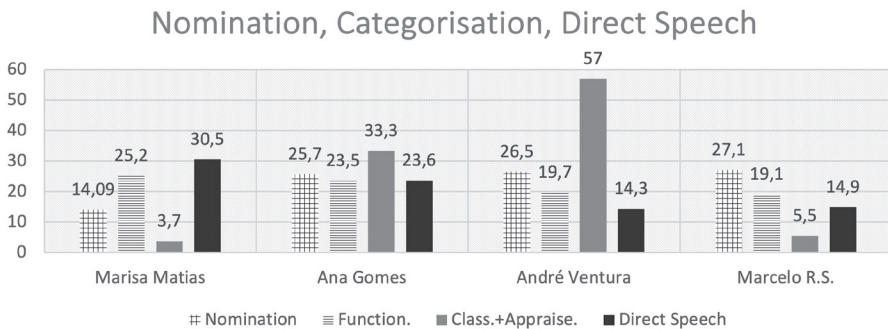
Marisa Matias foi questionada sobre o que fará em relação ao resto da sua corrida eleitoral a Belém.

Marisa Matias was asked about what she will do concerning the rest of her Belém electoral race.

These results are noteworthy from a qualitative perspective – passive constructions which background the agent are not of quantitative import in the corpus, but they are certainly significant when underpinning the qualitative nuances that make up the representation of each SA, hence the importance of highlighting the subjection noted in the representation of Marisa Matias. She is more often passivated in relation to all other candidates, but specially against André Ventura’s more active role. That this is not entirely gender-based is clear when noting that Ana Gomes is more often activated than Marisa Matias.

The core of SA’s representations fell on the categories of Nomination and Categorisation (namely Functionalisation) and how often SAs were quoted directly, which Figure 4 illustrates:

Figure 4: Nomination, Categorisation and Direct Speech distributed by SAs.



The reason why classification and appraisal are grouped together is because they often co-occur, thus making it more relevant to display their respective percentages together – for example, Ana Gomes is described as an “honest, courageous woman,” which not only classifies her on the basis of gender but also positively evaluates her behaviour and character.

The most significant aspects that Figure 4 illustrates are, firstly, the functionalisation of women candidates (more than the other candidates), which points to a need of over-determination to define the occupation of both women, represented as participants in related yet different social practices – Marisa Matias is a “candidate” in addition to being represented as a “leader of the Left-Wing Block” [Bloco de Esquerda, the party to which she belongs], a “blockist” (“bloquista,” an allusion to her party), an MEP, an “MEP supported by the Left-Wing Block,” a “re-candidate” (“recandidata”) in the Presidential elections, a

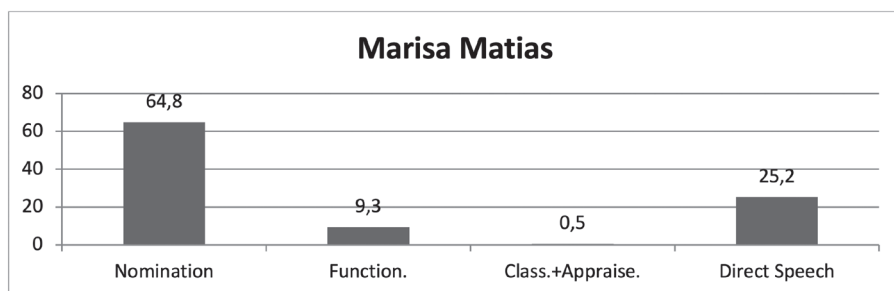
Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

“Presidential candidate.” Ana Gomes is repeatedly described as “a diplomat,” an “ex-MEP,” a “socialist,” a “former socialist MEP” or “former MEP,” a “candidate for the Presidency,” etc.

Secondly, a relevant aspect displayed in Figure 4 is an over-determination in the classification and appraisal of André Ventura, which will be examined at a later stage in this study.

To explore the full relevance of these results, we will now focus on each SA and examine how discursive choices of representation were deployed in order to linguistically represent them individually, starting with Marisa Matias (Figure 5):

Figure 5: Representation of Marisa Matias.



Not surprisingly, Marisa Matias is often nominated, with the most relevant aspect being the recurrence of informalisation, with the media opting for first name only. For example:

(1) *Foi esse o discurso que Marisa repetiu no último dia.*

That was the speech that Marisa repeated on the last day.

Informalisation is also used to represent Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, but does not occur with the remaining candidates, Ana Gomes and André Ventura, and it is therefore not an entirely gender-based strategy. If on the one hand the informalisation of “Marcelo” in media discourse is probably a testament to the candidate’s popularity, that is not the case with Marisa Matias, whose first name is used probably because she is a relatively young candidate, well-known by the media, who has not yet amassed the clout of her fellow woman candidate Ana Gomes.

Regarding relational representation (how Marisa Matias is represented when in relation to another SA), nomination strategies remain important, as example (2) illustrates:

(2) *Pingue-pongue de acusações entre Marisa e Ventura.*

Accusations fly between Marisa and Ventura.

Example (2) reveals the interesting choice of representing André Ventura by means of semi-informalisation, whereas Marisa Matias is informalised, a strategy akin to the functionalisation of André Ventura (“leader”) while Marisa Matias remains informalised (“Marisa”):

(3) *O líder do Chega e candidato a Belém devolveu a acusação de “vigarista” a Marisa.*

Chega’s leader and Belém candidate returned the “con artist” accusation to Marisa.

The only instance of affiliation in the corpus occurs to represent Marisa Matias and Ana Gomes, described as “friends”:

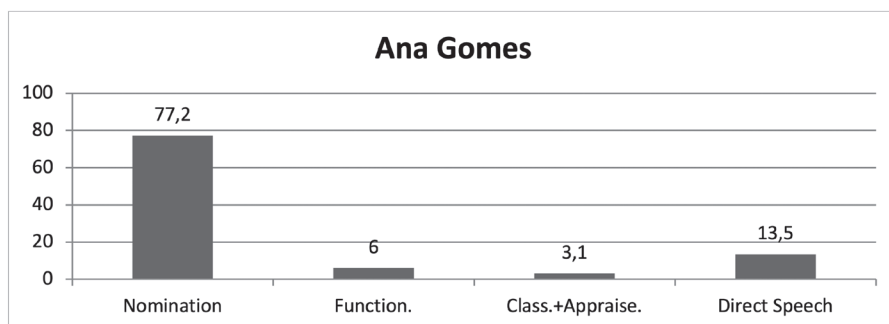
(4) *Marisa Matias (...) terá de avançar com argumentos de peso (...) com a dificuldade de ter uma “amiga” de esquerda a disputar o mesmo campo político, no caso Ana Gomes.*

Marisa Matias (...) will have to posit strong arguments (...) with the difficulty of having a left-wing “friend” competing in the same political field, in this case Ana Gomes.

Importantly, Figure 5 also shows that Marisa Matias is often quoted directly, which means that the audience is given direct access to her views, whilst also signifying that the media feel no need to frame her discourse or to modulate it by providing context mediated by a reporter voice.

The most important discursive choices in the representation of Ana Gomes are summarised in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Representation of Ana Gomes.



Nomination stands out as the most significant categorisation of Ana Gomes and, unlike Marisa Matias, she is semi-formalised at all times: “Ana Gomes.” As mentioned before, this signals the different standings held by the two women candidates, with Ana Gomes being the most experienced, more established one. As we shall see, the same nomination strategy happens with Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The older, more established and experienced candidates are more nominated, less functionalised and less classified and appraised simply because there is no need to explain to the public who they are, what they do and how well (or how badly) they do it. Nevertheless, it should be noted that when Ana Gomes is appraised, it is almost always positively, as in the aforementioned example of “Ana Gomes, an honest, courageous woman.”

The most interesting cases of Ana Gomes’s appraisal, however, are to be found in the framing of the election results, in which she came second. The choice was whether to highlight her second place, ahead of all other candidates except the President-elect (examples 5.a and 5.b), or to highlight her defeat (example 5.c):

(5) a. *A diplomata Ana Gomes foi a mulher mais votada de sempre numas eleições presidenciais em Portugal (...) e a primeira a conseguir um segundo lugar.*

The diplomat Ana Gomes was the most voted woman ever in a presidential election in Portugal (...) and the first to win a second place.

b. *Ana Gomes atingiu o seu propósito, ficar em segundo lugar, ainda que apenas com 12,97%, e apenas com uma diferença de um ponto percentual à frente de André Ventura.*

Ana Gomes achieved her goal, coming second, albeit with only 12.97%, and only one percentage point ahead of André Ventura.

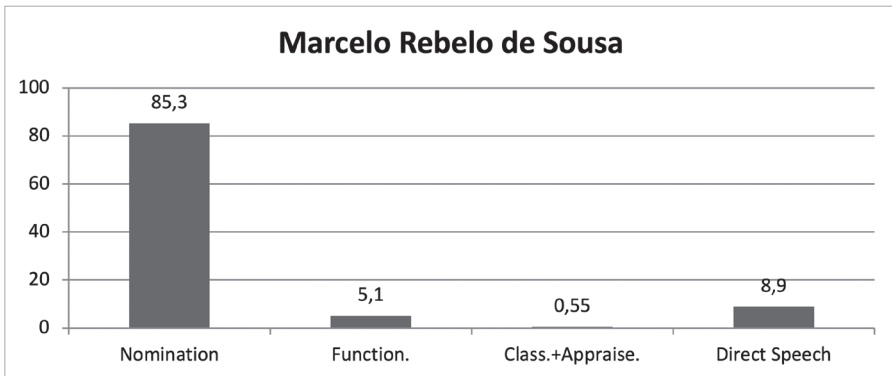
c. *Venceu Ventura por pouco e falhou por muito o objetivo da segunda volta.*

She narrowly beat Ventura and broadly missed her goal for a second-round.

Whilst also highlighting her gender, examples a. and b. prefer to frame Ana Gomes's second place as an actual victory and achievement, resorting to superlative adjectives ("the most voted woman ever") and numeral adjectives ("the first to win..."). Example 5.c frames the result as a defeat and is the almost parallel opposite of b., echoing the lexical choice of "goal" which is described as broadly missed.

Figure 7 displays the discursive categorisation of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa:

Figure 7: Representation of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.



As mentioned before, Nomination is the most important category of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's representation, signalling his popularity and his very likely chance of winning the elections. His recurring informalisation (example 6) demonstrates the extent to which he is a well-known figure of the public and media alike:

(6) *Apesar da queda, Marcelo regressa à casa dos 60% em que passou a maior parte do tempo nos últimos barómetros.*

Despite the fall, Marcelo is back to the 60% where he has spent most of the time in the last few barometers.

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

Interestingly enough, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa is the second-least represented candidate in the corpus (24%). This apparent lack of interest from the media is probably to do with the fact that he was the incumbent President, was the best positioned candidate to win the elections and a very well-known figure in the Portuguese public sphere, rendering his over-representation futile. At 25%, André Ventura, first-time runner and newcomer to politics, was more represented than the President, probably connected to the aforementioned “novelty” effect. A summary of Ventura’s discursive representation is to be found in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Representation of André Ventura.

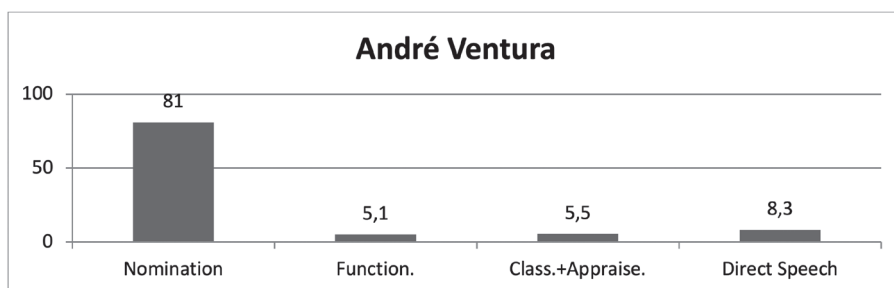


Figure 8 must be examined in articulation with Figure 4, which displays the discursive categories applied to all candidates, thus providing a general picture of their representation in the corpus. Through Figure 4, we can better contextualize the results for classification and appraisal, and direct speech – André Ventura is more specifically appraised than the other candidates, and less directly quoted.

Concerning direct speech, and the fact that both Ana Gomes and Marisa Matias are quoted more often than André Ventura, the overall result is that the public has a less direct access to Ventura’s unfiltered voice due to the media’s need to frame his discourse. This is reflected in the choice of reporting verbs as shown in example 7 (our emphasis):

(7) André Ventura **vitimizou-se** nesta quarta-feira por os elementos do partido serem apresentados como “bandidos” (...).

André Ventura **victimised himself** on Wednesday, claiming the party members were presented as “thugs.”

The lack of direct speech in the representation of André Ventura could be seen as a sort of *cordon sanitaire* to protect the public sphere from a far-right candidate running for President. However, the appraisal of André Ventura does not fully support this view.

Appraisal is noticeable in the use of nouns, adjectives and idioms from the semantic field of masculinity and belligerency: *vencedor* (winner), *alvo* (target), *inimigo* (enemy), *narcisista* (narcissist), *domínio da testosterona* (the dominance of testosterone). Whilst some evaluative language points to a clear negative appraisal such as “narcissist” or “virus” (*o vírus Ventura* – “the Ventura virus”), the case of metaphors of attack (example 8.a) and metonymy (examples 8.b, 8.c and 8.d, the latter also a case of possessivation foregrounding Ventura) produce a more ambiguous evaluative effect (our emphasis):

(8) a. *André Ventura não demorou cinco minutos a **disparar a primeira bala que levava engatilhada** (...).*

It didn't take André Ventura five minutes **to fire the first bullet he had loaded**.

b. *O **terramoto Ventura** anuncia a reconfiguração da direita.*

The Ventura earthquake heralds the reconfiguration of the right.

c. *André Ventura sabe o caminho que quer percorrer (...) com um **discurso demolidor**.*

André Ventura knows the path he wants to tread (...) with **a demolishing speech**.

d. *Apesar de estar a começar, **a máquina de Ventura** já se mostra oleada.*

Although he/it is just starting, **Ventura's machine** is already well-oiled.

Are these examples descriptions of a belligerent candidate whose rhetorical style is unusually abrasive in Portuguese politics or an acknowledgement of an energetic, masculine style not to be discounted? Our analysis of the corpus tells us it can be both.

What can be safely asserted, however, is that there is a preoccupation in media discourse with qualifying and evaluating André Ventura which is absent from the representation of other candidates, Marisa Matias and Ana Gomes included.

Conclusion

Our first research question asked how women politicians were discursively represented in the Portuguese press during the 2021 presidential campaign. Our findings are that women are slightly more functionalised than men, with greater concern from the media to describe their different social practices in the public sphere, but that the main difference lies in status – the fact that Ana Gomes is more established than Marisa Matias explains the deployment of different informalisation and semi-informalisation strategies.

Our second research question was whether the press covered men and women politicians differently during the campaign, which posited a tight nexus with the issue of possible gender bias. The press did cover candidates differently – Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was under-represented possibly because he was seen as a guaranteed winner from the start, of whom nothing too novel could be said and Ana Gomes was nominated and functionalised according to her acknowledged standing in the public sphere (a diplomat, an experienced politician, “the most voted woman”). Marisa Matias was more functionalised and more passivated than other candidates whilst André Ventura was more appraised; these discursive choices might reflect their lower standing in politics (at 23%, Marisa Matias was the least visible SA – Figure 2), in addition to the “novelty” effect in the case of Ventura. Demonstrably, these categorisation choices were not entirely gender-based.

Our micro-analysis (candidate by candidate), however, has shown that there are significant differences in the relational representation of Marisa Matias and André Ventura, with the latter more often semi-informalised or functionalised, and with Marisa Matias more backgrounded in a passivated role when represented against André Ventura (Figure 3). Furthermore, the appraisal of André Ventura by means of metaphors of attack and belligerence seems to have a partial gendered motivation.

On the one hand, our examination of the discursive representation of women candidates in the 2021 Presidential campaign ends on the optimistic (yet cautious) note that no significant evidence of gender bias was found. On the other hand, these findings undoubtedly warrant further analysis. They show that the consideration and investigation of gender in the political field and public affairs in general, coupled with the other categories with which gender intersects (for example, political ideology in the case of André Ventura, social class

and status in the case of Marisa Matias and Ana Gomes), opens new and much needed avenues of research.

References

- BAKHTIN, Mikhail. 1986. The Problem of Speech Genres. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 60-101.
- BAPTISTA, Carla, Ana Cabrera, Carla Martins & Teresa Mendes Flores. 2016. Female politics in Parliament: addressing questions about political and journalistic representation. In Cerqueira, Carla, Rosa Cabecinhas & Sara I. Magalhães (eds.), *Gender in focus: (new) trends in media*. Braga: CECS, 161-183.
- BAKER, Paul. 2012. Acceptable bias? Using corpus linguistics methods with critical discourse analysis. *Critical Discourse Studies* 9(3), 247-256.
- BAKER, Paul. 2014. *Using corpora to analyze gender*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- BARÁT, Erzsébet. 2007. The 'Terrorist Feminist': Strategies of Gate-Keeping in the Hungarian Printed Media. In Lazar, Michelle M. (ed.), *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 205-228.
- BARRENO, Isabel. 1976. *A Imagem da Mulher na Imprensa*. Lisbon: Comissão da Condição Feminina; Ministério dos Assuntos Sociais.
- BELL, Allan. 1991. *The language of news media*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- BOU-FRANCH, Patricia. 2013. Domestic Violence and Public Participation in the Media: The Case of Citizen Journalism. *Gender and Language* 7, 275-302.
- CALDAS-COULTHARD, Carmen & Rosamund Moon. 2010. 'Curvy, hunky, kinky': Using corpora as tools for critical analysis. *Discourse & Society* 21(2), 99-133.
- D'HEER, Joke, Justine Vergotte, Sara De Vuyst & Sarah Van Leuven. 2019. The bits and bytes of gender bias in online news: a quantitative content analysis of the representation of women in Vice.com. *Feminist Media Studies*.
- FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. 1995. *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
- FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. 2010. *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. Harlow: Longman.
- FERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA, Núria. 2016. Framing gender and women politicians representation: print media coverage of Spanish women ministries. In Cerqueira, Carla, Rosa Cabecinhas & Sara I. Magalhães (eds.), *Gender in focus: (new) trends in media*. Braga: CECS, 141-160.
- FOWLER, Roger. 1991. *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge.
- HUNT, Sally & Sylvia Jaworska. 2019. Intersections of nationality, gender, race and crime in news reporting: The case of Oscar Pistorius – Olympian and murderer. *Discourse, Context & Media* 30, 1-11.
- KAHN, Kim Fridkin. 1994. The Distorted Mirror: Press Coverage of Women Candidates for Statewide Office. *The Journal of Politics* 56(1), 154-173.
- MARLING, Raili. 2010. The Intimidating Other: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Feminism in Estonian Print Media. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 18(1), 7-19.
- MARTIN, Jeannett R. & Peter R. R. White. 2005. *The language of evaluation: appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- NAU, Charlotte & Craig O. Stewart. 2014. Effects of Verbal Aggression and Party Identification Bias on Perceptions of Political Speakers. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 33(5), 526-536.

Language, Gender and Society: How Language Issues Reflect Societal Ones

- ROHRBACH, Tobias, Stephanie Fiechtner, Philomen Schönhagen & Manuel Puppis. 2020. More Than Just Gender: Exploring Contextual Influences on Media Bias of Political Candidates. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 1-20.
- SANTAEMILIA, José & Sergio Maruenda. 2014. The linguistic representation of gender violence in (written) media discourse. The term 'woman' in Spanish contemporary newspapers. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 2(2), 249-273.
- TUCHMAN, Gaye, Arlene Kaplan Daniels & James Benet. 1979. *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- VAN DER PAS, Daphne Joanna & Loes Aaldering. 2020. Gender Differences in Political Media Coverage: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Communication* 70(1), 114-143.
- VAN LEEUWEN, Theo. 2008. *Discourse and practice: new tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- VAN LEEUWEN, Theo. 1996. The representation of social actors. In: Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard, Carmen Rosa & Malcolm Coulthard (eds.), *Texts and practices: readings in critical discourse analysis*. London: Routledge, 32-70.
- VAVRUS, Mary Douglas. 2002. *Postfeminist News: Political Women in Media Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- WALSH, Clare. 1998. Gender and Mediatized Political Discourse: a case study of press coverage of Margaret Beckett's campaign for the Labour leadership in 1994. *Language and Literature* 7(3), 199-214.