

PERFORMING POPULIST STYLE IN CONTEXT

Abstract: Adopting the definition of populism as a political style and performance, this article deals with the contextualized performance of populist rhetoric. Drawing on data from a videoblog on current affairs produced by the head of the most prominent Czech populist party, the analysis documents some of the typical features of populist discourse, e.g. the discursive construction of a narrative of threat, the intentional production of scandal talk, and the extreme othering of outgroups, particularly elite social actors (the media, the mainstream media, the EU) that are deemed not to represent the real interests of the people. The paper argues that public performances of populist politicians skilfully exploit various forms of context and intertextuality in order to foster their anti-establishment agenda.

Key words: populism; style; discourse; social media; scandal talk

1. Introduction

Although political communication has been the focus of scholars for a long time, it is only in recent years that a more systematic attention is being paid to the phenomenon of 'populism', particularly in connection with the rise of various populist movements across Europe. However, the concept of populism is rather elusive and escapes an easy definition. While populism can be both right-wing (Wodak et al., 2013) and left-wing (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014), there appears to be some agreement that it is not an independent political ideology but, rather, a largely discursive phenomenon that emphasizes the undesirable separation of 'the elites' from 'the common people' (Moffitt, 2016; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018) and creates feelings of fear and threat (Wodak, 2015).

Adopting Benjamin Moffitt's (2016) definition of populism as a political style and performance, this article seeks to trace some of the linguistic repertoires available to politicians and the ways in which they skilfully draw on shared cultural context. Thus, populism is a phenomenon that can be traced on the macro-level as the rhetorical deployment of particular themes, as well as on the micro-level of linguistic analysis – it is not so much a political programme as a form of political communication (cf. Ekström et al., 2019). Populist media performances tend to be heavily contextualized speech events because they need to relate to cultural stereotypes that are shared, easily understood and taken for granted by the audience.

Using data from Czech politics, the article documents some of the characteristic features of populist discourse, such as the vilification of elites, the populists' self-presentation as victims of multiple 'others', and the enhancement of the narrative

of threat and crisis. The analysis shows how a populist politician comments on a controversial news story in order to reframe the issue in terms of his populist agenda. The analysis indicates that a populist politician uses the occasion not only to identify the assumed enemies of the common people (i.e. elite politicians and the media) but also to market his political programme and align himself with the people.

2. Populism and discourse

Populism can be defined in a broad way as a political style that consists of “the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life” (Moffitt, 2016: 38). The definition stresses the performative aspect of populism, i.e. it is a way of ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’, thus reflecting a social constructivist approach to discourse (Fairclough, 1989).

In Moffitt’s view, populism has several defining aspects: (a) the appeal to the people vs. the elite (cf. also Mudde, 2007); (b) the indication of bad manners of populist leaders (i.e. their rejection of the conventions of political or polite discourse and the intentional incitement of scandal) (cf. Ekström and Johansson, 2019); and (c) the advancement of the narrative of crisis, breakdown and threat (see also Wodak, 2015). In regard to populist style, Ekström and Morton (2017: 293) mention several specific linguistic features of populist language. These include: (a) frank and crude speech; (b) colloquial expressions; (c) emotional appeal; and (d) the demonization of the political elite. Acknowledging that populist language is a difficult analytical context, however, they view its characteristics essentially in opposition to what they call “conventional language of politics in public settings”. The reason populists intentionally transgress various boundaries is because “[t]o violate the norms and conventions in the language of politics is a way to perform being anti-establishment” (Ekström and Morton, 2017: 293).

Populist language, thus, has an underlying oppositional nature. In this connection, it is worth noting that this oppositionality concerns not only the content (i.e. the political issues addressed and the solutions proposed by populists) but also the form in its micro-structural (features of language and style) and macro-structural elements (the conventions of political debate). In this connection, Moffitt (2016: 44) characterizes populist style as showing “bad manners”.

Reviewing the existing approaches to populism, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) note that the dominant approach is a discourse analytical one, which they call “ideational”. In their view, populism is a “thin-centered ideology” that “almost always appears attached to other ideological elements” (2018: 1669), such as nativism, particularly in right-wing populism (cf. also Wodak et al., 2013). This approach to populism underlies much of the research into the discursive characteristics of populism, i.e. those seeing populism as a form of discourse, language, style, and

performance, which can be aptly summed within the notion of “rhetorical repertoires” (Ekström et al., 2019). While the methodologies of the scholars may be different, a cross-national comparative approach to political populism is needed. As observed by Ekström and Morton (2017: 290), while there are similarities across Europe, there are also significant differences in how populist politicians perform populism in their different countries.

The present study seeks to contribute to the incipient comparative approach to populist discourse from the perspective of linguistically-oriented discourse analysis (see Ekström and Firmstone, 2017; Zienkowski and Breeze, 2019; and some of the papers in Assimakopoulos et al., 2017; Chovanec and Molek-Kopytowska, 2017; Karner and Kopytowska, 2017) with a more general critical discourse orientation that seeks to offer a broader contextual explanation for the rhetorical structure of texts (cf. Richardson, 2006; Hart, 2010; Wodak and Meyer, 2001). It explores the performance of populist discourse in a central European context, using data from a country where populism does not currently have a very strong political role, by focusing on a monologue produced for and mediatized via social media.

3. Data

The material analysed in this paper is part of a broader research project into the discursive processes of othering in the public media (cf. Chovanec, 2019, 2020). The project seeks to identify some of the discursive strategies that can be used to construct the ‘other’ (Molek-Kozakowska and Chovanec, 2017), which is also one of the central rhetorical strategies in populist discourse, where the antagonistic opposition between common people and the elites is predicated (Mudde, 2007; Moffitt, 2016).

The present article provides a case study of the populist rhetorical style of a Czech politician, Tomio Okamura, who entered politics about 10 years ago following a successful career as a businessman. In 2012, he was elected for the Senate as an independent candidate, and he ran for the office of the President in 2013. The same year he founded the political movement “Dawn of Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura” (Úsvit přímé demokracie Tomio Okamury), but after two years he was expelled due to long-term disagreements, only to establish a new political movement “Freedom and Direct Democracy” (Svoboda a přímá demokracie, SPD). Under the platform of this movement, which emphasizes patriotism, Euroscepticism and direct democracy, he was elected into the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament and appointed to the position of a vice-president of the chamber in 2017. The SPD movement seeks cooperation with other European populist movements, such as Marie Le Pen’s Front National in France.

4. Analysis

This section illustrates the contextualized performance of populist rhetoric in the speech of one of the main representatives of Czech populism, Tomio Okamura, in a short videoblog originally posted on his Facebook and then uploaded on the page of his political party and its YouTube channel. The channel contains numerous videos that are uploaded almost every day. In these short videoblogs, Okamura provides personal commentaries on a broad range of topics, reacts to current news, presents his encounters with voters, and shares speeches made in the parliament.

The recording analysed here is a short 2-minute video in which Okamura reacts to one of the main news events of the day.¹ The news item referred to in the video concerns a report on the actions of the German supermarket chain Lidl in connection with one of its periodical weekly campaigns featuring products from various countries, which came to be widely interpreted as controversial. In autumn 2017, Lidl ran its ‘Greek cuisine’ week and, as usual, used the well-known images of blue-domed Orthodox churches on the Greek island of Santorini. However, as opposed to the leaflets from the earlier ‘Greek week’ campaigns, there were no crosses shown on the rooftops of the iconic churches, evidently having been edited out from the current leaflets and product packages.

There are several aspects of the contextualized performance of populism in the video recording that are worthy of more focused attention. These include, among other, the semiotics of the shots that make up the video (Section 4.1), and the topic and style of the politician’s statements (Section 4.2), whereby he discursively constructs a multiply polarized and dichotomized view of the world and evokes the threat allegedly posed by ‘the other’ – elitist pro-migration politicians and the media.

4.1 Visual semiotics

The video consists of only two shots, both of which intertextually draw on other communicative contexts – news reporting (headlines) in the first case and social media communication in the second case. The first, opening shot shows a five-second still image of a generic Lidl supermarket and it bears the inscription ‘*Lidl deletes/has deleted Christian crosses*’.² The caption is written in two colours, thereby highlighting that it is made up of two distinct elements: the short sentence ‘*Lidl deletes/has deleted*’ in blue and the noun phrase ‘*Christian crosses*’ in reddish brown (see Figure 1). Arguably, the visual division of the caption into two units that are meaningful in themselves contributes towards increasing the impact of the caption; such typographic manipulation is commonly found, for instance, in tabloid headlines (Conboy, 2006: 42). Here, it appears to enhance the sensationalism of the central

¹ The video was uploaded to YouTube on 7 September 2017. It is available online at <https://youtu.be/ScuqnWWCSas>.

² While the Czech original uses the simple past tense (*Lidl vymazal křesťanské kříže*), a fitting translation equivalent into English could also be *Lidl deletes Christian crosses*, i.e. using the simple present tense conventionally found in headlines and other kinds of block language.

proposition in the first phrase (*Lidl has cancelled*) and emphasize the negatively affected entity (*Christian crosses*) in the second phrase.



Figure 1. The opening shot of the videoblog

Shortly after the opening still image, the videoblog switches to the second shot, which remains without any change for the rest of the recording. The shot shows the politician talking directly to the camera, sitting against a background panel with the name and logo of his political party (SPD), with the latter being a stylized image of the Czech national flag (see Figure 2). The fact that the SPD movement has adopted the national iconography is hardly surprising in view of its political programme, which alleges to seek the protection of Czech national interests, and in view of the general evocation of nativism in right-wing populism (Wodak et al., 1999; Krzyżanowski, 2013; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).



Figure 2. The physical set-up of Tomio Okamura's on-camera monologue

The physical context of the set-up is significant on account of the way it skilfully merges the private and the public domains. Okamura is shown in a chequered shirt, i.e. patently non-political attire, while producing a selfie video recording of himself. In this way, he contextually draws on the self-presentation techniques of YouTubers and other social media influencers, who tend to produce similar monologue speech events broadcasted online to their followers. At the same time, the topic of Okamura's talk and the background of his video simultaneously indicate that he is acting in his professional (public) role as a politician. It is, of course, a common thing for politicians to use social media to promote themselves and their political ideas and programmes, sometimes in rather idiosyncratic ways (cf. the way Trump uses Twitter, as discussed by Sclafani, 2017; Ott and Dickinson, 2019; Lockhart, 2019). However, by recording himself in an ordinary shirt, Okamura may be seeking – at least semiotically – to

bridge the divide between politicians and ordinary people, indicating that he is one of the ‘common people’. In other videoblogs, his clothing is likewise consistently informal, contrasting with his formal dress when he appears in the official function of one of the vice-presidents of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech parliament. Thus, the choice of his clothing can be read as an act of self-positioning whereby this populist politician aligns himself with his supporters.

4.2 Populist rhetoric

Regarding the main, i.e. verbal, component of the video recording, Okamura’s speech contains many of the features that have been identified as typical of populist rhetoric. Thus, he provides a biased representation of the news event, draws on emotional language, constructs the fear of threat, and uses a highly dichotomizing discourse to predicate the existence of multiple mutually opposing groups. During his monologue, he positions himself in opposition to the mainstream elites, and aligns himself with the common people, who are addressed through his videoblog.

The opening of the videoblog is relatively brief, with Okamura greeting and welcoming his absent online audiences as follows:³

(1) Dear friends, dear ladies and gentlemen, welcome to my profile.

[*Milí přátelé, vážené dámy a pánové, vítám Vás na mém profilu.*]

Okamura starts with the verbalization of his greeting already during the five-second opening shot, which means that the title of the video (i.e. the headline of the news story; see Figure 1), is shown simultaneously with the greeting. There are two noteworthy aspects to the politician’s greeting. First, he combines two forms of address, starting with ‘*Dear friends*’ and then continues with the more formal and conventional ‘*dear ladies and gentlemen*’. The first form of address establishes a more personal communicative situation because it explicitly labels the audience as ‘*friends*’, i.e. people who are positively aligned to Okamura. This is enhanced through the choice of the Czech adjective ‘*milí*’ (nom. pl.), which indicates a positive, cordial stance.⁴ In this way, the personal address simulates a relationship of quasi-friendship and pseudo-intimacy. Such synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 1989) contributes to the establishment a sense of equality and reciprocity within the communicative situation.

The second part of the opening statement is likewise significant: the politician continues the greeting by expressing a welcome and explicitly referencing the communicative context as being his own (‘*welcome to my profile*’). By doing this, he creates his own discursive space and indicates that the blog is different from other public media events. Thus, the viewers are aware from the very beginning that this is

³ The analysis in this subsection proceeds by describing and interpreting Okamura’s videoblog in a linear manner, using a simplified transcription system that represents pauses (marked with (.)) and emphatic speech (marked with capital letters). Translation into English by the author.

⁴ Cf. how the second address form uses the more neutral and official adjective ‘*vážení*’ (nom. sg.), which could have been chosen to modify the first address form as well.

not a mainstream media appearance (Okamura eventually becomes explicitly critical of the mainstream media towards the end of his talk). Thus, although this is an instance of public communication with a clear political goal, he provides something of a pre-emptive hedge as to its content by underlining that it is a discursive context belonging to him personally. This situation has implications for the anticipated content of the talk, since populists tend to present themselves as the apostles of free speech. The personal videoblog gives the chance to present one's opinions, without being hindered by the constraints of conventions or political correctness.

In the next part of the videoblog, Okamura moves directly to the gist of the current news, which has already been summed up in the opening headline to the video:

(2)The Lidl chain, in its leaflet and products for the Greek week (.) Deleted from the photographs the crosses of Greek churches.

[*Řetězec Lidl na letáčích a výrobcích k řeckému týdnu (.) z fotografií VYmazal kříže řeckých kostelů.*]

Here, the politician provides a factual account of the news story as it was publicised in other news media outlets. This is an uncontested (and incontestable) part of his talk.⁵ However, he immediately continues by pointing out an apparent inconsistency in the supermarket chain's marketing strategies by producing another utterance that already contains some imprecision:

(3) By contrast, during its ARAB week event, it did NOT delete ANYthing from a mosque.

[*A naopak u akce ARABský týden NIC z mešity nesmazal.*]

In this sentence, Okamura refers to a leaflet that was circulated shortly before the 'Greek week'. However, the special event was called '1001 delicacies of the Orient' and the products displayed the logo '1001 Delights'. The initial page of the leaflet (but none of the products) contained the image of a mosque with a tiny crescent as part of the logo. By pointing out the discrepancy in the use of religious symbols, the politician is implying the existence of double standards and, thus, an underlying injustice against the ingroup. Within the populist rhetoric, this eventually enables

⁵ Needless to say, this act drew criticism from various mainstream and conservative politicians as well. For instance, the Czech cardinal Dominik Duka wrote a letter to the Greek ambassador expressing solidarity with Greece, likening the photoshopping to "an uncultured and barbaric act" (www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/kardinal-duka-chybi-mu-krize-na-reckych-chramech-dopis-velvyslanci.A170903_130144_domaci_jkk, published on 3 September 2017). As a result of criticism from several countries (as well as calls for a boycott of the company), the Lidl chain eventually apologized for deleting the crosses, claiming that it had sought to preserve religious neutrality. According to a statement by the chain's representative, it was going to reinstitute the images of crosses on its own Greek-style products. (For more information, see, for instance, www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article168363577/Lidl-will-wieder-Kirchenkreuze-auf-Verpackungen-zeigen.html, published on 6 September 2017, or www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article168301359/Lidl-entfernt-Kreuze-von-Verpackungen.html, published on 4 September 2017). The current situation (February 2020) is that the packaging does not contain any Christian iconography at all, after the domed churches were replaced with generic white Mediterranean buildings set against the blue sky/sea.

him to identify various social actors who act as ‘traitors’ or ‘conspirators’ and who subvert the traditions and cultures of the autochthonous (national) population. That is the argument suggested in the immediately following segment of the videoblog:

(4) The removal of Christian symbols on adverts and packaging of the German chain Lidl is something I find ABSOLUTELY UNacceptable (.) But, paradoxically, I think that Lidl management is doing (.) in inverted commas (.) GOOD WORk (.) because it is showing to all of us what Europe should look like (.) according to the ideas of Merkel, Sobotka, Jourová, Pelikán, Schwanzenberg, Bělobrádek, Juncker and Macron: namely Europe of Muslims where Europeans are discriminated against.

[*Odstraňování křesťanských symbolů na reklamách a obalech německého řetězce Lidl (.) považuji za NAPROSTO NEpřijatelné. Paradoxně si ale myslím, že vedení firmy Lidl dělá (.) v uvozovkách (.) DOBROU PRÁci, (.) jelikož nám všem ukazuje, jak by měla vypadat Evropa (.) podle představ Merklové, Sobotky, Jourové, Pelikána, Schwanzenberga, Bělobrádka, Junckera nebo Macrona (.) tedy Evropa muslimská, ve které jsou křesťané diskriminováni.*]

In this segment, the politician firstly provides an emotive personal reaction to the news item, which has already been framed in terms of the dichotomous contrast between cultures and the implication of the existence of double standards. Here, Okamura uses a booster and an emphatic pronunciation in order to underline the unacceptability of the implied double standards (‘ABSOLUTELY UNacceptable’). In this manner, he manages to convey his negative stance and indignation.

What follows is an elaboration of the issue, where he seizes the opportunity to reframe the topic by expanding from the news at hand to vilifying a number of national and EU politicians. Interestingly enough, he praises the management of the supermarket chain (‘*is doing [...] GOOD WORk*’), although he explicitly indicates the non-bona fide mode by specifying that such an utterance is being produced ‘in inverted commas’, i.e. it is intended ironically. The ironic reversal appears to be a frequent rhetorical device used not only by populist politicians but also more generally, e.g. by readers in online debates, to express a dissenting opinion on socially sensitive issues such as immigration (cf. Chovanec, 2018).

The shift to ironic discourse is significant here because it marks the point where the politician starts departing from facts and the actual reality and moves into the sphere of constructing hypothetical situations. This is apparent in his comment interpreting Lidl’s marketing blunder as what Okamura conceptualizes to be the future of Europe (‘*what Europe should look like*’). Such a conceptualization attests to his rhetorical construction of the future as negative, i.e. as a threat to the ingroup’s status quo. He uses this situation as a pretext for listing the names of several mainstream national and international politicians, who have been understood – from the populist point of view – to be largely pro-immigrant.⁶ The summing up of the future of Europe,

⁶ Okamura mispronounces the German name of the Czech politician Karel Schwarzenberg as ‘*Schwanzenberg*’. This tends to be a common pronunciation mistake, particularly among working class people. It is, however, questionable whether Okamura uses the pronunciation intentionally to align with the ‘common people’ (or mock his political opponent) or purely by accident.

as outlined by Okamura's expression of the assumed beliefs of the mainstream and pro-EU politicians, takes up the polarized view of the situation as a conflict between different religious cultures (*'Europe of Muslims where Europeans are discriminated against'*). In this discourse, members of the ingroup – made up of Europeans of non-immigrant background – are constructed as victims of discrimination.

Immediately afterwards, the first fictionalized account is followed up with a series of increasingly absurd propositions by means of which the politician continues with what has, by now, become a rant.

(5) I just can't think of what will be next, what will they prepare for us (.) these multiculturalists and supporters of the Brussels dictate. Ban on entry for Jews? And executions of infidels during the Muslim week?

[*Jen netuším, co bude dál, co dalšího nám připraví (.) tyto multikulturalisté a podpůrci diktátu Bruselu. Zákaz vstupu Židům? A popravy nevěřících o muslimském týdnu?*]

In the segment, Okamura not only takes a jibe at his opponents by labelling them in a negative way (*'these multiculturalists and supports of the Brussels dictate'*) but he also suggests there is an escalating progression of actions that may be taken against the ingroup, speculating about the rise of (officially sanctioned) anti-Semitism and even physical violence. Absurd as that is, the fictional scenarios that he deploys are part of the common rhetorical strategy whereby populists intentionally produce scandal talk (Ekström and Johansson, 2019), often in order to attract further media attention (Wodak, 2015; Patrona, 2019; Chovanec, 2020). This is the point where the politician is performing 'bad manners' by engaging in an unchecked hypotheticization of the topos of danger.

Following the absurd hypothetical speculation about the future, the politician then turns his attention to the motives of the company, interpreting Lidl's action as the result of its unscrupulous economic motivation. The argument has some moral undertones because it evokes the concept of greed (itself one of the seven deadly sins within Western Christian culture). Here, the moralizing discourse is grafted onto the issue of immigration from non-European cultural contexts. The argument is further developed by suggesting that Lidl's action is, in fact, an act of historical revisionism (*'the wilful twisting of history'*):

(6) In the case of Lidl, this is a manifestation of an unprecedented attempt by the chain owner in the sense (.) of maximizing profits with Muslim populations (.) across European states and in this sense also the wilful twisting of history. The NEW European totality has, REALLY, AGAIn ASSUMed a bit (.) more hateful shape.

[*V případě řetězce Lidl se jedná o projev bezprecedentního pokusu majitele řetězce ve smyslu (.) maximalizace zisků uvedeného zboží u muslimského obyvatelstva (.) napříč evropskými státy. A v tomto ohledu i záměrné překrucování dějin. NOVá evropská totalita SKUTEčně NAbrala ZASE o něco (.) nenávislnější podobu.*]

At the end of the segment, what was originally a marketing blunder by a private company turns out to be reframed as a failure of the EU: the politician not only uses the negative emotive label *'new European totality'* but also adds a further negative

opinion on its perceived gradual development through the ensuing predication ('has [...] assumed a bit more hateful shape'). In this populist discourse, there appears to be little logic in how some of the conclusions have been arrived at, such as reference to historical revisionism and the association of the EU with an increase in hatred. Arguably, however, that is beyond the point: as this is the politician's personal videoblog, he need not be accountable for his words and for justifying the logical progression of his talk. Moreover, the format of the monologue offers him the chance to say just about anything that comes to his mind, without the correcting presence of an interviewer who might question some of the more problematic opinions and conclusions.

At this point, the content of the speech changes. Continuing without making any noticeable pause or uttering any transition marker, the politician shifts towards discussing the programme of his political movement. This segment indicates that the news item commented on by the politician serves as a pretext for not only providing a personal opinionated commentary but also reiterating the key points of his populist political movement:

(7) Our movement Freedom and Direct Democracy SPD voices a STRONG disagreement with similar practices. SPD will assert strong action against islamization of public life and society. We in SPD say clearly: we propose a referendum on the exit of the Czech Republic from the European Union, ZERO tolerance to illegal immig- migration and the ban on Islam in the Czech Republic.

[Naše hnutí Svoboda a přímá demokracie SPD vyslovuje DŮRAZný nesouhlas s podobnými praktikami. SPD bude prosazovat důrazný postup proti islamizaci veřejného života a společnosti. My v SPD říkáme jasně: prosazujeme referendum o vystoupení České republiky z Evropské unie, NULOvou toleranci nezákonné imig- migrace, a zákaz islámu v České republice.]

After presenting the political agenda, the videoblog proceeds to its final part, where the politician switches the topic once more. This time he directly addresses the audience by means of a question that invites the viewers to reflect on the issue and contribute by means of uploading comments. This form of two-way communication is enabled by the technical affordances of the medium where the video is uploaded. This mode of interaction is not only encouraged by the politician but also taken up by him since he frequently does respond to some of the comments, thereby positioning himself as an attentive listener who genuinely wishes to connect with the people:

(8) What do you think about this topic? Write me in the comments and if you agree with me, please share with all your friends so that they learn information that is not given in Czech manipulated and lying media. And I thank you for visiting my profile and wish you all the best in all your endeavours. Have a great time and let's keep together.

[Co si o tomto tématu myslíte vy? Napište mi do komentářů a jestli se mnou souhlasíte, prosím sdílejte všem vašim přátelům, aby se dozvěděli informace, které nezaznívají v českých zmanipulovaných a prolhaných médiích. A já vám děkuji, že jste navštívili můj profil a přeji vám, ať se vám ve všem krásně daří. Mějte se hezky a držme spolu.]

Evidently, the social media channel has some major advantages over other kinds of institutionalized broadcasts. Not only is the politician fully in charge of the content and free from any potential accountability-seeking questions, but he also has the chance to solicit further contact and action from his supporters. This enables him to use synthetic personalization as well as to align and bond with his audience (*'let's keep together'*), while hinting at a sense of conspiracy by disassociating oneself from the elites (Moffitt 2016) – in this case the *'manipulated and lying media'*.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the videoblog with the politician's commentary on a current news story has shown several ways of how that public appearance constitutes a contextualized performance of a specific style of political discourse.

First of all, the politician chooses to present the controversial news item by summing up the gist of the story for his audience. His videoblog thus partly functions by drawing on the conventions of the genre of news reporting, as attested by the opening headline summary and the initial summarizing account of the news, which provides the basic facts of the case. What follows is a commentary given by an opinion leader, which is a standard role of politicians who are asked to react and comment on current affairs for the media. However, thanks to the affordances of the media platform and the fact that the commentary is a strictly monologue speech event, the politician is fully in charge of the content, the framing of the comment and the anti-other positioning adopted in his reaction.

As a result, the politician can use the videoblog as a platform for the "performance of anti-establishment stances and identities" (Ekström et al., 2019: 2) and for pushing the political programme of his own party. Since populism is a people-centred discourse, alignment with the audience is needed. This is achieved on the micro-level through address forms and audience-oriented speech acts calling for the audience's involvement, and by the rhetorical construction of the elites and the media as discredited and opposed to the actual needs and wants of the common people. Last but not least, the performance of the populist style appears to be connected with a skilful rhetorical construction of threat and fear, which may be achieved through producing hypothetical scenarios. However absurd such fictionalizations may be, they enhance the narrative of threat and crisis and attest to the populist performance of bad manners and norm-transgressive behaviour.

Acknowledgement

This paper was supported with a research grant of the Czech Grant Agency "Discursive construction of otherness in medial and post-medial spaces" (Diskurzivní konstrukce jinakosti v mediálním a post-mediálním prostoru; GA16-05484S).

Sources

Lidl odstranil křestanské kříže [Lidl has removed Christian crosses], 7 September 2017.
<https://youtu.be/ScuqnWWCSas>

References

- Assimakopoulos, S., Baider, F. H., and Millar, S. (eds.) (2017). *Online Hate Speech in the European Union. A Discourse-Analytic Perspective*. Cham: Springer Open.
- Chovanec, J. (2018). Irony as counter positioning: Reader comments on the EU migrant crisis. In: Jobert, M., and Sorlin, S. (eds.) *The Pragmatics of Irony and Banter*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 165–194. doi:10.1075/lal.30.09cho.
- Chovanec, J. (2019). Critical pragmatic insights into (mis)translation in the news. In: Tipton, R., and Desilla, L. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Pragmatics*. Abingdon: Routledge, 133–152.
- Chovanec, J. (2020). ‘Those are not my words’: Evasion and metalingual accountability in political scandal talk. *Journal of Pragmatics* 158, 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.01.003>
- Chovanec, J., and Molek-Kozakowska, K. (eds.) (2017). *Representing the Other in European Media Discourses*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Conboy, M. (2006). *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community through Language*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ekström, M. and Firmstone, J. (eds.) (2017). *The Mediated Politics of Europe: A Comparative Study of Discourse*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan,
- Ekström, M., and Johansson, B. (2019). Talk scandals: The power of mediated talk. In: Tumber, H., and Waisbord, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal*. Routledge.
- Ekström, M., and Morton, A. (2017). The performance of right-wing populism: Populist discourse, embodied styles and forms of news reporting. In: Ekström, M. and Firmstone, J. (eds.) *The Mediated Politics of Europe: A Comparative Study of Discourse*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 289–316.
- Ekström, M., Patrona M., and Thornborrow, J. (2019). Right-wing populism and the dynamics of style: a discourse-analytic perspective on mediated political performances. *Palgrave Communications* 4(83), 1–11. | DOI: 10.1057/s41599-018-0132-6
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Hart, C. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karner, C., and Kopytowska, M. (eds.) (2017). *National Identity and Europe in Times of Crisis: Doing and Undoing Europe*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- Krzyżanowski, M. (2013). From anti-immigration and nationalist revisionism to islamophobia: Continuities and shifts in recent discourses and patterns of political communication of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). In: Wodak, R., KhosraviNik, M., and Mral, B. (eds.) *Right-wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury, 135–148.

- Lockhart, M. (ed.) (2019). *President Donald Trump and His Political Discourse: Ramifications of Rhetoric via Twitter*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Moffitt, B. (2016). *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Molek-Kozakowska, K., and Chovanec, J. (2017). Media representations of the “other” Europeans: Common themes and points of divergence. In: Chovanec, J., and Molek-Kozakowska, K. (eds.) *Representing the Other in European Media Discourses*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1–22.
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, C., and Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2018). Studying populism in comparative perspective: Reflections on the contemporary and future research agenda. *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13), 1667–1693.
- Ott, B. L., and Dickinson, G. (2019). *The Twitter Presidency: Donald J. Trump and the Politics of White Rage*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge Focus.
- Patrona, M. (2019). The talk scandal as mediatized event and communicative resource in far-right populist talk. *Discourse, Context & Media* 29, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.11.004>
- Richardson, J.E. (2006). *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sclafani, J. (2017). *Talking Donald Trump: A Sociolinguistic Study of Style, Metadiscourse and Political Identity*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge Focus.
- Stavrakakis Y., and Katsambekis, G. (2014). Left-wing populism in the European periphery: The case of SYRIZA. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19(2), 119–142.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1993). *Elite Discourse and Racism*. Sage.
- Wodak, R. (2015). *The Politics of Fear*. London: Sage.
- Wodak, R., and Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. (1999). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wodak, R., KhosraviNik, M., and Mral, B. (eds.) (2013). *Right-wing Populism in Europe*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Zienkowski, J., and Breeze, R. (eds.) (2019). *Imagining the Peoples of Europe: Political Discourses across the Political Spectrum*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Jan Hovanec

POLITIČKI POPULISTIČKI NASTUP U KONTEKSTU

Rezime

Sledeći definiciju populizma kao političkog stila i političkog nastupa, ovaj rad se bavi kontekstualizovanim ispoljavanjima populističke retorike. Na osnovu materijala iz

videobloga o tekućim događajima, koji snima vođa najistaknutije češke populističke partije, rad analizira neke od tipičnih karakteristika populističkog diskursa, kao što su npr. diskursivna konstrukcija narativa pretnje, namerne skandalozne izjave i ekstremno negativan stav prema onima koji pripadaju drugim grupama, posebno elitnim društvenim kategorijama (mediji, kvalitetni dominantni mediji, EU), za koje se smatra da ne predstavljaju interese naroda. U radu se zastupa teza da javni nastupi populističkih političara vešto eksploatišu različite forme konteksta i intertekstualnosti da bi promovisali svoju agendu.

chovanec@phil.muni.cz