"The discursive construction of populism in the francophone Belgian media"

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the construction of the concept of populism in the francophone Belgian media outlets in 2019, a year when the European, federal, and regional elections took place in Belgium. Using a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach, we analyse the uses and the meanings of the term populis* (i.e. populisme and its derivatives) in order to determine what actors and phenomena are labelled as populist and what are the evaluations of such a qualification. To date, only a few studies have explored the uses and the meanings of populis* in media discourse (Hamo et al., 2019; Demata et al., 2020; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020). It is relevant to investigate further the "non-scholarly use of the term" (Demata et al., 2020, p. 9) in order to understand the way in which the concept of populism is used in actual discursive practices and the consequences this might have (Brown & Mondon, 2020). In our study, data sources include articles, containing at least one token of populis*, collected from digital media sources (Le Soir, La DH, Metro, RTBF). The patterns of usage of populis* in our corpus are analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively employing corpus linguistics tools and methodology combined with discourse analysis analytical steps (Partington et al., 2013). We first analyse the frequency of occurrence of the term in order to observe its evolution of the use within the period of study and to identify the peaks of occurrence. In a second step, we analyse collocates and concordances of populis* as well as its semantic prosody (Sinclair, 1991). We report ou...

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In this paper, we examine the construction of the concept of populism in the francophone Belgian media outlets in 2019, a year when the European, federal, and regional elections took place in Belgium. Using a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach, we analyse the uses and the meanings of the term *populis** (i.e. *populisme* and its derivatives) in order to determine what actors and phenomena are labelled as populist and what are the evaluations of such a qualification. To date, only a few studies have explored the uses and the meanings of *populis** in media discourse (Hamo et al., 2019; Demata et al., 2020; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020). It is relevant to investigate further the "non-scholarly use of the term" (Demata et al., 2020, p. 9) in order to understand the way in which the concept of populism is used in actual discursive practices and the consequences this might have (Brown & Mondon, 2020). In our study, data sources include articles, containing at least one token of *populis**, collected from digital media sources (*Le Soir*, *La DH*, *Metro*, *RTBF*). The patterns of usage of *populis** in our corpus are analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively employing corpus linguistics tools and methodology combined with discourse analysis analytical steps (Partington et al., 2013). We first analyse the frequency of occurrence of the term in order to observe its evolution of the use within the period of study and to identify the peaks of occurrence. In a second step, we analyse collocates and concordances of *populis** as well as its semantic prosody (Sinclair, 1991). We report our key findings, including the recurrence of certain collocates that entail negative evaluation of populism.

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