



"Transformations between political discourse and media representations: a comparative analysis of the term populis* in French media"

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ABSTRACT

The term populism is constantly used in political and media discourse. However, the meaning of populism is still open to debate among scholars, political actors, mass media and laypeople. A substantial amount of research in several disciplines has been focused on populism as an ideology (Mudde, 2004), as a discursive strategy (Charaudeau, 2011; Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019) and as a “communication phenomenon” (de Vreese et al., 2018). These studies have contributed to the ongoing debate about the role and place of people in a democracy. The way the word and the notion of populism are defined, used and circulated in political and media discourse in European democracies remains understudied. In addition, research looking into the relationship between media and populism in the French context is limited (Hubé & Truan, 2016). Addressing these gaps, we study the construction of the notion of populism in two forums—parliamentary arena and mass media—and from a twofold perspective: linguistics and communication studies. The aim of our study is to explore the uses of the term populis* (i.e., populisme and its derivatives) in a series of political speeches pronounced by politicians in the French Parliament in 2019 and its representation in French media outlets (i.e., Franceinfo, Le Monde, Le Parisien, 20 Minutes). The two datasets analysed in this study consist of discourses containing at least one token of populis* in (1) parliamentary debates held in 2019 and (2) articles from digital media sources. For analytical purposes, we distinguish between public-owned media, “esta...

CITE THIS VERSION

Shchinova, Nadezda ; Nuevo Gascó, Raül. *Transformations between political discourse and media representations: a comparative analysis of the term populis* in French media*. Les mutations des discours médiatiques : approche contrastive et interculturelle (Université Grenoble Alpes, France - en ligne, du 03/06/2021 au 04/06/2021). <http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/249042>

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Transformations between political discourse and media representations: a comparative analysis of the term *populis in French media | Transformations entre discours politique et représentations médiatiques : analyse comparative du terme *populis** dans les médias français.**

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The term *populism* is constantly used in political and media discourse. However, the meaning of populism is still open to debate among scholars, political actors, mass media and laypeople. A substantial amount of research in several disciplines has been focused on populism as an ideology (Mudde, 2004), as a discursive strategy (Charaudeau, 2011; Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019) and as a “communication phenomenon” (de Vreese et al., 2018). These studies have contributed to the ongoing debate about the role and place of people in a democracy. The way the word and the notion of *populism* are defined, used and circulated in political and media discourse in European democracies remains understudied. In addition, research looking into the relationship between media and populism in the French context is limited (Hubé & Truan, 2016). Addressing these gaps, we study the construction of the notion of *populism* in two forums—parliamentary arena and mass media—and from a twofold perspective: linguistics and communication studies. The aim of our study is to explore the uses of the term *populis** (i.e. *populisme* and its derivatives) in a series of political speeches pronounced by politicians in the French Parliament in 2019 and its representation in French media outlets (i.e. *Franceinfo*, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien*, *20 Minutes*). The two datasets analysed in this study consist of discourses containing at least one token of *populis** in (1) parliamentary debates held in 2019 and (2) articles from digital media sources. For analytical purposes, we distinguish between public-owned media, “established media” (Wiesslits & Ashuri, 2011), “serious-popular” media (Sparks, 2000) and free daily media. The choice of the media is due to the comparative perspective of our project. The analysis will first offer a common description and contextualisation of the selected speeches and mass media discourses. From the linguistics perspective, we will address the pragmatic meanings and functions of *populis** by observing the discursive context and the co-occurrences with other terms. Through its communicative angle, we will explore how discourses are transferred and re-elaborated when switching from one arena to another (e.g. from a public speech to a digital press report) and the structures, mechanisms and actors implied in this process. By adopting a communicative-linguistics approach, our study will provide a better understanding of the role that media play in the circulation of discourses and in the shaping of public debate on the categorisation as “populist” in France.

Keywords: populism – discourse – media – parliamentary debates – transformation

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