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Reconsidering the Electoral Connection of Speeches: The Impact of Electoral Vulnerability on Legislative Speechmaking in a Preferential Voting System

Recent literature highlights the incentives emanating from the electoral system and intraparty politics to explain unequal access to the plenary floor. This article contributes to the literature by investigating the effect of electoral vulnerability on the likelihood to deliver speeches in a preferential voting system. Drawing on data from Finland, it argues that intraparty vulnerability has a negative impact on the likelihood to deliver speeches, whereas the opposite effect is expected regarding interparty vulnerability. The findings show that intraparty vulnerability is negatively correlated with the number of speeches and that this effect is even larger when intraparty competition is tougher. The article underlines the importance of individual electoral goals when exploring legislative speechmaking. It also shows the need to distinguish the two forms of vulnerability and to consider factors that mediate the electoral connection.

Introduction

The seminal work of Proskch and Slapin (2010, 2014) has contributed to a growing interest in legislative speechmaking. Debates and speeches on the plenary floor are considered as the quintessence of parliamentary work since they allow Members of Parliament (MPs), party groups, and ministers to express and defend their ideas and positions (Bäck et al. 2019). The literature

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has highlighted the unequal distribution of access to the floor resulting from intra- and interparty politics. A gender gap has been identified as female MPs deliver significantly fewer speeches, particularly on “hard” issues (Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014). The floor is also the preferred arena for the opposition to challenge government’s proposals (Curini, Hino, and Osaka 2020).

Comparative literature highlights the incentives emanating from the electoral system (Bäck et al. 2019; Proksch and Slapin 2012). However, these causal mechanisms between electoral incentives and legislative speeches have mainly been studied at the party level. Individual MPs also have their own electoral goals, and these goals may not be congruent with those of their parties. This applies particularly to preferential electoral systems that allow (or require) voters to choose between individual candidates. The question of whether and how a personalized electoral system impacts legislative speechmaking remains open. In preferential systems, election outcomes do not only depend on the performance of parties, but also on the number of preferential votes each candidate receives. This provides candidates with incentives to cultivate a personal vote in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors. The double-layered competition, within and between political parties, increases the uncertainty of the electoral process, especially for the most electorally vulnerable MPs seeking reelection. In this article, we thus explore the impact of electoral uncertainty on legislative speechmaking. Our main research question is what is the impact of electoral vulnerability on legislative speechmaking?

The question of electoral safety is, of course, not new, and a large body of literature discusses its effect on various aspects of legislative behavior. Even though MPs are interested in reelection (Mayhew 1974), the most vulnerable ones devote more energy to this goal (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). In that sense, *ceteris paribus*, MPs experiencing a similar level of vulnerability will act in a similar way (Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019). The level of electoral vulnerability thus provides MPs with more or fewer motivations to react to the incentives produced by the institutional features. To phrase it differently, according to André, Depauw, and Martin (2015, 465), electoral safety explains the inconsistencies observed in studies exploring the impact of electoral systems on parliamentary work (Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005; Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). More precisely, the effect of vulnerability can be additive or conditional. In the former case, vulnerability would strengthen, conversely weaken, the

incentives of the electoral system (Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005). In the latter case, vulnerability conditions the impact of electoral institutions (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). In this situation, only (or mostly) vulnerable MPs will be influenced by the institutional incentives.

After initial research on the US Congress (Fiorina 1973; Jacobson 1987), the literature generally has relied on Strøm's (1997) conception of legislative behavior where MPs that perceive themselves to be electorally vulnerable will adopt a behavior they think will help them to secure reelection. Empirically, the first studies showed that vulnerability leads to increased activity of MPs (Bowler 2010; Rasch 2009; Soroka, Penner, and Blidook 2009) and mainly incites them to adopt a constituency focus (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Russo 2011; Soroka, Penner, and Blidook 2009). Moreover, vulnerability also impacts policy positions, with vulnerable MPs dedicating more attention to the policy preferences of the median voter (Burden 2004; Immergut and Abou-Chadi 2014). The effect of electoral (un)safety has also been challenged. For example, Lazardeux (2005) did not find any evidence of electoral safety impacting the behavior of French MPs. However, this study appears to be an exception that may be explained by the French electoral system that provides MPs with only partial incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Brouard and Kerrouche 2014; Carey and Shugart 1995). Similarly, Gulati (2004) showed that vulnerable US senators were less responsive to the ideological center than their colleagues occupying safe seats. Beyond the case of the US Congress, the literature on electoral vulnerability has mainly focused on parliamentary questions (Blidook and Kerby 2011; Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019; Kellermann 2016; Lazardeux 2005; Rasch 2009; Russo 2011), private-member bills (Bowler 2010; Kellermann 2013; Solvak and Pajala 2016), and district work (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Costa and Poyet 2016).

Legislative speeches share common characteristics with these parliamentary instruments used to assess the impact of electoral vulnerability: they are formal, institutionalized, and can be used for self-promotion (Bäck and Debus 2016; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019; Proksch and Slapin 2014). However, only a handful of studies have explored the electoral connection of legislative speechmaking, and their empirical results are mixed, justifying thus further research. The literature explains that MPs are more likely to deliver speeches on topics that matter for constituents

(Bäck and Debus 2016, 2018; Bäck et al. 2019), even though the rules parties set for accessing the floor may limit this behavior (Bäck and Debus 2018). Moreover, in the German case, MPs who would benefit more from the speeches (those elected by a direct mandate) are not more active on the floor than other MPs (Bäck and Debus 2016, 146). When controlling for institutional limitations, there is evidence of the positive impact of electoral fate; the higher the number of speeches, the better the electoral success (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019).

Hence, although the literature acknowledges the utility of speeches for self-promotion and electoral purposes, the few empirical observations do not always match the exceptions. To explain the variations, the literature mainly focuses on institutional and party-level factors. Authors have examined the likelihood of dissenting MPs to deliver speeches (Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017; Proksch and Slapin 2014), showing that when parties may electorally benefit from free access to the floor, they will not exercise control over their MPs (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2014). Only two studies have explored the individual electoral incentives to take the floor. Fernandes, Won, and Martins (2020) showed that MPs are more likely to be responsive towards their constituents when candidate selection is decentralized. Dockendorff (2020) measures the effect of electoral (un)safety on speechmaking, showing that unsafe Chilean MPs deliver less constituency-oriented legislative speeches. However, Dockendorff does not discuss his findings. There is, thus, a lack of in-depth research on the impact of electoral vulnerability on legislative speechmaking. This lack is particularly detrimental considering the role played by electoral vulnerability on MP behavior. It mediates the effect of variables that have been identified as important in explaining varying access to the floor: electoral rules (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019; Riera and Cantú 2018) and candidate-selection procedures (Crisp et al. 2013). Even though they are elected under a similar electoral system and act under the same rules, not all MPs may be tempted to use the floor in a similar way, and one aspect that is taken into account by MPs is the possible electoral benefits (Mayhew 1974). It is therefore important to include electoral (un)safety in the explicative models.

To explore the impact of electoral (un)safety on legislative speechmaking, we draw on data covering all legislative speeches delivered between 1995 and 2019 in the Finnish unicameral parliament, the *Eduskunta*, which offers a relevant case study for

two reasons. First, Finland has one of the most candidate-centered electoral systems in the world: casting a preferential vote is mandatory, with around half of the voters viewing the particular candidate as more important than the party in determining their vote choice (von Schoultz 2018). Finland can thus be viewed as a most-likely case of an electoral system providing MPs and candidates with incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Arter 2011; von Schoultz and Papageorgiou 2019). Second, access to the floor of the *Eduskunta* is rather unconstrained. The parliamentary rules of procedure ensure free access to the floor and do not set a specific duration for the debates, except for the weekly session of oral questions. Also, parties mostly refrain from controlling access. The next section introduces the theoretical framework. Then, we detail the practice of legislative speechmaking in Finland. The fourth section explains the empirical strategy. The results are in the fifth section. Finally, the concluding discussion highlights the theoretical and empirical implications of our article.

Vulnerability and the Electoral Connection of Legislative Speeches: Theoretical Framework

Legislative speeches have two main goals (Austen-Smith 1990, 144; Proksch and Slapin 2012, 521). On the one hand, through speeches, MPs can persuade others about the superiority of their arguments and policy positions. Existing literature considers this function to be mostly unsuccessful (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019, 581). On the other hand, speeches have a communication function and are designed to strengthen the connection between MPs and citizens (Martin and Vanberg 2008; Proksch and Slapin 2014). In other words, MPs use the floor to advertise their positions not only to the government and their colleagues, but also—and mainly—to voters. Speeches are a good mechanism for communicating policy positions, ultimately impacting the reelection chances of MPs by expanding their name recognition (Bäck and Debus 2016). In most democratic countries, plenary debates are regularly covered by the media, which provides MPs with a strong incentive for communicating their positions (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996; Proksch and Slapin 2012).

The literature offers robust evidence of the strategic use of speeches, including in countries where access to the floor is institutionally restricted or controlled by party groups (Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017; Proksch and Slapin 2014). Scholars have thus

shown that rebel MPs (i.e., MPs who deviate from the party line in roll-call votes) deliver more speeches when the electoral system allows the voters to select a particular candidate instead of voting for the whole list. Moreover, these MPs make more frequent use of those types of debates where they can access the floor without control from their party (Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017). The strategic use of speeches is also attested by exploring the effect of candidate-selection procedures on MPs' floor behavior: decentralized procedures result in more references to the districts (Fernandes, Won, and Martins 2020). Ultimately, the strategic use of speeches is observed in voters' behavior, although the literature is scarcer. Even though the heterogeneity of speeches may complicate the "good" reception of MPs messages, voters directly react to MPs' behavior on the floor (Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019), and, in certain cases, this instrument has even a stronger impact on MPs' electoral fate than parliamentary questions and private-member bills (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019). Parties are also evaluated through the prism of their floor behavior, with parties perceived as internally divided losing a significant share of support (Kam 2009; Proksch and Slapin 2012).

Although speeches share common features with other parliamentary instruments, the plenary is not only a forum for individual MPs, but also for the parties (Martin and Vanberg 2008). Speeches are used for position taking by both individual MPs and parties and for signaling policy positions as part of party competition (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 521). Speechmaking is thus not only a matter of individual benefit but implies a coordination between legislators and their parties (Proksch and Slapin 2012). Even in countries where the floor is accessible with little restrictions, parties aim at protecting their party brands, and MPs take into consideration their parties' collective goals. Hence, the decision to deliver a speech and its content is not only an individual decision based on the quest for personal votes. Collective goals, and more generally partisanship, do matter (Morris 2001).

Yet, in legislatures where access to the floor is not strongly restricted by parties, the limitations may also come from MPs themselves. MPs calculate the benefits of their actions (Mayhew 1974; Strøm 1997), and speeches are no exception (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996). One of the most important aspects is electoral fate. Not all MPs share the same chance of reelection, with some MPs being more vulnerable to an electoral defeat than others.

Considering the impact of speeches on electoral fortune, we argue that MPs' floor activity is impacted by their electoral vulnerability.

In preferential electoral systems, electoral competition occurs at two different levels: within (or intra-) and between (or inter-) parties (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Arter 2013). Candidates do not only compete against candidates from other parties, but also against candidates from the same list in the same district (Karvonen 2010; Passarelli 2020). Hence an electoral defeat can be an intraparty or an interparty defeat (Katz 2003). In the former situation, an MP loses to a copartisan, in the latter case, to a candidate from another party (Katz and Bardi 1980; Passarelli 2020; Villodres 2003). In assessing the impact of the electoral vulnerability, it is thus essential to consider both sides of the coin with each one having, potentially, a different effect on the likelihood to take the floor. Outside the seminal work from André et al. (2015), this distinction is generally absent from research on electoral vulnerability in spite of its theoretical and empirical implications. Being vulnerable to an intraparty defeat does not have the same implications than being vulnerable to an interparty defeat. *Ceteris paribus*, in the former case, electoral fate depends on the ability of an MP to attract enough preferential votes. In the latter, it depends on the success of the whole party list (Katz 2003). To phrase it differently, the two types of electoral vulnerability have a different impact on how MPs allocate efforts between constituency service and party activities. Modelling the effect of electoral vulnerability requires thus taking into account the different incentives provided to MPs by the two *types* of vulnerability.

As stated in the literature, preferential electoral systems enhance intraparty competition and incite MPs to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). Since they also have to compete against candidates who share similar policy positions, MPs have to distinguish themselves to improve their name recognition (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005), in addition to the party label. Hence, MPs in preferential systems are more likely to adopt a constituency focus (Crisp et al. 2004; Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005). Similar effect is observed when candidate selection is decentralized (Crisp et al. 2004). MPs translate these incentives into constituency-related activities, mainly when intraparty competition is harsh and MPs are thus more vulnerable (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Arter 2011; Kellermann 2016). Electorally vulnerable MPs will prioritize constituency service to facilitate reelection. Beyond quantitative research,

qualitative studies from Finland suggest that unsafe MPs invest more resources in maintaining contacts with constituents (Raunio and Ruotsalainen 2018). Moreover, literature on district-oriented policy responsiveness shows that competition for personal votes provides MPs with incentives to focus on matters important for their constituents (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2008; Dropp and Peskowitz 2012; Kellermann 2016; Lazarus 2009). Dyadic representation is thus strengthened by intraparty electoral competition (Kuklinski 1977; Soroka, Penner, and Blidook 2009, 564). Hence, intraparty competition provides MPs with incentives to cultivate a personal vote which is translated into activities improving name recognition and mainly constituency service. Vulnerability to an intraparty defeat implies, thus, even greater incentives to use parliamentary instruments, leading, for example, to more written questions (Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019).

Yet, as explained above, the empirical implications for MPs work were mainly explored through their use of parliamentary questions and private-members bills. Although speeches share common features with these instruments, the literature also notes they differ in many key aspects, inciting us to reconsider the effect of intraparty vulnerability on MPs' activity. While drafting a written question is rather hassle free, speeches require more effort (Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019, 279). In addition, the nature of legislative speechmaking is more constraining. Written questions are mostly free from party control (Martin 2011; Rozenberg and Martin 2011), but speeches are more strongly connected to the party. As discussed above, in addition to being an instrument for individual legislators' self-promotion, legislative speeches are also used by parties to further promote their brand, signal policy positions, and monitor their members (Martin and Vanberg 2008; Proksch and Slapin 2012). These functions of position taking and policy signaling appear, at least partially, antagonistic to the cultivation of a personal vote as defined by Cain et al. (1987). Hence, we argue that the connection between MPs' self-promotion and parties' collective goals makes it more difficult for MPs to claim personal credit for the speeches and for the voters to identify whom to reward and punish.

The burgeoning literature on speechmaking supports the claim that speeches are not a favored venue for cultivating a personal vote. Although there is evidence of using speeches to promote constituents interests (Fernandes, Won, and Martins 2020;

Yildirim 2020), the literature also shows that MPs who may benefit more from the speeches are not the most active on the floor.

Paraphrasing Euchner and Frech (2020), the floor may offer “visibility,” but it does not mean it is considered as “useful.” Bäck and Debus (2018) highlighted that MPs elected in districts with high unemployment rates delivered fewer speeches on the economy, while policy responsiveness theory would expect the opposite pattern (Borghetto, Santana-Pereira, and Freire 2020; Däubler 2019). Similarly, in Germany MPs elected in single-member districts through first-past-the-post electoral systems do not deliver more speeches than their colleagues elected on closed lists, despite the incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Bäck and Debus 2016). In the conclusion of their work on legislative speechmaking in the US Congress, Maltzman and Sieglman (1996, 827–28) even argue that MPs in need of personal votes find their time better spent in other activities than the floor.

Considering the incentives emanating from the electoral system and the inappropriateness of the floor for policy-responsiveness purposes, we expect that intraparty vulnerability is negatively correlated with legislative speechmaking. The first hypothesis is:

H1: The higher the intraparty vulnerability, the lower the number of speeches.

Another feature of preferential systems is the nature of the accountability structure. Since citizens can vote for a particular candidate, MPs are directly accountable to the voters (Folke and Rickne 2020). In other words, voters may punish or reward an individual MP for bad (conversely, good) service. This aspect is particularly crucial for MPs of governing parties that can be found “guilty by association,” namely being undermined by association with unpopular decisions. Considering the impact of speeches on name recognition, one can argue that governing-party MPs will therefore refrain from speaking in order to not be associated with potential unpopular policies in voters’ minds. Furthermore, MPs of governing parties have a direct and facilitated access to the government and national administration, providing them with greater opportunities to deliver benefits to their districts. Hence, they do not need to make active use of traditional parliamentary channels for advertising themselves. Considering that MPs who are vulnerable to an intraparty defeat are incited to cultivate a personal vote, we thus arrive at our second hypothesis:

H2: At high levels of intraparty vulnerability, opposition MPs deliver more speeches than government MPs. No difference is expected at low levels of intraparty vulnerability.

The same level of vulnerability may not have the same effect depending on the properties of the electoral district (André and Depauw 2014; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Riera and Cantú 2018) and the performance of the MP's party. The literature has already noted the interaction between district magnitude, the openness of the electoral lists, and vulnerability (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). Moreover, under preferential voting systems, intraparty competition is exacerbated in districts with large magnitudes and among copartisans of a particularly successful party (Carey and Shugart 1995; Crisp et al. 2013; André and Depauw 2014). In other words, although two MPs may share a similar level of intraparty vulnerability, the incentives will vary depending on the magnitude of the district and the size of the party delegation. As stated above, harsh intraparty competition provides MPs with more incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995). Electoral vulnerability matters mainly when an MP must compete with a large number of opponents. In this situation, MPs that are the most vulnerable to an intraparty defeat, will be more incited to cultivate a personal vote in order to differentiate themselves from copartisans (Selb and Lutz 2015). Considering the previous hypotheses, we expect that when intraparty competition becomes fiercer, it provides MPs vulnerable to an intraparty defeat with even fewer incentives for taking the floor. Hence, the third hypothesis is:

H3: When intraparty competition is high, the less vulnerable to an intraparty defeat an MPs is, the more speeches (s)he will deliver. No difference is expected when intraparty competition is low.

Regarding interparty vulnerability, the pattern is different. The electoral fate of vulnerable MPs depends mainly on the result of their parties so that the party at least wins the same number of seats as in previous elections (Katz 2003). In other words, a vulnerable MP will be incited to act in order to improve the success of her/his party, even though personal vote-seeking activities such as constituency service are also considered as efficient (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). Parties can even encourage their MPs

to do constituency service since it may also improve the electoral success of the party (Kam 2009). However, this incentive appears to be mainly observed in closed-list electoral systems. On the other hand, in preferential systems, Selb and Lutz (2015) showed that the level of interparty competition did not affect MPs' investment into activities supporting the cultivation of a personal vote. Hence, being highly vulnerable to an interparty defeat in preferential systems does not necessarily imply a stronger investment into constituency service (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015, 480). However, when investigating the impact on speechmaking, the pattern is different. Parties benefit from unity on the floor (Kam 2009, 140) and use speeches as a way to differentiate themselves from competitors, including from coalition partners (Martin and Vanberg 2008). Hence, following the literature on the communication function of speeches (Proksch and Slapin 2012) and the trade-offs between constituency service and party and policy work (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987), we expect that vulnerable MPs will promote the proposals and positions of their parties. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis is:

H4: The higher the interparty vulnerability, the higher the number of speeches.

The Context of Legislative Speechmaking in Finland

In order to test our hypotheses, we focus on Finland which is relevant for two reasons. First, access to the floor is rather unconstrained. According to Proksch and Slapin (2014), Finland belongs to the category of “party lists favored, individual access.” It appears that the authors based their categorization on parliamentary rules, as Finnish parties did not respond to their survey of internal party practices. In the *Eduskunta*, individual MPs are free to access the floor. Party groups do exercise some level of control: particularly in more salient issues and/or when debating time is limited, such as during oral question time, parties have an incentive to allocate speaking time to their frontbenchers or MPs known for their expertise on the matter. Loyalty to the party also plays a role, but overall, party groups refrain from interfering with members' right to speak.¹

Second, Finland certainly has one of the most candidate-centered electoral systems in the world. The 200 MPs are elected for

a four-year term from one single-member (Åland Islands) and 12 multimember electoral districts. Candidate selection is decentralized to district-level party branches, and the national party leadership has only limited possibilities to influence candidate selection. Voters choose between individual candidates that appear on party lists in alphabetical order. The combination of an “open list” and decentralized candidate selection means that the whole system is very local or district-based—and this creates strong incentives for developing a personal vote. Hence the combination of unconstrained access to the floor and a candidate-centered electoral system makes Finland a relevant or even a most-likely case for testing hypotheses about the impact of MPs’ electoral vulnerability on legislative speechmaking.

Moving to the parliamentary context, one needs to remember that not so long ago, the *Eduskunta* plenary was hardly relevant in national politics. However, in connection with constitutional reforms enacted in the 1990s that strengthened the government and also the parliament, the status of the plenary debates was elevated. Debates on topical matters can now be held at short notice; during oral question time, MPs can put spontaneous questions to the ministers, and overall the government is constitutionally obliged to provide more information and reports to the *Eduskunta* that are then debated in the plenary.

The Speaker directs parliamentary work together with the Speaker’s Council and is assisted by two Deputy Speakers. The Speaker or a Deputy Speaker chairs the plenary sessions, grants the floor for speeches and replies, makes voting proposals, and decides on the final order of business. Before giving the floor to those MPs that had requested the right to speak on the matter (such requests can also be made during the debates), the spokesperson for the party group or responsible committee opens the debate.² Individual MPs have access to the floor in the order of the requests. The debating culture is quite cautious and polite, but there is also some back-and-forth dialogue between ministers and MPs, as well as some interruptive shouts from MPs. In “dialogue” debates between the government and the opposition, the *Eduskunta* has decided to allocate more speaking time to the opposition parties. Plenaries have session plans (rough timetables), but the Speaker usually allows debates to proceed as long as needed.

Data and Method

The hypotheses are tested using all speeches delivered in the *Eduskunta* from April 1995 to March 2019. The data from 1995

to 2015 comes from the *Parlspeech* dataset (Rauh, De Wilde, and Schwalbach 2017). The authors web-scraped the remaining speeches of the 2015–19 term directly from the *Eduskunta* website. The data consists of 252,834 speeches delivered by 634 unique MPs.

The dependent variable is the number of speeches delivered by an MP during one term. This variable ranges from 1 to 2,047, with an average of 202 speeches per MP.

The main independent variables are the two forms of electoral vulnerability. For the sake of comparability and external validity, we use the measure developed by André, Depauw, and Martin (2015). Intraparty vulnerability corresponds to 1 minus the margin between the number of votes separating the MP and the first nonelected challenger and the total number of votes. In other words, the variable measures vulnerability by capturing the share of votes separating the MPs and the first nonelected candidate by considering the total number of votes. Interparty vulnerability corresponds to the rank of election within a party list. The MP elected first is less vulnerable than the MP receiving the last seat of the list. Both indices range from 0 to 1 with 1 corresponding to the highest degree of vulnerability. A few runners-up joined the parliament during the term; their vulnerability is thus above 1. When comparing the scores of Finnish MPs with those in the country cases included in André, Depauw, and Martin (2015), we note the stiffer intraparty competition in Finland. The average intraparty vulnerability is significantly higher in Finland than elsewhere in Europe, and only a handful number of MPs have an intraparty vulnerability below 0,5.

The second independent variable is the government-opposition divide. We use a regular dummy with all MPs from a governing party coded “1.” Two changes in the composition of the governments happened during the terms. However, the code of this variable is determined by the position of the MP at the beginning of the term. Third, party performance in the district is measured by the share of votes that goes only to the party. In other words, we do not take into account potential electoral alliances since they are purely strategic and do not involve any joint policy programs (Arter 2013, 105).

We then add seven control variables. First, we add a series of dummies covering frontbencher positions: ministers, the chairs of the committees, parties, and party groups. Since the Speaker is not supposed to deliver speeches, this position is not included in the models. We also add a dummy for gender (female MPs coded 1),

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Number of speeches	201.78	187.309	1	2047
Intra-party vulnerability	.914	.135	.026	1.07
Inter-party vulnerability	.728	.332	.049	3
Government-opposition dummy	.647	.478	0	1
Score of the party in the district	21.16	9.83	.900	46.6
Minister	.119	.324	0	1
Committee chair	.120	.325	0	1
Party leader	.052	.222	0	1
Party group chair	.055	.232	0	1
Female MP	.388	.487	0	1
Seniority	2.62	1.77	1	11
Size of the party group	37.63	16.19	1	63
Share of the term spent in parliament (logged)	-.080	.340	-5.30	0

Source: *Parlspeech* and authors' data.

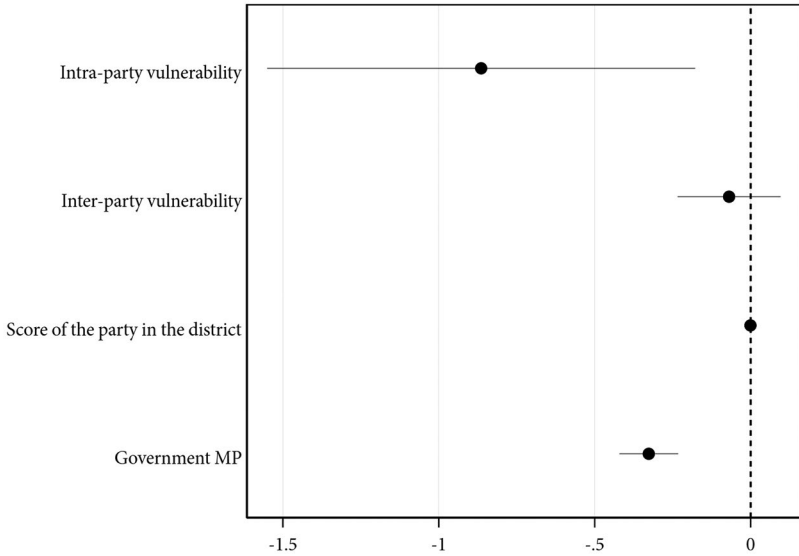
a measure for seniority corresponding to the number of terms an MP has served in parliament and/or government, the size of the party group, and, finally, the number of days the MP had served in parliament during the term under study. The descriptive statistics of all variables are displayed in Table 1.

Considering the right-skewed distribution and high dispersion of the dependent variable containing only nonnegative and integer values, the appropriate estimation model is a negative binomial regression (Hilbe 2011). All analyses include term-fixed effects to control for time effects. Also, all models include standard errors clustered by individual MP.

Results

The full model specifications are in the online supporting information (Table A1). Here, we plot the findings related to our hypotheses and the variables of interest. Model 1 tests the first and fourth hypotheses. Model 2 includes the interaction between intra-party vulnerability and the government-opposition dummy (H2).

FIGURE 1
The impact of intra- and inter-party vulnerability on legislative speechmaking



Source: Parlspeech and authors' data. Figure based on model 1, Table A1. The lines are the 95% confidence intervals.

Finally, model 3 tests the expected conditional effect of intraparty vulnerability upon party electoral performance in the district (H3).

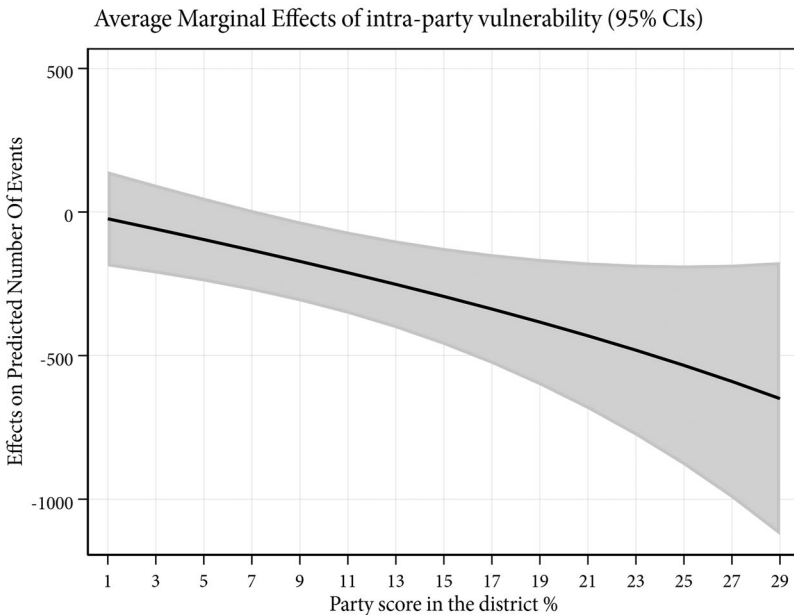
Figure 1 displays the effect of intra- and interparty vulnerability on the likelihood of delivering a speech (together with the other independent variables). The findings show that the two forms of electoral vulnerability do not equally affect MP behavior, while also underlining the importance of considering both intra- and interparty vulnerability. More precisely, intraparty vulnerability is negatively correlated with the number of speeches delivered during one term. To phrase it differently, the higher the intraparty vulnerability, the fewer the number of speeches per term. This supports Hypothesis 1. On the other hand, the findings show that interparty vulnerability does not affect the number of speeches. Hypothesis 4 is thus rejected.

Moreover, we expected that not all MPs would react to electoral (un)safety in the same way. We hypothesized a conditional effect upon the government-opposition dummy and the electoral performance of the party. The results are mixed. First, the

government-opposition dummy does not condition the effect of intraparty vulnerability (H2 is thus rejected). Regardless of their level of electoral vulnerability, opposition MPs deliver more speeches than MPs of governing parties (see model 1). Intraparty vulnerability has the same impact on MPs from both groups: the increase of one unit of intraparty vulnerability has a similar effect on the number of speeches among both opposition and cabinet parties' MPs. Contrary to our expectations, governing parties' MPs do not therefore react differently to electoral vulnerability than opposition MPs. It means that the risk of being found guilty by association does not affect MPs of governing parties, or, at least, it does not provide them with incentives to behave differently from opposition MPs.

Regarding the impact of intraparty competition, the results offer strong support for Hypothesis 3. In order to better appreciate the interaction, we plot the average marginal effects in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Average marginal effects of intra-party vulnerability conditioned upon party electoral performance

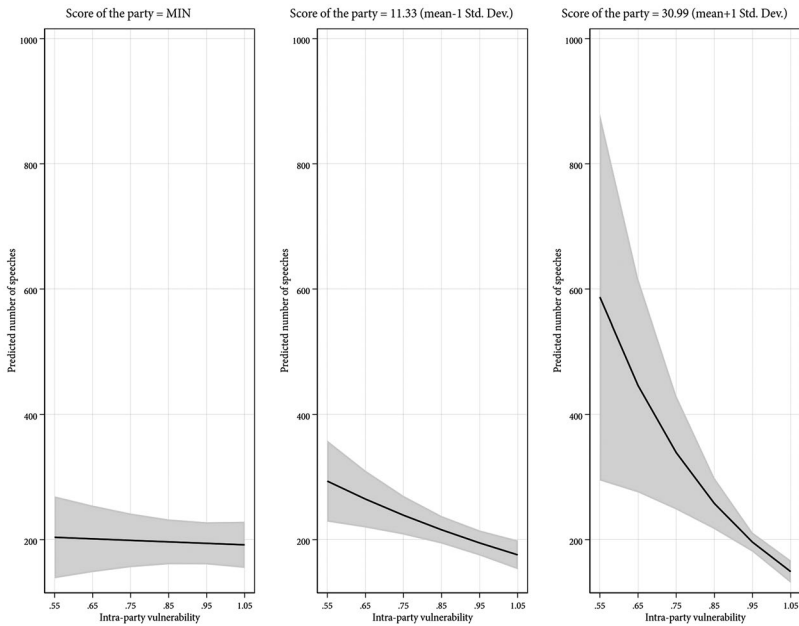


Source: Parlspeech and authors' data. Figure based on model 3, Table A1. The grey area is the 95% confidence intervals

It shows that electoral vulnerability has a more substantial effect among MPs elected on a party list that performed well in the same district in the previous elections. *Ceteris paribus*, compared to less vulnerable MPs, these parliamentarians were expected to deliver significantly fewer speeches than MPs elected in a district where their party performed poorly. According to previous literature electoral vulnerability has a uniform effect on MPs. In other words, at a similar level of electoral vulnerability, MPs are expected to behave similarly. Our findings show that the picture is less straightforward. Sharing a similar level of electoral vulnerability does not necessarily mean similar incentives. To better appraise the differences, we calculated the predicted number of speeches (predictive margins) at three different values of the variable measuring the score of the party. The results are in Figure 3.

Our model shows that intraparty competition largely conditions the effect of electoral vulnerability. When intraparty

FIGURE 3
 Predictive margins of intra-party vulnerability conditioned upon party electoral performance



Source: Parlspeech and authors' data. Figure based on model 3, Table A1. The grey areas are the 90% confidence intervals

competition is tougher, MPs are even more incited to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995; Crisp, Jensen, and Shomer 2007), and this aspect appears to strengthen the negative effect of vulnerability (conversely the positive effect of electoral safety) on the likelihood of delivering speeches. The right-hand panel shows that MPs that are at low levels of intraparty vulnerability deliver, on average, three times more speeches than the most vulnerable MPs. Figure 3 shows, thus, that the success of the party provides MPs who are highly vulnerable to an intraparty defeat with less incentives to take the floor. Conversely, safe MPs deliver even more speeches, offering evidence that electoral safety—low risk of an intraparty defeat and elected on a list that performed well—is a good predictor of the behavior on the floor. On the other hand, an increase of one unit of electoral vulnerability of an MP elected in a district where the party performed poorly (left-hand panel) has, finally, only a minor impact.

Moreover, this finding also complements the literature on the effect of intraparty competition in preferential voting systems (André and Depauw 2014; Carey and Shugart 1995; Crisp, Jensen, and Shomer 2007). Intraparty competition does not have a direct effect on MPs likelihood to take the floor (see model 1). Rather, it affects MPs' work only in concomitance with electoral vulnerability. It shows thus the importance of considering both factors (i.e., intraparty competition and vulnerability), not independently, but together as is the case when looking at the link between district magnitude, electoral vulnerability, and MPs work (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). To phrase it differently, party magnitude (i.e., the number of seats per party per district) works in a same way as district magnitude.

Concluding Discussion

This article has explored the effect of electoral vulnerability on legislative speechmaking in a preferential electoral system. Considering the mediating effect of electoral vulnerability on MPs' work (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015), parliamentarians may have higher or lower incentives to deliver speeches depending on the likelihood of an electoral defeat. Our main argument was that in preferential electoral regimes, scholars must pay attention to both intraparty and interparty vulnerability. The former provides a disincentive against MPs taking the floor, while interparty vulnerability is expected to have the opposite effect. Moreover, we

also hypothesized party performance in the district and the government-opposition divide to have a conditional effect on speech-making activity.

Drawing on data from the Finnish parliament, the findings are mixed. As expected, intraparty vulnerability had a negative effect: the more vulnerable the MP, the fewer speeches. However, interparty vulnerability did not directly affect the likelihood of taking the floor. Moreover, the results also showed no difference between governing party and opposition MPs regarding reaction to electoral vulnerability. Opposition MPs were more likely to deliver speeches regardless of their level of electoral safety. More importantly, the intensity of intraparty competition mediated the effect of intraparty vulnerability. The effect of electoral unsafety was more substantial among MPs elected in a district where their party performed well. Concretely, when the party performed poorly, MPs vulnerable to an intraparty defeat do not deliver fewer speeches than their safe colleagues. On the other hand, when intraparty competition increases, safe MPs deliver about three times more speeches than legislators highly vulnerable to an intraparty defeat.

Our results have three main implications. First, they show the importance of considering the two forms of electoral vulnerability. In a strong preferential voting system, MPs do not react in the same way to intra- and interparty vulnerability. Interparty vulnerability does not directly affect MP behavior, while its intraparty counterpart constrains MPs to a great extent. More than the risk of losing their seats due to an interparty defeat, it is the risk of losing the seat to copartisans that explains MPs' speechmaking activity. Not all vulnerabilities are equal, and subsequent research should consider these insights when investigating the impact of electoral competition on parliamentary behavior.

Second, previous literature has considered electoral (un)safety as producing similar effects across MPs and districts, highlighting the mediating effect of vulnerability that conditions the effect of other variables (André, Depauw, and Martin 2015; Heitshusen, Young, and Wood 2005). However, our study showed that the impact of vulnerability is in turn impacted by other factors, mainly by the level of intraparty competition—the harsher the competition, the fewer speeches delivered by vulnerable MPs. Intraparty competition provides MPs with more incentives to cultivate a personal vote and, thus, provides a disincentive against taking the floor. Recent work has shown that the effect of electoral vulnerability

varies between different electoral systems (Fernandes, Geese, and Schwemmer 2019; Riera and Cantú 2018). This article has shown that even among MPs elected under the same rules, electoral vulnerability can have different effects.

Finally, the article provides further insights into legislative speechmaking. One of the key functions of plenary speeches is communication with voters (Proksch and Slapin 2014), leading MPs to use speeches for self-promotion (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019). Our findings do not necessarily contest this conception, but they incite to temper it. To a certain extent, this article indicates that MPs who would need the largest self-promotion are those who refrain from speaking. In preferential voting systems, a large part of the electoral outcome depends on the ability of candidates to attract enough preferential votes. Our study suggests that the risk of being directly associated with potentially unpopular decisions has a stronger impact on MPs than any visibility derived from speechmaking. In other words, the visibility offered by the floor is not necessarily targeted by MPs, and mainly those MPs with a large reserve of personal votes venture out on the floor. This confirms the importance of distinguishing the “visibility” and the “usefulness” of a parliamentary instrument (Euchner and Frech 2020). Another way to interpret our results is that they indicate self-censorship from vulnerable MPs who may also feel less representative of party voters. Overall, future research should reconsider the connection between legislative speeches and vote-seeking behavior.

This article also has two limitations that should be addressed by subsequent studies. First, we analyzed only one case, but our research design can be easily replicated in virtually all countries. Second, we focused on the number of speeches, the intensity of the behavior. Further studies should also examine the content of the speeches and the link between constituency pressures and speechmaking. A reasonable expectation is that vulnerable MPs focus on specific issues salient for their districts. Nevertheless, this article has provided robust evidence about the impact of electoral vulnerability on legislative speechmaking. Further studies on plenary debates need thus also to consider MPs’ electoral incentives and their interaction with other factors. More generally, this article has shown the importance of dismantling electoral vulnerability. Not all vulnerabilities are equal.

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NOTES

1. According to Section 31 of the constitution, “Each Representative has the right to speak freely in the Parliament on all matters under consideration and on how they are dealt with. A Representative shall conduct himself or herself with dignity and decorum and not behave offensively to another person. If a Representative is in breach of such conduct, the Speaker may point this out or prohibit the Representative from continuing to speak.”

2. The exact speaking order and the roles of party groups and committee spokespersons vary between the different types of debates.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Table A1. Full Model Specifications