



"Who calls whom a populist? A pragmatic analysis of the uses of populism(s) and populist(s) in French and Spanish parliamentary debates"

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ABSTRACT

In this comparative study, we analyse quantitatively and qualitatively the occurrences of the term *populis** in two datasets containing parliamentary debates that took place in 2019 in the French National Assembly and the Spanish Congress of Deputies. The study examines populism as a keyword in discourse (Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Williams, 1985) and aims to determine the meanings and the functions of this widely used polysemic term claimed to be the "main political buzzword of the 21st century" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1). The token *populis** is used as a search word that allows for a comparative analysis of all linguistic realisations of populism and refers to the following terms: *populisme(s)/populiste(s)* in French and *populismo(s)/populistas(s)* in Spanish. First, we examine the discursive contexts in which *populis** occurs in order to determine the frequency of occurrence and the collocates of *populis** in each dataset. Second, we focus on a sample of concordance lines and examine who labels whom as populist and what are the pragmatic functions of this label. We show that in both datasets, the term has a variety of uses. Furthermore, this study underlines some differences regarding the uses of *populis** in the French and Spanish datasets (e.g., the choice of the linguistic form of *populis**). In both datasets, the term is mainly employed with a negative value, and, thus, has a delegitimising function. Moreover, this study shows that the term is used to target political opponents, but not necessarily to label political actors that are classified as popu...

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Abstract

In this comparative study, we analyse quantitatively and qualitatively the occurrences of the term *populis** in two datasets containing parliamentary debates that took place in 2019 in the French National Assembly and the Spanish Congress of Deputies. The study examines *populism* as a keyword in discourse (Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Williams, 1985) and aims to determine the meanings and the functions of this widely used polysemic term claimed to be the “main political buzzword of the 21st century” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1). The token *populis** is used as a search word that allows for a comparative analysis of all linguistic realisations of populism and refers to the following terms: *populisme(s)/populiste(s)* in French and *populismo(s)/populistas(s)* in Spanish. First, we examine the discursive contexts in which *populis** occurs in order to determine the frequency of occurrence and the collocates of *populis** in each dataset. Second, we focus on a sample of concordance lines and examine (i) who labels whom as populist and (ii) what are the pragmatic functions of this label. We show that in both datasets, the term has a variety of uses. Furthermore, this study underlines some differences regarding the uses of *populis** in the French and Spanish datasets (e.g., the choice of the linguistic form of *populis**). In both datasets, the term is mainly employed with a negative value, and, thus, has a delegitimising function. Moreover, this study shows that the term is used to target political opponents, but not necessarily to label political actors that are classified as populist in academic literature.