Personal Pronoun Analysis on Abraham Lincoln's Selected Speeches Could Indicate Effectiveness of Speech Writing

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Abstract

Abraham Lincoln is known by consensus as the best president of the United States and he is known by his recognizable skills in speaking. Not only in speaking is he recognized but also in his writing. For this reason, text-analysis can be applied to his speeches to find whether his use of personal pronouns have a significant effect on the overall impression of his political speeches. In order to do that, a text analysis tool was used to identify the concordance of the corpora constructed from 11 of his randomly-selected speeches. The personal pronouns were identified and categorized into three groups: gender-associative pronouns, self-inclusive pronouns, and self-exclusive pronouns. The analysis showed that there is a high level usage of self-inclusive pronouns with a relevance rate of 42.48% while the self-exclusive pronoun usage played a significant rate of 35.82%. Similar studies suggest that although deep analysis is needed for more accurate interpretation, the use of personal pronouns could affect the effectiveness of political speeches.

I.   Introduction

Abraham Lincoln is known as the "best" president of the United States (U.S.) as consensus by both historians and the public. According to the president ranking, he ranks the top one (1) among other U.S. presidents and majority of the Americans acknowledge his public speaking skills including his powerful speeches[1][2].

Studies show that there are political speech techniques or patterns that can help in the effective writing and delivery of political speeches. The usage of personal pronouns also plays an important role in the effectiveness of political speeches. However, since the delivery of speeches cannot be objectively assessed with the tools used on this paper, this study will focus on the text-

analysis of the political speeches delivered by the late U.S. President Abraham Lincoln during his life. Hence, this study aims to determine the characteristics of Abraham Lincoln's speeches in terms of the following questions to be solved:

1.) What are the most used terms/words through his 11 randomly-selected speeches?

2.) Is there a significant difference in terms of the frequencies of these words?

3.) How relevant are the concordance hits of each personal pronoun throughout his speeches?

The researcher selected 11 random speeches among his available speech transcripts online and was assembled as the corpora. The text-analysis tool used in this study is AntConc-a concordance tool to analyze the corpora.

II.   Literature Review

In 2018, systematic evidence was used to rank the best United States (U.S.) president by inquiring the members of the American Political Science Association's Presidents and Executive Politics section. The results found that Abraham Lincoln topped the overall ranking, scoring 95/100 [1].

In a document analysis on the Great Bay Charter School, it is identified that there are certain techniques used by Lincoln through his letters to captivate his readers' interests. Some of these tactics are by the usage of the self-inclusive pronouns followed by the action word and by frequently involving the receiver of the letter to his composition[2].

Personal pronouns have varying relevance depending on the context of the speech. The occurrence of personal pronouns might or might not implicate any significance on the impact of speech unless otherwise inspected deeply[3].

The use of personal pronouns *I* or *we* may indicate cooperativeness on oral communication such as speeches[4].

III.   Methodology

In this study, 11 speech transcripts of Mr. Abraham Lincoln were analyzed as a corpora using AntConc.. Firstly, Antconc was used to analyze the frequencies, of personal pronouns: *he, she, him, her, we, us, you, it, them*, and, *their*. Similarly, the AntConc tool was used to generate Concordance data and Concordance Plots, and a Keyness graph of the top 10 words in the corpora using Chi-Square.

Categorization

In the categorization of personal pronouns, the researcher categorized them as the following: Self-inclusive pronouns, self-exclusive pronouns, and gender-associative pronouns. The self-inclusive pronouns are composed of sub-categories of "personal voice" that includes *I* and *me*, the "collective pronoun" includes *we* and *us*. The gender-associative pronouns section is divided into two sub-groups namely "Male", and "Female". The male pronouns being composed of personal pronouns *him*, and *he*, while the female personal pronouns: *her* and *she*. The last category is Self-exclusive composed of personal pronouns *they*, *them*, and *you.*

AntConc

The following charts represent the concordance and concordance plots of the personal pronouns that appeared in the 11 speech transcripts of the late U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. These are categorized in three different sections. The first set is the *gender-associative* personal pronouns, the second set are the *self-inclusive* personal pronouns, and third set is composed of the *self-exclusion* personal pronouns.

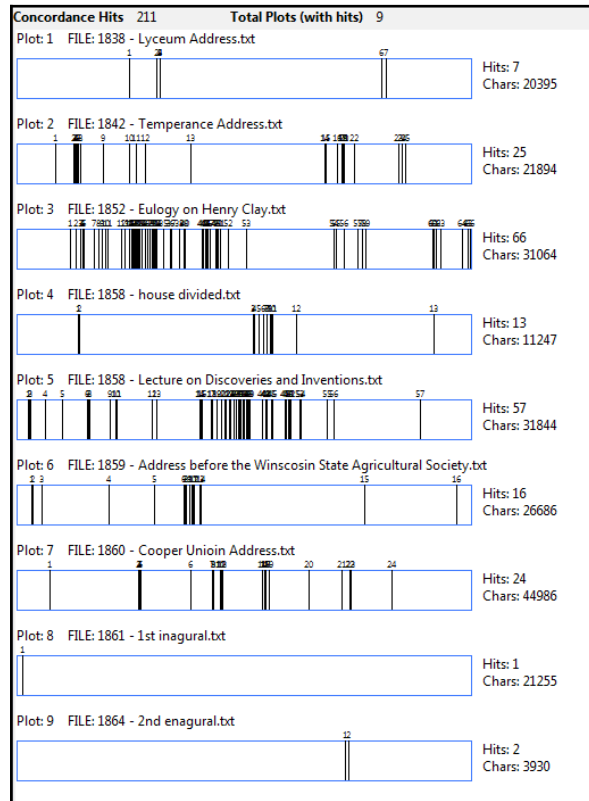The first set of figures is composed of the *gender* associated pronouns (*he, him, she* and *her*):

Figure 1. Concordance Plot of personal pronoun *he* in the corpora.
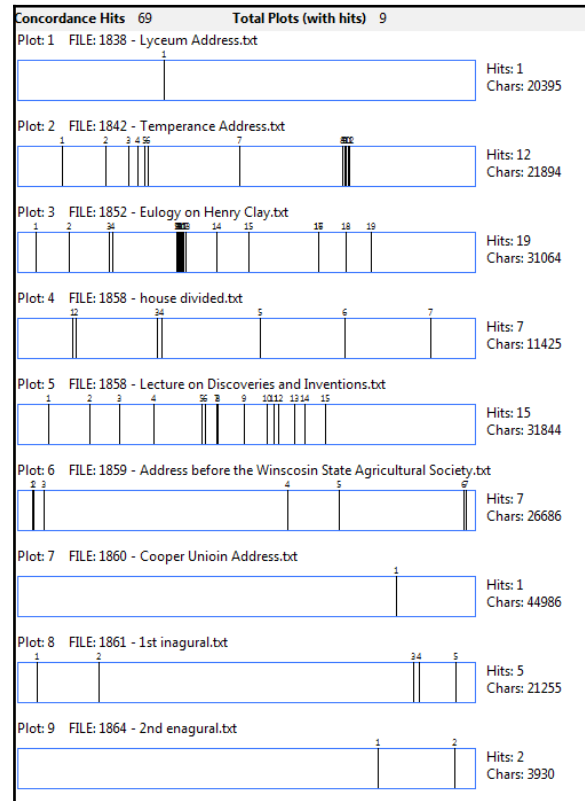

Figure 3. Concordance Plot of personal pronoun *him* from the corpora.
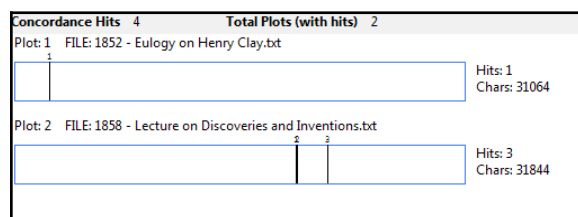

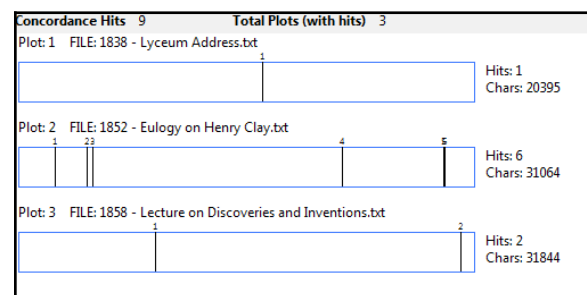**Figure 2.** Concordance Plot of personal pronoun *she* from the corpora.

Figure 4. Concordance Plot of personal pronoun *her* from the corpora.

The figures above show the concordance plot of the *gender-based* personal pronouns: he, him, she, and her consecutively. The figures shows that throughout the analysis of the 11 selected speeches; ***he*** was used strongly, accounting to 211 hits in nine (9) over 11 speeches. On the other hand, ***him*** was used 69 times, ***she*** was used for only four (4) times, and ***her*** was only mentioned nine (9) times throughout the corpora. Therefore, gender-associative pronouns: he, him, she, and her accounted for 293 hits overall.

Meanwhile, the figures below show the frequency of use of the *self-inclusive* (***I, me, us*** and ***we***) personal pronouns in the concordance plots:
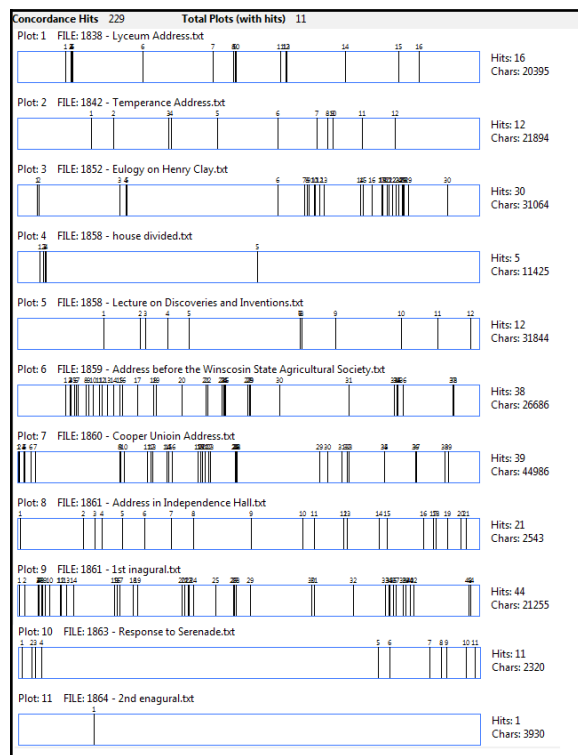

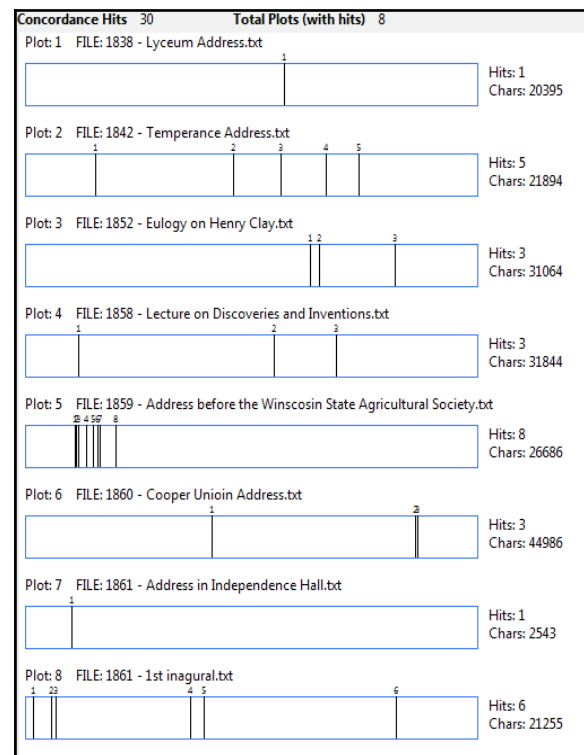**Figure 5.** Concordance Plot of the personal pronoun ***I*** in the corpora.

Figure 6. Concordance Plot of the personal pronoun ***me*** in the corpora.
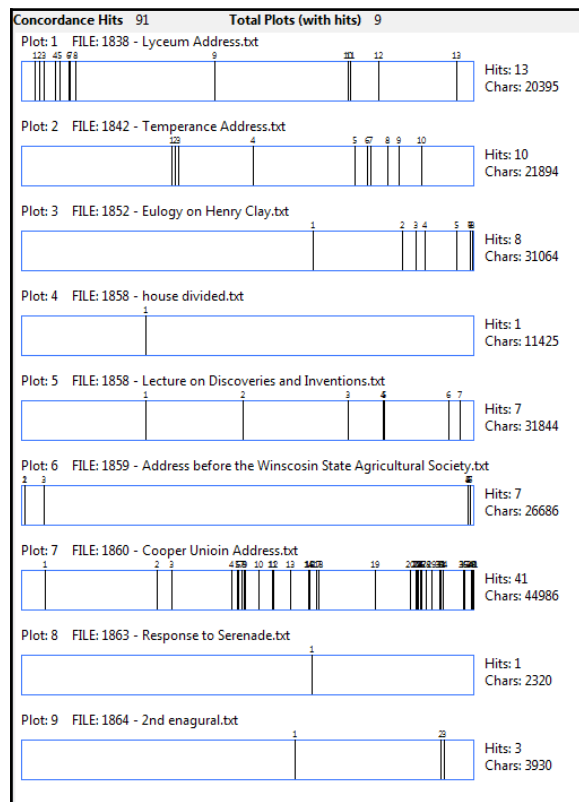
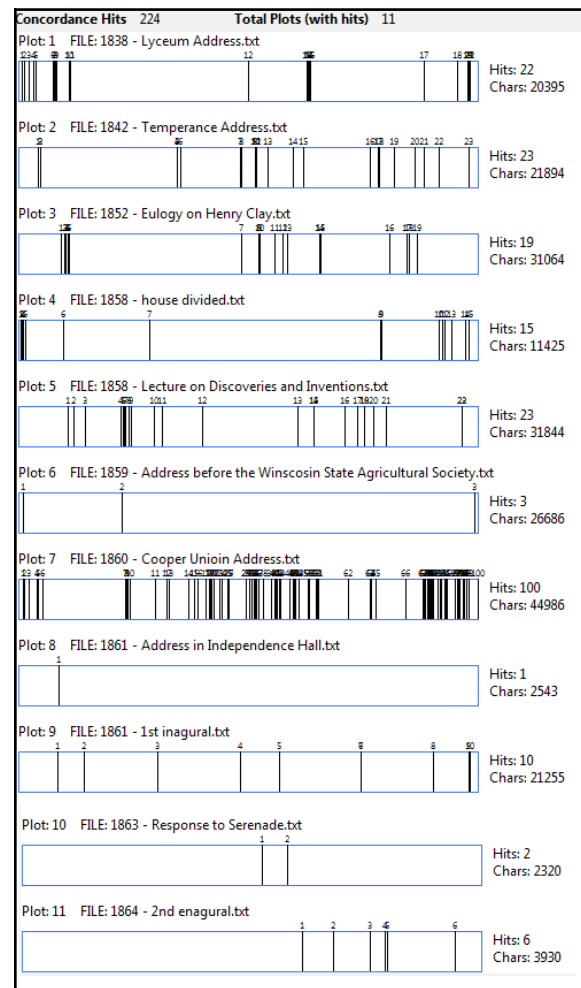**Figure 6.** Concordance plot of the personal pronoun *us* in the corpora.

Figure 7. Concordance plot of the personal pronoun *we* in the corpora.

The figures above show the concordance plot of the personal pronoun labeled in this paper as *self-inclusive* personal pronouns as defined. Figure five (5) above shows the concordance of the personal pronoun *I* accounting to 229 hits. Figure six (6) on the other hand shows that the personal pronoun *me* was used 30 times through the corpora. Figure seven (7) shows the concordance hits of the personal pronoun *us* garnering 91. Lastly, Figure eight (8) shows the concordance plot of the personal pronoun *we* with 224 hits. In total, the usage of *personal voice* pronouns *I* and *me* has 259 hits; the usage of collective personal pronouns *us* and *we* gained 315 hits. The *self-inclusive* personal pronouns have a total of 574 hits.

The following figures below shows the concordance plot of the rest of the pronouns: *they, them* and *you* in which we define on this paper as *self-exclusion* personal pronouns.
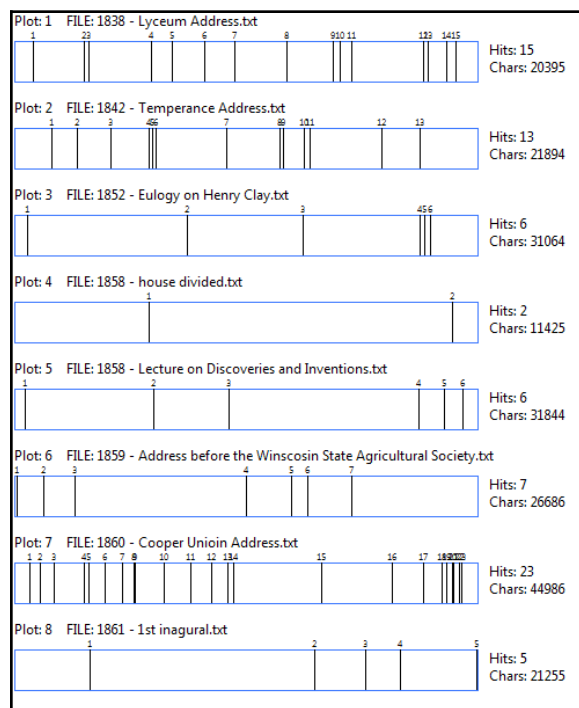

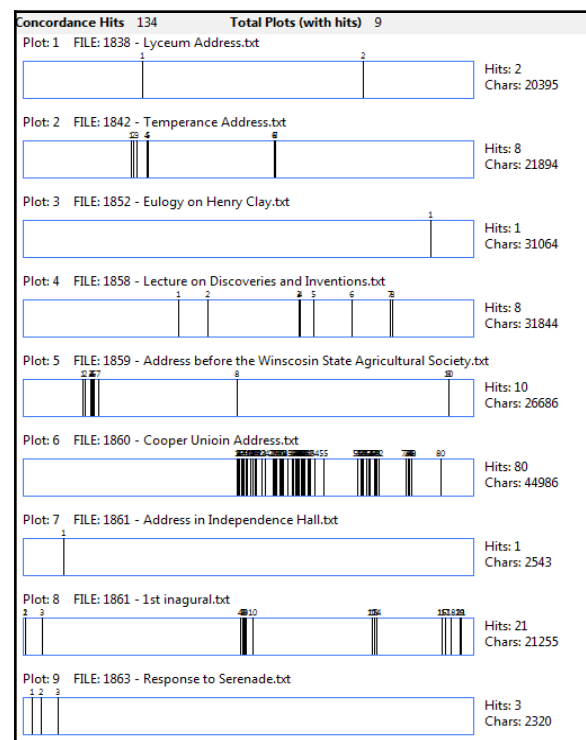**Figure 8.** Concordance plot of self-exclusion personal pronoun ***they***.

Figure 9. Concordance plot for personal pronoun ***you***.
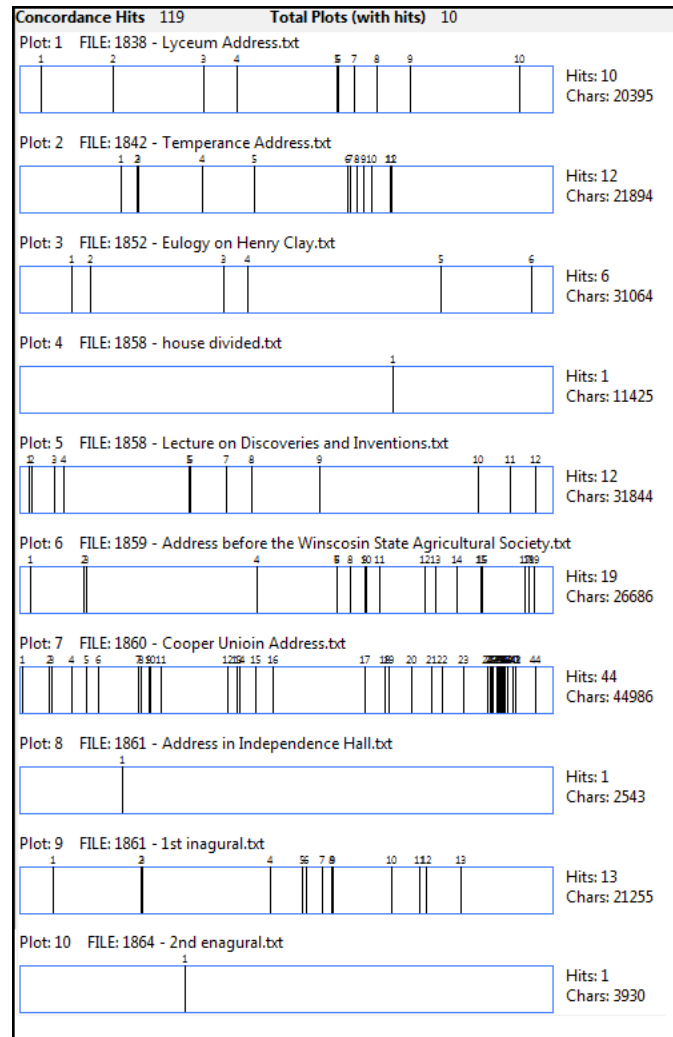
Figure 10. Concordance plots for the personal pronoun **them** in the corpora analysis.

The last set of personal pronouns that the researcher defines as self-exclusion personal pronouns (they, them, and you) have the following concordance hits: 119, 231, and 134 respectively. This means that the overall concordance hits of the self-exclusion personal pronouns is 484.

Comparatively, the personal pronouns by their categories have significantly large differences among them throughout the corpora. The **gender-associative** personal pronouns having the smallest total hits of 293; the **self-inclusive** pronouns having the largest hits of 574

(dividing further, 259 for personal voice pronouns and 315 for collective personal pronouns); and *self-exclusion* personal pronouns which garnered 484 hits. In total, the selected personal pronouns used for this analysis has 1351 overall hits.

Table 1. The table below shows the summary of the concordances of each pronoun categories.

Pronoun Types						
	Gender-associative		Self-inclusive		Self-exclusion	Total
	Male	Female	*Personal Voice*	*Collective Pronoun*		
Pronouns	*he, him*	*she, her*	*I, me*	*us, we*	*them, they,* *you*	**1351**
Hits	211	13	259	315	484	
Sub-total	*293*		*574*		*484*	

The table above shows that the total number of the selected personal pronouns is 1351. Moreover, the percentage (relevance) of gender-associative pronouns are 15.61% for male, and 0.96% for female, with a combined percentage 21.68% from the total number of gender-associative personal pronouns divided by the total pronoun entries. The self-inclusive pronouns in personal voice have a relevance of 19.17%, the collective pronoun has 23.31%, and combined, the self-inclusive personal pronouns have 42.48% relevance in the corpora. Finally, the self-exclusion pronouns have a relevance of 35.82% in the corpora. This means that former President Abraham Lincoln, used more *self-inclusive* pronouns (much more collective than personal voice) in his speeches, *self-exclusion* pronouns and less *gender-associative* (although male associated pronouns are significantly high).

Table 2. Words and their keyness from the corpora.

Rank		Keyness*	Keyword
1	-	222.55	you

2	-	169.71	i
3	-	83.28	your
4	-	81.19	my
5	-	77.39	army
6	-	77.37	me
7	-	55.15	compromise
8	-	49.93	kansas
9	-	44.58	violence
10	-	40.22	yours

Chi-Square

The table above shows the ranked *keyness* of the words in the corpora regardless of whether it is a personal pronoun or not. According to the analysis tool, the top 10 distinguishing words are: **you**, **I**, **your**, **my**, **army**, **me**, **compromise**, **Kansas**, **violence,** and **yours**.

IV.   Discussion and Interpretation

Results show that the overall personal pronouns categorized as gender-associative personal pronouns, self-inclusive-pronouns, and self-exclusive pronouns resulted in 1351 hits. Specifically in the gender-associative pronoun categorized as *Male*, there are 211 hits throughout the corpus with a relevance of 15.61%. In gender-associative pronoun categorized as *Female*, there are 13 hits only, compromising 0.96%. Therefore, the relevance of male personal pronouns used is significantly higher and the female pronoun use isn't relevant.

On the other hand, the personal voice self-inclusive pronouns used have 259 hits compromising 19.17%, and the use of collective pronouns has 23.31% accounting for 315 hits. Overall, the self-inclusive personal pronouns have a total score of 315 throughout the corpora. The last category which is self-exclusive personal pronouns has an overall score of 484 compromising 35.82% relevance in the corpora. Therefore, the relevance is high. It is a question, hence, whether a certain ratio of personal pronouns use could lead to a more effective speech.

We can conclude that among the distinguishing non-specific pronouns and words: *you, I, your, my, army, me, compromise, violence,* and *yours,* the frequency and relevance of the personal pronouns used in Abraham Lincoln's speeches are connected with the concordance scores. Studies support that the pronoun usage in political speeches play a role in the effectiveness of the speeches.

Although the researcher was able to generate significant related results with similar research, there are areas of the corpus that were not included in the paper for the convenience of specificity. Further research would enhance the relevance of this study in the future.

V.   Bibliography

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[2]   "Lincoln_ Tactical Thinker_ - Lincoln_ Creator of the Modern Presidency_." .

[3]   J. Håkansson, "The Use of Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches : A comparative study of the pronominal choices of two American presidents," 2012.

[4]   I.-M. Stănculete, "I vs. We. First Person Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches," *East-West Cult. Passage*, vol. 1, no. 19, pp. 1–3, 2019, doi: DOI: 10.2478/ewcp-2019-0008.