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Meanings and functions of ‘populism’ and ‘populist’ in media and political discourses in Belgium, France, and Spain: A corpus-based discourse analysis of sociopolitical keywords

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To my parents,
who gifted me my first multilingual dictionary
and the lifelong curiosity that followed

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the use of socially and politically significant words in media and political discourse. Specifically, it examines the meanings and functions of the terms *populism* and *populist* in two complementary case studies using a combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis methods. The first case study zooms out and analyses the collocational profiles of these terms in the Belgian, French, and Spanish mass media discourses in 2019, an electoral year in all three countries. The second case study zooms in on one language and compares the pragmatic functions of these terms in Spanish-language tweets posted by politicians and lay users of Twitter. The findings suggest that *populism* and *populist* are powerful sociopolitical keywords in contemporary public discourse: negatively coloured yet meaningful, seemingly vague yet overloaded with meanings, apparently descriptive yet centrally involved in marking the boundaries of political legitimacy.

Résumé

Cette thèse analyse l'usage de mots socialement et politiquement significatifs dans le discours médiatique et politique. Plus précisément, elle examine les significations et les fonctions des termes *populisme* et *populiste* dans deux études de cas complémentaires, en combinant des méthodes de la linguistique de corpus et de l'analyse du discours. La première étude de cas prend du recul et analyse les profils collocationnels de ces termes dans les discours médiatiques belge, français et espagnol en 2019, une année électorale dans les trois pays. La seconde étude de cas se concentre sur une seule langue et compare les fonctions pragmatiques de ces termes dans des tweets en espagnol publiés par des personnalités politiques et des utilisateurs ordinaires de Twitter. Les résultats suggèrent que *populisme* et *populiste* sont des mots-clés sociopolitiques puissants dans le discours public contemporain : connotés négativement mais porteurs de sens, apparemment vagues mais surchargés de significations, en apparence descriptifs mais impliqués de manière centrale dans le marquage des frontières de la légitimité politique.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift analyseert het gebruik van maatschappelijk en politiek betekenisvolle woorden in mediadiscours en politiek discours. Meer specifiek onderzoekt het de betekenissen en functies van de termen *populisme, populist* en *populistisch* in twee complementaire casestudy's, waarbij methoden uit de corpuslinguïstiek en discoursanalyse worden gecombineerd. De eerste casestudy zoomt uit en analyseert de collocatieprofielen van deze termen in het Belgische, Franse en Spaanse massamediadiscours in 2019, een verkiezingsjaar in alle drie de landen. De tweede casestudy zoomt in op één taal en vergelijkt de pragmatische functies van deze termen in Spaanstalige tweets van politieke actoren en alledaagse gebruikers van Twitter. De bevindingen suggereren dat *populisme, populist* en *populistisch* krachtige sociopolitieke sleutelwoorden zijn in het hedendaagse publieke discours: negatief gekleurd maar betekenisvol, ogenschijnlijk vaag maar overladen met betekenissen, schijnbaar beschrijvend maar centraal betrokken bij het markeren van de grenzen van politieke legitimiteit.

Resumen

Esta tesis analiza el uso de palabras social y políticamente significativas en el discurso mediático y político. En concreto, examina los significados y las funciones de los términos *populismo* y *populista* en dos estudios de caso complementarios, combinando métodos de la lingüística de corpus y del análisis del discurso. El primer estudio de caso amplía la perspectiva y analiza los perfiles colocacionales de estos términos en los discursos mediáticos en Bélgica, Francia y España en 2019, un año electoral en los tres países. El segundo estudio de caso se centra en una sola lengua y compara las funciones pragmáticas de estos términos en tuits en español publicados por actores políticos y usuarios no profesionales de Twitter. Los resultados sugieren que *populismo* y *populista* son palabras clave sociopolíticas de gran impacto en el discurso público contemporáneo: connotadas negativamente pero significativas, aparentemente vagas pero sobrecargadas de significados, y en apariencia descriptivas pero implicadas de manera central en la marcación de los límites de la legitimidad política.

Summary

This thesis analyses the meanings and functions of the terms *populism* and *populist* in mass media and social media discourses. It contributes to the growing body of research on discourses about populism (De Cleen et al., 2018, Demata et al., 2020), which shifts attention away from defining populism as a phenomenon towards examining how the word itself is used, by whom, and with what effects. Previous research has produced two dominant, and somewhat contradictory, characterisations. On the one hand, *populism* is described as a randomly used "meaningless buzzword" (Bale et al., 2011; Schwörer, 2021) that can be attached to almost any politician. On the other hand, it is described as a "stigma term" (Knobloch, 2012; Kranert, 2020) whose main purpose is to discredit political opponents. Both characterisations rest mainly on studies of English-language quality newspapers, and few studies analyse how the term behaves across languages, across types of media, or when deployed by actors other than journalists. This thesis addresses these gaps by asking what *populism* and *populist* mean, how they are evaluated, and what speakers achieve by using them, and by comparing the answers across public spheres and across types of actors.

Methodologically, this thesis adopts a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach and treats *populism* and *populist* (henceforth *populis**) as sociopolitical keywords (Kranert, 2020; Schröter, 2008), that is, words that play a key role in sociopolitical debates and stand out in discourse because of their polysemy, sociopolitical significance, evaluative load, and pragmatic potential. These aspects of the use of *populis** are examined in two complementary case studies. The first case study zooms out and compares the use of *populis** in the mass media discourse of four public spheres and three languages (Spain, France, French-speaking Belgium, and Dutch-speaking Belgium) in 2019, an electoral year in all three countries. Sixteen subcorpora were built from all articles containing *populis** published on the websites of four types of outlet per public sphere: an established newspaper, a serious-popular newspaper, a free daily newspaper, and a public broadcaster. The frequency and distribution of each word form of *populis** (abstract nouns, person-referring nouns, and adjectives) were compared across outlets, and the collocational profiles of each form were established with the logDice measure, grouped into inductively established

semantic categories, and interpreted through the reading of concordance lines. The second case study zooms in on one language and compares the pragmatic functions of *populis** in 200 tweets by Spanish political actors and 200 tweets by lay users of Spanish-speaking Twitter, all published in 2019. Each occurrence was manually annotated for grammatical form, topic, object, target, value, conceptual field, discursive action, and pragmatic function, as well as for Twitter-specific features. The rationale for this contrastive design is that sociopolitical keywords are polysemic and can be invested with different meanings and functions by different actors; analysing *populis** across linguistic, sociopolitical, and discursive contexts therefore makes it possible to nuance its portrayal as a negative catch-all term.

The findings show that *populis** is a flexible discursive device that can carry a variety of meanings and perform multiple functions, but that its use is far from random. In the mass media data, the distribution of word forms already differs across outlets: the singular abstract noun (populism) is proportionally more frequent in the established newspapers, where populism is discussed as a phenomenon, whereas the free dailies and public broadcasters favour the adjective and the person-referring nouns, which serve to label actors. The plural abstract noun is rare everywhere and is absent from the Dutch-language data. The collocation analysis reveals a consistently negative semantic prosody of *populis** across all four public spheres. Grouping the collocates into semantic categories shows that *populis** is associated with other political labels (ideologies, leanings, and many -isms), with geographical locations, with specific political actors, and with negative evaluative lexis, including figurative language that presents populism as a rising wave, a disease, or an enemy to be fought. Two collocates stand out in all three languages: "nationalism/nationalist(s)" and "rise". In the mass media, populism is thus discussed predominantly as an extreme right-wing ideology linked to nationalism, extremism, and Euroscepticism, and the term is used to refer to international actors commonly labelled populist (e.g. Trump, Salvini). Where *populis** refers to the left, it is associated with communism and socialism. Across all four public spheres the meaning of *populis** is not contested by journalists; it functions as a fixed label whose evaluative load is taken for granted, and the dominant discourse is an anti-populist one.

The analysis of Twitter discourse brings out the pragmatic potential of these sociopolitical keywords. Three types of use are identified in both datasets, though they are articulated differently by politicians and by lay users: *populis** as a referring device, as a categorising device, and as a meta-discursive device. In the tweets by political actors, *populis** is above all a campaigning tool. As a referring device it evokes populism as an abstract threat, often with an unspecified referent, and allows the party to position itself as anti-populist. As a categorising device it consistently targets the same actor, *Unidas Podemos*, yet its purpose is rarely to stigmatise UP directly: it serves to reframe a debate about concrete government measures, to justify a viewpoint, and to delegitimise the governing party indirectly, through its potential ally. As a meta-discursive device it is reused from allies or the media to strengthen an argument, or reused from opponents to reject the label. Metalinguistic comments on the meaning of the word are almost absent from politicians' tweets, which might suggest a shared, self-evident understanding of the term within Spanish politics. Lay users, by contrast, exploit the dialogic potential of Twitter: their tweets are mostly replies and comments, they use *populis** to attack more explicitly, and they target a much wider range of entities, including political actors and their actions, the media, and even the Pope. They also contest the meaning of the term itself, proposing definitions, rejecting others' uses, and reflecting on its (mis)use, which points to an ongoing semantic struggle over the meaning of populism among non-professional users that is not visible in the discourse of politicians or journalists.

Taken together, the two case studies show that the meanings activated and the functions performed by *populis** depend on the grammatical form, the co-occurring lexical items, the type of media, the sociopolitical context, the author, and the target of the use of *populis**. *Populis** is not empty but overloaded: it works as a semantic node that accumulates consistent associations, and this concentration of meaning is what produces the impression of vagueness. By approaching *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword in several sources of data and through a combination of corpus-linguistic and discourse-analytic methods, the thesis provides a more detailed account of the object of study than previous research. It documents the similarities and differences in the meanings of *populis** across languages, the role of grammatical form, and the specificities of its use by different types of actors. The framework developed in this thesis, combining cross-linguistic collocation analysis and the comparison of semantic

categories with manual annotation and interpretative analysis of function in context, can be transferred to the study of other sociopolitical keywords and contexts.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

> People talk about populism with the same confidence they exude when talking about lineup changes the coach should have made to stave off defeat for their team. However, if you ask what it means to call something or someone populist, they are likely to express a mixture of confusion and irritation. One *knows* what populism is. Or one thinks one knows (Arditi, 2024, p. 1).

The phenomenon of populism has been extensively studied (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017). Its definitions and conceptions are as broad and varied as the individual backgrounds and interests of the researchers themselves (see, among others, Aslanidis, 2017; Canovan, 1981; de Vreese et al., 2018; Deringer & Ströbel, 2023; Laclau, 2005; Moffitt, 2017; Mudde, 2004; Müller, 2017; Rooduijn, 2014; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2024; Taggart, 2000). The terms *populism* and *populist* have long been used in the academic literature to describe an array of political parties – of both the left- and the right-wing leanings – in a variety of contexts, making them highly contested terms that can be used both positively and negatively, as well as applied to others or used as a self-descriptor (see, among others, Bale et al., 2011; Collovald, 2004; de Santiago Guervós, 2015; Demata et al., 2020; Elmgren, 2018; Goyvaerts, 2023; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Kranert, 2020; Lara, 2018; Schwörer, 2021). However, the actual use of these terms in discourse, and particularly "the non-scholarly use" (Demata et al., 2020, p. 9) still remains understudied. Recent research points out that "in public debate vagueness and ambiguity about the meaning of populism still abounds" (De Cleen, 2019, p. 9) and proposes to shift the attention away from trying to define the phenomenon of populism towards examining how the term is actually used in discourse (De Cleen et al., 2018; Dean & Maiguashca, 2020).

This thesis analyses discourses about populism and approaches populism as a category and not as a concept (De Cleen et al., 2018; Goyvaerts, 2023; Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020; Nuevo Gascó, 2025; Thornborrow et al., 2021). The main focus

of the analysis is the actual use of the terms *populism* and *populist* – henceforth *populis** – in public discourse. In this thesis, I do not seek to provide a new definition of the term, nor to demonstrate whether the term is misused or attached to an entity which is not populist. I rather seek to provide empirical linguistic evidence of how *populis** is used and what it helps to achieve pragmatically in discourse. The main motivation for this study is my interest in the way language operates through discourse to produce, reshape, and communicate sociopolitical viewpoints and ideologies. The case of the terms *populism* and *populist* provides a clear lexical entry point to gain this understanding. Indeed, it allows us to observe how a single term is deployed with multiple meanings and diverging evaluations by different speakers, for varying communicative purposes, and across distinct geographical, sociopolitical, and discursive contexts. Despite their importance, these multiple facets of *populis** have not yet been examined in a unified empirical study.

Recent research shows that the terms *populism* and *populist* have permeated the public discourse acquiring the status of "the main political buzzword[s] of the 21st century" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1). The number of academic and media articles about populism and populist political actors has grown exponentially over the past two decades (Hunger & Paxton, 2022). Its pervasive use in media discourse over the recent decades has impacted the way we understand the realities denoted by the use of these terms (Brown & Mondon, 2021; Collovald, 2004; Goyvaerts et al., 2024). Such a tendency is observed worldwide. For example, in 2016, *populismo* was selected as the word of the year by Fundéu BBVA, a foundation which addresses the questions related to the Spanish language and chooses a word of the year from the terms appearing in the news. Similarly, Cambridge Dictionary announced *populism* as its Word of the Year 2017. Certainly, the electoral success of populist political actors worldwide, and particularly in Europe, has triggered the increased use of the term in the media coverage of political events. However, *populism* is not only attractive because of the realities it refers to. *Populism* is also appealing to current-day discourse producers because of its discursive versatility which is inherent to any political buzzword (e.g. *fake news* and *woke).*

Previous research has produced differing conclusions regarding the use of *populis** in discourse. Previous studies have pointed out a wide range of possible referents of *populis** and have suggested its chameleon-like character (Taggart, 2000). Previous

empirical research has pointed out “the almost random use of the term”, albeit with consistent negative evaluation in the British press (Bale et al., 2011, p. 128). Similarly, the random attribution of the populist label as “a meaningless buzzword” (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) has been demonstrated in the tweets of political leaders in six Western countries. According to Kranert (2020, p. 35), such conclusions are “possibly reached through a lack of a linguistic perspective on the pragmatic function of the term”. In contrast, Kranert (2020) and Thornborrow et al. (2021) have determined that the use of *populis** is rather characterised by some stability in terms of its pragmatic function, i.e. the purpose of its use (Kranert, 2020), and in terms of its semantic profile across different linguistic and sociopolitical contexts (Thornborrow et al., 2021). Furthermore, some positive uses of *populis** have been determined in the analysis of politicians' deployment of the term (Elmgren, 2018; Schwörer, 2021) and in news media (Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020).

Moreover, previous research has also addressed the question of the functions of the term depending on the speakers and their communicative goals. Canovan (1981, p. 3) has noted that “populism is rarely a label used by political actors to identify themselves and is on the contrary often used in contemporary politics as a way to undermine the credibility of a rival political personality or party”. She considers populism to be “a common yet empty signifier that is often used by mainstream parties or the media to qualify an immense variety of actors”. Similarly, previous research argues that the term *populism* is “a political *Kampfbegriff*” (‘battle concept/term’) which is used to attack political opponents in political discourse (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1). However, in the past decades, some leaders, mainly from the extreme-right wing parties (e.g. Le Pen, Orban, Salvini) but also from the centre-right (e.g. Macron), have identified themselves as populists, meaning they represent ‘the people’ and emphasising the positive load of the term as a “token of political honour” (Jäger, 2016, p. 16).

Such use is illustrated in Example (1):

(1) “*Nous sommes de vrais **populistes**, nous sommes avec le peuple, tous les jours*”[1]

[1] The French President Emmanuel Macron quoted in *Le Monde diplomatique* N° 164.

("We are true **populists**, we are with the people, every day".) (*Tous populistes !*, 2019, p. 91).

Furthermore, *populis** is also a term which can itself be the subject of discussion and participate in what Schröter (2008) calls "metalinguistic comments", that is those cases in which a speaker reflects on the actual use and the meaning of the term (Schröter, 2008, p. 51). Let us consider Example (2) in which the former President of Uruguay José Mujica uses different word forms of *populis** in a metalinguistic comment:

(2) "*La palabra **populista** no la uso porque la usan para un barrido y un fregado. Los que votan en Alemania por la derecha medio neonazis son **populistas**, en Nicaragua son **populistas**. Entonces, cualquier cosa es **populismo**. Yo saco esta conclusión: todo con lo que no se está de acuerdo, que molesta, es* populista*. Es una categoría que no define*".[2]

("I do not use the word **'populism**' because it is too much of a multi-faceted tool. Those who vote for the right-wing neo-Nazists are **populists**, (people) in Nicaragua are also **populists**. So, anything is **populism**. I draw this conclusion: anything that one does not agree with, that bothers, is labelled **populist**. It is a category that does not define anything.") (*La Jornada Maya*, 2018)

These observations lead us to ask the following questions:

What are the meanings, evaluation, and pragmatic functions of *populis** in public discourse? What are the similarities and differences in the use of *populis** that can be systematically observed and compared across distinct contexts?

Approaching *populis** as a 'sociopolitical keyword' is a starting point in my pursuit of an answer to these questions. The term 'keyword' does not refer to 'statistical keywords' (P. Baker, 2004; Scott & Tribble, 2006) as used in corpus linguistics research and computational approaches to the study of language. In this thesis, the

[2] The former President of Uruguay José Mujica quoted in *La Jornada Maya*, 02/09/2018.

term ‘keyword’ refers to the analyses of those words which have some social, political, and discursive significance at a given period of time (see, among others, Hambye et al., 2025; Jeffries, 2003; Jeffries & Walker, 2012, 2018; Kranert, 2020; Krieg-Planque, 2003, 2009; Schröter, 2008; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Storjohann, 2015; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor, 2017).

My understanding of *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword stems from the assumption that the terms *populism* and *populist*, like many other ‘isms’ (e.g. *liberalism*, *multiculturalism*), as well as such political buzzwords as *woke* or *fake news* are contested concepts with a variety of meanings and a significant evaluative load. Such words stand out in discourse and play a key role in social and political debates. Yet, analysing how they are actually used in discourse is still an overlooked area of research in social sciences (Kurunmäki & Marjanen, 2018; Spira, 2015).

Approaching *populis** through the perspective of sociopolitical keywords allows one to make sense of its outstanding place in discourse both in terms of its linguistic features and the sociopolitical issues it raises. Hence, this thesis will provide a detailed linguistic analysis of this global discursive phenomenon to better understand what the terms *populism* and *populist* mean, how they are evaluated, and what they help to achieve in contemporary political and media discourse of different actors.

I will now present the research design and the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Research design

This thesis is part of the interdisciplinary research project “Tracking the uses of *populism* in media and political discourse” (TrUMPo), funded by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (*Actions de recherche concertées*, ARC) and conducted at UCLouvain (Belgium)[3]. Over a six-year period (2020–2026), TrUMPo brought together scholars from political science, communication studies, and linguistics, alongside data managers, administrative staff, and research trainees. While focusing on the linguistic part of the project, this thesis contributes to its broader objectives by analysing the use and the role of *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword in contemporary media discourses across three Western democracies: Belgium, France, and Spain.

[3] ARC 20/25–109 “Tracking the uses of *populism* in media and political discourse” (TrUMPo)

Specifically, this study examines four distinct public spheres and three languages (Dutch, French, and Spanish). Belgium is analysed as comprising two separate public spheres – Dutch-speaking and French-speaking – given its distinct media and political landscapes. Furthermore, French-language data from Belgium and France are treated separately to account for variations arising from their respective public sphere constellations. Following Schlesinger (2019), the term 'public sphere' is approached heuristically as a "spatial metaphor" – that is, as "the primary locus of political communication" and public discourse, where discourses about populism are examined (Schlesinger, 2019, p. 1).

The key methodological choices of this thesis, particularly concerning the research context, the period of study, and the selection of data sources, are aligned with the core framework of the TrUMPo project. These methodological choices and their implications are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

This thesis is guided by an overarching research question:

> **Main RQ:** What are the meanings and functions of *populis** in mass media and social media discourses and how do they compare and contrast across different public spheres and types of actors?

In light of the background and rationale for the study presented in Section 1.1, I address this central inquiry by conducting two complementary case studies (Chapters 4 and 5) guided by three specific research questions:

> **RQ 1a:** What similarities and differences emerge in the frequency and distribution of specific word forms of *populis** in mass media discourse across the four public spheres studied?
>
> **RQ 1b:** What are the meanings and semantic prosodies of *populis** and how do they converge and diverge in mass media discourse across the four public spheres studied?
>
> **RQ 2:** What are the pragmatic functions of *populis** in the social media discourse of political actors and laypeople?

Methodologically, this thesis adopts a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach to comparatively investigate sociopolitical keywords across languages and

communicative environments (Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor, 2017; Taylor & Del Fante, 2020; Thornborrow et al., 2021). A mixed-method analysis of the behaviour of *populis** involving corpus linguistics and discourse analysis is applied to answer the main research question in two complementary analytical chapters. This behaviour of lexical items concerns the patterns of use of *populis** related to its meanings and functions which can be observed through collocation analysis as well as through manual annotation of the pragmatic function.

In this thesis, the meanings and functions of *populis** are studied in two complementary case studies. The first case study helps to make conclusions about how *populis** as a discursive phenomenon is linked to social and political issues present in current-day public discourse from a broad and cross-linguistic perspective, while the second case study helps to observe discourse about populism at the micro level. Both case studies shed light on the evaluative orientation of *populis**. The notions of 'semantic preference' and 'semantic prosody' (Bednarek, 2008; Louw, 1993) used in Corpus Linguistics, are relevant to the understanding of the meaning and function of a lexical item. Bednarek (2008, p. 120) points out that "both of these terms have been used to refer to the fact that some lexical items predominantly co-occur with what can be called 'negative' ('bad', 'unpleasant') and 'positive' ('good', 'pleasant')". Gillings et al. (2023, p. 29) observe that "many words may appear at first glance to have fairly neutral meanings but as a result of repeatedly occurring in certain contexts, they can gather negative or positive associations which can influence readers or hearers in a certain direction."

In this thesis, 'semantic preference' refers to the collocational phenomenon of lexical items to co-occur with those words which "share a semantic feature" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 12). Furthermore, the notion of 'semantic prosody' broadly refers in this thesis to "the connotations of a lexical items (including those of 'individual' words and extended units of meaning)" (Bednarek, 2008, p. 130). Moreover, Sinclair (2004) argues that semantic prosody is located "on the pragmatic side of the semantics/pragmatics continuum", as it "expresses something close to the 'function' of the item – it shows how the rest of the item is to be interpreted functionally" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 34). Phenomena similar to semantic preference and semantic prosody can also be

observed in the analysis of the pragmatic functions of *populis**, determined through the manual annotation of the use of *populis** (see Chapter 3 for details).

Chapter 4 addresses **RQ 1a** and **RQ 1b** through a comparative analysis of mass media discourse across three languages and four distinct public spheres. This case study shows how the sociopolitical keyword *populis** is deployed in different linguistic, discursive and sociopolitical environments by conducting a detailed analysis of the collocational profiles of the terms *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* in Dutch, French, and Spanish in four comparable corpora (four corpora corresponding to four public spheres, i.e. Dutch-speaking Belgium, French-speaking Belgium, France, and Spain). The comparison between languages serves to capture in a detailed way how *populis** is used, focusing on the linguistic strategies to do so and the specificities of the different languages and countries involved. Moreover, it aims to study whether the observed features are similar in different languages and sociopolitical contexts or whether we can observe relevant specificities in each individual context.

To ensure the representativeness of the data, the corpora and subcorpora contain media texts across the four distinct outlets per public sphere: (i) an established newspaper, (ii) a serious-popular medium, (iii) a free daily newspaper, and (iv) a public-owned broadcasting outlet featuring news from television and radio platforms. These outlets differ in editorial positioning, their readership, and production methods. All these factors may influence the way *populis** is used. Thus, analysing *populis** in a range of media outlets, beyond traditionally studied established sources, offers a broader view on the object of study and may produce new insights.

The meanings of *populis** are determined through collocational analysis, drawing on previous cross-linguistic studies of (sociopolitical) keywords (Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016) and established corpus linguistics and discourse analysis approaches including (CADS) (Gillings et al., 2023; Jaworska & Kinloch, 2018; Partington et al., 2013a; Taylor & Marchi, 2018). Thus, Chapter 4 addresses a crucial gap in the literature by offering empirical insights from less frequently studied non-English language sociopolitical contexts. Furthermore, it pays particular attention to observing the trends related to the use of different word forms of *populis**, namely abstract nouns (‘populism(s)’), person-referring nouns (‘populist(s)’),

and adjectives (‘populist’). This aspect has been largely disregarded in previous analyses.

Chapter 5 constitutes the second case study and addresses **RQ 2** by analysing the pragmatic features of *populis** and comparing its usage across different types of actors, i.e. political actors and laypeople. The social media platform Twitter is considered to be a major news source and an important channel of communication of public figures (Berber Sardinha, 2022). Moreover, it is a valuable source of "social media texts” for political discourse analysis (Taylor, 2022, p. 610). In addition, it is also a valuable source of data for analysing how *populis** is evoked by lay users of the platform who are involved in the discussion of sociopolitical issues (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025). The focus of this chapter is to determine the pragmatic functions of *populis**, that is, the purposes achieved by the speakers through the use of a particular word form of *populis** and through a particular discursive action (Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025; Kranert, 2020; Shchinova, 2023). Based on manual annotation and qualitative interpretation of sampled Twitter data, this chapter fills an empirical gap by refining the characterisation of *populis** as a mere "meaningless buzzword" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) or a "stigma term" (Knobloch, 2012; Kranert, 2020) used solely for direct delegitimisation.

The main contribution of this thesis is a nuanced empirical account of how *populism* and *populist* are used by different actors in society, in different languages and sociopolitical contexts beyond those analysed in previous studies. Furthermore, on the methodological level, this thesis contributes to the body of research which combines corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, and particularly to cross-linguistic corpus-assisted discourse studies (Taylor, 2014; Vessey, 2013), demonstrating the value of comparative frameworks applied to languages other than English. On the theoretical level, it adds to research on the discursive construction of contested categories, that is concepts that remain semantically open and are progressively filled with specific meanings through communicative practice (Wodak & Forchtner, 2017). By operationalising *populism* and *populist* as sociopolitical keywords, this study provides a replicable framework for analysing how contested ideologies are linguistically constructed in contemporary public discourse.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 (Literature review) outlines previous scholarly literature on populism as a political phenomenon and as a lexical unit. It highlights empirical gaps regarding the meanings and functions of *populis** and establishes the theoretical framework of the thesis. Specifically, it details how approaching *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword provides an effective lens for cross-linguistic semantic and pragmatic analysis.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) presents the methodology detailing key research choices such as the research contexts and data sources selected for analysing discourses containing *populis**. Furthermore, it delineates the two complementary empirical approaches applied in this thesis: the corpus-assisted methodology used to examine collocational profiles of *populis** cross-linguistically in Case study 1 (Chapter 4) and the discourse-analytic annotation scheme implemented to analyse pragmatic functions of *populis** in Case study 2 (Chapter 5).

Chapter 4 (The use of *populis in mass media discourse: a cross-linguistic perspective)** examines the frequency and distribution of *populis** in mass media data. Moreover, it presents a cross-linguistic comparison of collocates of *populis** across Dutch, French, and Spanish, detailing the specific research context, corpus metrics, and collocational profile findings for this case study.

Chapter 5 (The use of *populis in social media discourse: a cross-actor perspective)** investigates the pragmatic functions of *populis** in Twitter discourse in Spanish. It provides a detailed comparison of the use of *populis** by political actors and lay users of Twitter.

Chapter 6 (Conclusion) summarises the key empirical findings across both case studies, highlighting how the data address the overarching research question. It outlines the main theoretical and methodological contributions of the thesis, reflects on its limitations, and suggests avenues for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 A brief historical overview of the terms *populism* and *populist*

Populism and *populist* are two terms that have undergone historical changes. Initially, the term *populism* was used to denote specific entities, namely the French literary movement (Paveau, 1998), and the term *populist* was mainly used to denote a member of the People's Party in the US and *Narodniki* in Russia (Houwen, 2011). Throughout the 20th century, new uses emerged and replaced the old ones. Furthermore, at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the use of the terms in public discourse significantly increased. The label began to be used almost exclusively in a negative way, mainly functioning as a "stigma term" (Knobloch, 2012; Kranert, 2020) used by politicians to discredit their opponents and by journalists to talk about the danger of the phenomenon of populism and the electoral gains of populist parties.

Previous studies have focused on providing a historical perspective on this object of study in order to understand populism's origins, its evolution throughout time, and to cover the diversity of political actors classified as populists. Numerous studies have provided a detailed overview of the concept of populism over time describing the evolution of the term since its first use in the US by the People's Party at the end of the 19th century (Frank, 2020; Fuentes, 2020; Houwen, 2011; Jäger, 2016). The term *populism*, since its spread in the 1980s, is mostly a label attached to others by all types of actors to either describe or more often to denigrate their opponents (Jäger & Borriello, 2020; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Previous research, furthermore, highlights the importance of the People's Party to the understanding of the term and the concept of populism (Jäger & Borriello, 2020). The People's Party, formed by farmers and workers, emerged in the rural parts of the USA in 1892. The members of this coalition used the term *populists* by analogy with the Democrats (the members of the Democratic Party) and the Republicans (the members of the Republican party). Thus, the term *populist* was used to denote a member of this concrete party.

Goyvaerts (2023) points out that during the existence of the People's Party, it was criticised by the established parties, and the concept of *populism* was already highly controversial during this period. Members of the People's Party used the word to

describe themselves, as it “was used by self-styled populists who claimed that democracy holds an anti-intellectualist vocation” (Houwen, 2011, p. 11). However, the term was also used as “a label mobilised pejoratively by its opponents” (Houwen, 2011, p. 11). The history of the word *populism* is also linked to another movement which arose in Russia in the second half of the 19th century. Studies discussing the evolution of the term *populism* also cover the history of the movement of intellectuals with socialist and democratic ideas, called *Narodnichestvo* (*Народничество*) and its members *Narodniki* (*Народники*) (*народ narod* meaning ‘people’). The term *Narodnik* was translated into English as *populist*. It was a revolutionary agrarian movement in Russia in the 1870s led by young intellectuals who claimed to represent ‘the true people’ against the Tsarist regime (Houwen, 2011; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Members of this movement “used the notions *narodnichestvo* and *narodniki* as self-descriptors and both terms had, therefore, a positive connotation” (Houwen, 2011, p. 14). Thus, initially, the terms *populism* and *populist* referred to two specific entities. Even though these two movements have some similarities, such as the fact that their members used the term to refer to themselves and both appealed to the rural population, *populism* and *narodnichestvo* cannot be considered as two equivalent terms.

Moving forward into the history of populism, we witness a change in how the term was used and to which actors it was attached. The situation changed with the emergence of the academic literature analysing new political entities in different parts of the world throughout the 20th century. Between the 1930s and 1980s, several political movements and parties, later referred to as ‘populist regimes’ in the academic literature, emerged in Latin American countries, for example, the regimes of Perón in Argentina (the period was also called *Peronismo* ‘Peronism’) and Vargas in Brazil (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Scholars who focused their attention on the systems of governing in Latin American countries started to use the *populist* label to refer to the political movements often characterised by the presence of a charismatic leader (Pappas, 2018) and by authoritarianism (Germani, 1971). Another wave of populism called “neo-populism” (late 1980s and 1990s) in the Latin American countries was represented by Salinas de Gortari in Mexico and Fujimori in Peru. In addition, more recent politicians (Chávez in

Venezuela; Morales in Bolivia) have been analysed through the perspective of left-wing populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Starting from the 1980s, scholars began to study populist movements, parties and leaders in Europe. *Populism* in the European context was used to refer to the right-wing, mainly, the extreme right-wing parties, movements, and politicians in Western Europe. Such use, furthermore, influenced the conflation of the concept of *populism* with the concept of *nationalism*, and in general with the characteristics of the extreme right politics (De Cleen et al., 2018; Stavrakakis et al., 2018). For example, in France the extreme-right *Front National* and its leader Jean-Marie Le Pen were referred to as *national-populisme* (Collovald, 2004; Taguieff, 1984) which furthermore influenced an increasing use of such categorisation in media discourse. Such use of the term raises a question about the function of the label itself to make it more acceptable, as opposed to terms such as *nativism* or *racism* (Hubé & Truan, 2016, pp. 181–182). Moving forward to the beginning of the 21st century, we witness the resurgence of the populist leaders, parties, and movements in the world, as well as of the academic literature on a variety of entities classified as populists. This period is also characterised by the emergence and the rise of the left-wing and the right-wing forms of populism. In the context of European politics, the electoral success of the extreme-right wing parties after the 2007-2008 economic crisis attracted the attention of the media to their discourses appealing to 'people', and the populist label began to be associated with the extreme right and its nationalist discourse.

The period following the economic crisis was also characterised by the left radicalisation of several anti-austerity movements (in Greece the *Aganakitsmenoi*, in Spain the *Indignados* of the 15-M). Specifically, in Greece (*SYRIZA*) and Spain (*Podemos*), the left-wing anti-austerity parties emerged from the protests and social movements. Those parties were classified as (left-wing) populists in the academic literature (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2024). The label was even used by the members of these parties as a self-descriptor. For example, Pablo Iglesias and other partisans of Podemos explicitly claimed to be populists (Art, 2022).

A contribution to the understanding of the term and the concept of populism has been made in the field of lexicography. An example of the evolution of the term is illustrated in a lexicographic analysis which traces back the history of the use of the terms

populismo and *populista* in Spanish (de Santiago Guervós, 2015) pointing to their infrequent use in Spanish political language before the 1990s, and its widespread use throughout the following decades up to 2014. The occurrences of the terms in Spain during this period were linked to the description and assessment of the 'populist regimes' in Latin American countries, as well as to the political parties which emerged in the wake of the crisis in Europe. Specifically in Spanish media, the frequency of use drastically increased after the emergence of the left-wing political party Podemos (de Santiago Guervós, 2015). The analysis of the uses of the terms in the Spanish press points out that the meanings of the terms have changed over time. From denoting the People's Party in the US and the French literary movement, *populism* and *populist* became mainly linked to the left-wing ideologies and associated with other concepts, such as 'socialism' and 'communism'. The analysis thus suggests that the process of relexicalisation has resulted in the predominance of the pejorative uses of the terms which are extensively employed as a tool for denigrating and attacking (de Santiago Guervós, 2015, p. 481).

In sum, studies providing a historical perspective on populism show that the concept of populism has long been used in the academic literature to describe an array of political parties – of both the left- and the right-wing leanings – in different historical periods, locations, and sociopolitical contexts. Tracing back the history of its use, we can observe that the term has been attached to very different realities, ideologies, personalities, actions, and movements. Furthermore, the origins of the use of the terms point to their mainly denotative function in references to specific political entities. In addition, we find the use of the terms as self-descriptors by members of those movements, as well as critical (anti-populist) views towards those movements. Thus, previous studies within this strand of research have focused on the categorisation of the entities which can be referred to as *populist* and the analysis of concrete instances of populist political actors in multiple parts of the world throughout history. In addition, in order to understand the history of populism, it has been approached from the lexicographic and diachronic perspectives focusing specifically on the use of the terms in Spanish.

2.2 The breadth of research on populism

The phenomenon of populism has been studied from various theoretical and methodological perspectives and thus has been defined considering its different features, such as political, economic, social, and discursive features (Weyland, 2001). For example, in previous studies drawing on Mudde's ideational approach, populism is perceived as an ideology (Canovan, 1981; Mudde, 2004), and specifically as a "thin ideology" that divides a population into two antagonistic camps, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite"; and holds that politics should privilege the "general will" of the people (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). The view on populism as a 'thin' ideology as opposed to 'thick' ideologies (e.g. socialism) implies that there is no strictly defined set of traits that all populist actors share. This approach, furthermore, sheds light on why populism is often combined with other ideologies (mainly, with nationalism, socialism, and nativism) and why the populist categorisation is applied to the most diverse realities. Studies drawing on this view on populism primarily focus on specific political actors and examine their programmatic statements (for example, party manifestos) and classify these actors as populists or not. Most studies in this tradition analyse either a case of one country or compare several sets of data from different countries and use content analysis methodology (de Raadt et al., 2004). In addition, previous studies in this vein have identified the features of political actors deemed to represent populism by the scientific community (Rooduijn et al., 2024).

Among other well-established perspectives on the analysis of populism, there is an analysis of populism from a discourse-theoretical perspective (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Studies in this tradition focus more on populism as a discursive feature and as a "form of politics" (Panizza, 2005). Katsambekis (2022) argues that the discursive approach to populism "avoids a priori assumptions about the specific contents and the ideological or programmatic features of populist actors" and allows for understanding the meaning of 'the people' in discourse (Katsambekis, 2022, p. 64). A substantial number of studies have adopted this approach to populism, both theoretically (Casullo, 2019; Panizza, 2005; Zicman de Barros, 2022) and empirically (Goyvaerts, 2023; Palonen, 2018).

Among other influential approaches to the study of populism, there are those which focus on the performative nature of populism (Moffitt, 2017) and on the relationship

between populism and democratic systems of governing (Finchelstein & Urbinati, 2018). Moreover, populist discourses and the language of populist politicians in a multiplicity of countries have attracted the attention of discourse analysts (Charaudeau, 2022; Connett, 2023; Hidalgo-Tenorio et al., 2019; Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019). Finally, previous research on populism is characterised by those studies which focus on the use of the term populism itself. Over the years, there have been numerous attempts to define the term. In 1967, a conference aiming to define populism took place. The publication of *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969) followed and provided a range of divergent definitions of populism. Since then, the definitional issues have not been resolved. A noticeable disagreement over the definition of *populism* still exists (Hubé & Truan, 2016; Hunger & Paxton, 2022). The difficulty in providing a clear definition lies "in the inability to cover the diversity of populisms" and "to distinguish populism from other concepts" (De Cleen, 2019, p. 24).

Recent research shifts the attention from trying to define the term to analysing the way it is used by scholars themselves, as well as by other discourse producers, including journalists and politicians. Indeed, the meaning of this word as well as the question of what and/or who could be qualified as such, is at the core of debates among different actors. The interest in examining discourses about populism (De Cleen et al., 2018) emerged from the need to understand "how the term is used, by whom and why, and with what performative effects" and to critically assess populism's role as a signifier and not just a concept (De Cleen et al., 2018, p. 651). Other scholars have also pointed to such a need. For example, Moffitt (2017, p. 2) argues that the way to rethink contemporary populism lies in the answer to "the most basic question of all – what are we actually talking about when we use the term "populism" today?"

To date, *populis** as an object of study and its use in discourse has been approached drawing on a variety of theoretical and methodological frameworks. Researchers have used various terms to refer to *populis**. Namely, *populis** has been studied as a signifier, a concept, and as a keyword. Populism as a signifier is understood as a word "acquiring different meanings and normative inflections depending on the context within which it appears" (De Cleen et al., 2018, p. 651). The main research objective has been formulated as reflecting "on the context within which we as critical scholars make use of the term" and furthermore, on "academia's own relation to populism and

anti-populism" (De Cleen et al., 2018). Populism as a concept has been analysed in the fields of Cultural Studies and Conceptual History (Elmgren, 2018; Houwen, 2011; Koselleck, 2004). Populism as a keyword has been analysed mainly in the fields of linguistics taking into account the semantic and pragmatic features of (sociopolitical) keywords (Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020).

In what follows, I provide an overview of the studies focusing on the use of the term itself in the traditional media and social media discourse. In previous research, populism as the object of study is sometimes referred to as 'signifier' and sometimes as a 'keyword'. This terminological divergence is explained by the discipline and the theoretical perspective on which the analyses draw. Regardless of the label used, all the studies have a common denominator, that is they focus on populism as a word and seek to understand its use in different discursive contexts, rather than on populism as reality (for example, ideology, type of discourse, concrete political actor or other conceptualisation of populism).

2.3 The use of *populis** in media discourse: relevant academic literature

A substantial body of literature focused on analysing the use of *populis** in mass media discourse, mainly in the press. To a lesser extent, the use of the term has also been studied in social media discourse. For example, Schwörer (2021) compared the use of *populis** by political actors on Twitter and Filardo-Llamas et al. (2025) have analysed how laypeople use the phrase I am not populist. Moreover, different geographical contexts have been analysed. Some studies have examined media discourses about populism in either one country or comparatively analysed several countries. Examples include studies analysing newspaper discourse in the UK (Bale et al., 2011; Brown & Mondon, 2021; Demata et al., 2020); in Australia and the USA (Brookes, 2018); a comparison of the use of *populis** in the press of Finland and Sweden (Herkman, 2016) and in the press of Finland, Sweden, the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, and Turkey (Hatakka & Herkman, 2022); in the Greek press (Kitis & Kitis, 2015; Nikisianis et al., 2019).

All these studies have analysed media discourse produced in the past two decades. Even though these studies analyse different geographical contexts, the findings share

main conclusions about the use of *populism*. Concretely, previous studies highlight (i) the growing use of the term in media discourse over the past few decades; (ii) predominantly negative connotations and negative evaluation of the term. Most of the studies in this vein lack a discussion regarding the similarities or differences in the way different grammatical forms of *populis** are used. That is, possible differences in the semantics and pragmatics of the noun populism, the noun populist, and the adjective populist have been covered only superficially in previous studies.

2.3.1 Studies focusing on the use of *populis** in mass media discourse

Most of the previous studies on the use of *populis** focused on analysing traditional media discourses. Bale et al. (2011) focus on the use of the term in the British press in 2007 and identify a wide variety of entities referred to as populist. Bale et al. (2011) searched for *populis** in the UK's tabloids and broadsheet newspapers and chose to focus their analysis on the broadsheet newspapers, due to a high number of occurrences in this type of media. Two periods for analysing the use of *populis** were chosen to compare the occurrences of the search word: a period during an election campaign, as well as one outside of it. This choice was made to observe possible similarities and differences in the way the search word was used in two different periods, thus ensuring the strength of the findings. Bale et al. (2011) find that *populis** conveys mainly a pejorative connotation and suggest that it is used randomly. Namely, the analysis suggested that the populist label was attached to political actors of opposite ideologies, for example, politicians as different as the South African president Jacob Zuma, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the president of Venezuela Hugo Chavez, and many others. This study points out that *populis** is attributed "randomly" and is associated with "a wide range of seemingly unrelated actors across the world," so that "it is hard to find any logic in the set of policies that are associated with the term" (Bale et al., 2011, p. 111). In addition, Bale et al. (2011) show that the term is not only used in the articles about politics, but also in the articles about culture, media, and sport. Similarly, several studies highlight this aspect (Borriello, 2022; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Hatakka & Herkman, 2022; Kranert, 2020).

Other studies emphasise the predominance of the anti-populist stance in media discourse (Demata et al., 2020; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Nikisianis et al., 2019).

For instance, Goyvaerts and De Cleen (2020), drawing on a discourse-theoretical approach, analyse the use of *populis** in the Dutch-speaking Belgian press, mainly articles from subscription-based newspapers (*De Tijd, De Morgen, De Standaard, Het Laatste Nieuws, Het Nieuwsblad, Gazet van Antwerpen, Het Belang van Limburg)* (established media sources and serious-popular media sources, some of regional orientation) that covered the 2014 regional, federal, and European elections. Goyvaerts and De Cleen (2020, p. 89) suggest that the uses of the term are similar across all media sources studied in the sense that the negative connotation of the term prevails in both the uses by journalists and in the quotations of political actors. In addition, a few neutral uses and positive uses are identified. The uses of *populism* in media discourse during the period under study are characterised by being critical towards certain political parties, mostly outside Belgium, and by putting forward viewpoints concerning political legitimacy and democratic functioning. Thus, Goyvaerts and De Cleen (2020) argue that articles containing *populis** in the period studied promoted an anti-populist stance. This observation was then developed in the argument concerning the role of anti-populist discourse in the press and in academia.

Methodologically, previous studies of the use of *populis** in newspaper discourse adopted qualitative methods such as content analysis (Goyvaerts, 2023; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020) and manual annotation of the data based on inductively established analytical categories (Bale et al., 2011; Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020). Bale et al. (2011) manually coded each occurrence of populism in relation to several variables. Thus, the coding categories aimed at determining (i) the location of *populis** (e.g. the section of the newspaper, the genre of the article containing *populis**; whether it appeared in the title of an article) (ii) the reference of *populis** ("whether the term was used to refer to substance when it was explicitly linked to a certain policy, or rather to a particular style, such as manner of speech or even appearance" (p. 115)); (iii) the way *populis** is used (e.g. undefined, positive, negative, neutral); (iv) the target of *populis** (who, what was labelled; in what country); (v) the author of the use of *populis** (e.g. a journalist, a politician). In relation to the way *populis** was used, Bale et al. (2011, p. 116) state that in many cases "the term seemed to be used somewhat pejoratively, but in a rather implicit way which required some reading between the lines". Even though the authors "recorded the negative words associated with each of these instances" to ensure inter-coder reliability, they do not explain how they

determined whether those words were charged negatively (Bale et al., 2011, p. 116). This is the analytical category which precisely determines whether *populis** was used positively, negatively or neutrally and how it was done.

Another study drawing on qualitative reading and manual annotation of the data (Hamo et al., 2019). Similarly to the previous research on populism as a signifier (De Cleen et al., 2018; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020), Hamo et al., (2019) argue that the way populism has been analysed to date "fails to recognize the ways in which the meanings of populism are negotiated, constructed and strategically employed by actual participants in public discourse". However, in contrast to previous research, Hamo et al. (2019) focus not only on analysing the meanings of *populis**, but also on identifying its functions in a variety of media sources. Hamo et al. (2019) approach *populis** as a keyword, but do not elaborate on the terminology regarding keywords. However, this analysis clearly highlights the idea that *populism* plays an outstanding role in public discourse. Based on the analysis of 500 occurrences of *populism* and *populist* in the Israeli mass media (newspapers, radio, television) in the time span of five years from 2012 to 2017, the study by Hamo et al. highlighted the idea that *populis** is "a highly flexible and multi-functional" keyword in discourse (2019, p. 1). The study furthermore determined that *populis** is an "interactional resource" and "a meta-discursive resource for positioning" in mass media discourse of politicians and journalists. Hamo et al. (2019, p. 4) coded each occurrence of *populis** according to whether it was a source of self-positioning, other-positioning of a present interlocutor, and other-positioning of a non-present third party (Hamo et al., 2019, p. 4). This study furthermore shows that *populis** has a "strong moral negative load" and "is almost entirely used for the pejorative evaluation of statements, arguments, political positions or actions" (Hamo et al., 2019, pp. 3–4). In addition, this analysis points to the use of the term "as a face-threatening device, to frame and position their (of the political actors) rivals as untrustworthy" (Hamo et al., 2019, p. 3).

Moreover, a mixed-method approach, such as a combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis has been adopted in previous linguistic-oriented studies on the use of *populis** (Göhring, 2022; Kitis & Kitis, 2015; Kranert, 2020). Previous studies using corpus linguistics theories and methods focus on determining the meaning and the evaluation of the term by conducting a collocation analysis, and the function of the term by conducting a concordance lines analysis (Kranert, 2020). Kranert (2020),

following Hamo et al. (2019) as well as drawing on previous research in German political linguistics of *ideological catch terms* (Burkhardt, 2003) and qualitatively determined keywords (Schröter, 2008), approaches *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword. Kranert (2020) has conducted a mixed-method analysis aimed at determining the frequency of *populis** over time and its pragmatic functions in the newspaper discourse including instances of quotations of political actors. Kranert (2020) has adopted the term 'sociopolitical keyword' in his analysis of the use of *populis**. Kranert (2020) proposed to analyse the contextualisation of the terms (its denotative, evaluative, and deontic contextualisation) (Girnth, 2015) and the instances of meta-discursive comments (Schröter, 2008). Kranert analysed the collocates of populism and populist in the two corpora: one containing data from "quality" newspapers (a centre-left and a centre-right newspaper in Germany and the UK), as well as tabloid newspapers from each country (Kranert, 2020, p. 37). Then, concordance lines from a random sample were manually coded applying inductively established analytical categories. Concretely, the data were coded according to: "the political spectrum named (left-right); the person or party called populist; whether it includes a metalinguistic comment; topic of the article; if stigma term what the stigma is against; used by journalist or quotation/reported use by politician, expert, or member of the public" (Kranert, 2020, pp. 47–48).

In line with the findings from other studies, Kranert's analysis confirmed the negative load of *populis** in media discourse and, as in the study by Hamo et al. (2019), Kranert's study (2020, p. 54) pointed to the function of *populis** as a "stigma term". However, Kranert added a nuance, arguing that *populis** did not exclusively have the function of discrediting "policies and rhetoric of political actors", but was also used "to name political ideologies and groups that are not part of the established political centre ground" (Kranert, 2020, p. 54).

Analysing the meanings of *populis**, Kranert's study determined that *populism* and *populist* in the British and German press seem to "have become synonymous with right-wing ideologies" and more precisely with "nativism and xenophobia" (Kranert, 2020, p. 44). This finding is in line with the observation by Hamo et al. (2019) regarding "a moral-evaluative layer" attached to *populis** in the Israeli media discourse. In addition, similarly to Kitis and Kitis (2015), Kranert (2020, p. 45) points to "a weakening of the denotative meaning of 'populism'", arguing that *populis** in media discourse was

no longer used as in a dictionary definition, but that a new meaning conveying the connotation of threat emerged and became the dominant one. Ultimately, Kranert's analysis suggests that most occurrences of *populis** are "bare uses without any definition or discussion". This finding echoes D'Eramo, who stated that "the concept of populism is regarded as self-evident, as if we all know what is being referred to" (D'Eramo, 2013, p. 5).

Furthermore, studies focusing on the meanings and the evaluation of *populis** in a wide range of geographical contexts suggest that it is consistently used in a negative way. For example, Kitis and Kitis (2015, p. 80) show that "negative connotations have found their way into the core meaning of the term amounting to its current sense in the Greek context". Similarly, Nikisianis et al. (2019, p. 279) consider *populism* to be characterised by its pejorative use and "heterogeneous meanings" in the Greek press. Moreover, Nikisianis et al. (2019) point out that *populism* emerges in anti-populist discourse directed against political opponents. Furthermore, other studies in this vein have pointed out that the pejorative meaning of the term is constructed by those who oppose and demonise populism and populist politicians, i.e. by anti-populists (Demata et al., 2020; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020).

In other geographical contexts, for instance in France, the term is also used predominantly pejoratively (Göhring, 2022; Borriello, 2022). Findings concerning whom and what the populist label is attached suggest that *populis** is used in reference to collective actors (e.g. *parti(s)* "parties"*, movement(s)* "movements"*, formation(s)* "formations"*, force(s)* "forces"*, courant(s) populiste(s*) "populist currents") and to individual actors, suggested by such collocates as *candidat(s)* "candidate(s)"*, leader(s)* "leader(s)"*, dirigeant(s) populiste(s)* "populist leader(s)" (Göhring, 2022, p. 185). Regarding the political spectrum, *populis** is mainly associated with *extreme, extrémisme*, and the right wing (e.g. extreme right Le Pen) and to a lesser extent, with the left wing (e.g. extreme left Mélenchon). In addition, the analysis also reveals such collocates as *populisme du centre* and *populisme d'extreme centre* "populism of the centre", suggesting that the association of populism with the political centre is an "exceptional characteristic to the French situation" (Göhring, 2022, p. 185). Furthermore, Göhring (2022, p. 186) observes the emergence of the new dividing lines in French politics, "the opposition between *progressistes* and *populistes* put forward

by Emmanuel Macron". A similar use of *populists* versus *progressists* is found in the study of the Spanish Prime Minister's 2020 investiture speech (De Cock, 2023).

Furthermore, Borriello (2022) analyses metaphors of *populisme* and *populiste* in 1247 articles published in *Le Monde* during 2016 and 2017. The analysis using word clouds (a visual representation of text data in the form of tags, typically single words) points to several observations. Firstly, the word form *populiste* is more frequent than *populisme.* Such words as *peuple* "people"*, populaire* "popular"*, population* "population"*, élite* "elites" as well as a variety of politicians from the national and international contexts appear in the data. The analysis of the collocates suggests that *populis** is associated significantly more with the right wing than with the left wing (Borriello, 2022, p. 110). As in other studies (Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020; Göhring, 2022), *populism* is portrayed in a negative way with the connotations of threat, irrationality, and demagogy. Lastly, the analysis of the metaphors of *populis** suggests the portrayal of populism as a natural phenomenon which is expanding apparent through such collocates as (*vague* "wave", *tsunami* "tsunami", *vent* "wind", *montée* "rise").

In the theoretical analysis (Stavrakakis, 2014, p. 509), *populism* is described as "the synecdoche of an omnipresent evil and associated with all its manifestations imaginable: irresponsibility, demagogy, immorality, corruption, destruction, and irrationalism." This is corroborated by the findings of the collocation analysis of *populism* conducted by Kitis & Kitis (2015). They highlight the fact that within the field of populism studies, the discursive features of the use of the term itself, such as "differential operationalization or deployment of the term, changes in its meaning" have received little attention (Kitis & Kitis, 2015, p. 45). Kitis and Kitis (2015) use corpus linguistics tools and methods and examine several corpora in English and in Greek in order to trace the frequency and the evolution of meaning of the terms over time. For English, they examine the corpora of American and British English starting from 1961 and up to 2014; for Greek, they examine the corpora from 1990 to 2014. They focus on data from the American, British, and Greek press, as well as on the Greek Prime Minister's speeches. The findings of the collocation analysis in the press point to the negative evaluation of the terms *populism* and *populist*, mainly suggested by such collocates as "extremism, fear, misery, racism, opportunism, poison, terror" (Kitis & Kitis, 2015, p. 77). The study by Kitis and Kitis (2015) furthermore touches upon the

topic of the function of *populis**. Their analysis of the Prime Minister's speeches in the context of Greece in 2014 shows that the term itself can be used strategically as "a prime weapon in the rhetorical and ultimately political arsenal of politicians" (Kitis & Kitis, 2015, p. 43). Therefore, these findings are in line with how Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017, p. 1) refer to *populism* as "a political *Kampfbegriff* (battle term) to denounce political opponents".

One of the few existing comparative studies (Thornborrow et al., 2021) focuses on analysing the semantic elements attached to *populis** in the media discourse of four European countries (France, Greece, Sweden, the UK). Specifically, this study aims to determine the semantic and metaphoric fields of *populism* and *populist* in opinion-based journalism. Contrary to most previous studies on the use of *populis** in media discourse focusing exclusively on the reporting genres, Thornborrow et al. (2021) went further in the analysis of media discourse and provided findings on how *populis** was used in opinion-oriented genres. Thus, their study provided evidence on how *populis** functions in "producing journalistic stance in relation to political populism as a phenomenon in 2017" (Thornborrow et al., 2021, p. 1). Furthermore, this cross-linguistic and cross-cultural study conducted a qualitative analysis, which allowed for providing a refined comparison of the uses of *populis** across European countries. As in previous studies, the findings confirmed that *populis** was portrayed negatively across the four countries studied. Moreover, Thornborrow et al. (2021, p. 8) concluded that "there is a common conceptual metaphorical scope for evaluating populism negatively in the opinion-oriented journalism" across the contexts studied. Specifically, the findings of this study suggested that "notions of what populism is, and what it does, are highly consistent in the genre across the four nations: populism is represented as an increasingly threatening, dangerous, uncontrollable force, as a flood or wave that submerges them, but a flood that can in some cases be represented as subsiding; as a disease that infects and causes lack of bodily control, but that can also be remedied, vaccinated against, and possibly eradicated" (Thornborrow et al., 2021, p. 8). Thus, this study added a new perspective on the previously dominant view on *populism* as a floating signifier and explained how the negatively loaded meanings of populism were constructed in media discourse.

2.3.2 Studies focusing on the use of *populis** in social media discourse

While numerous studies have analysed the use of *populis** in traditional media discourse, research focusing on how *populis** is used in social media discourse and by other types of actors than journalists has received little attention. To date, there are several studies on the use of *populis** on Twitter. Schwörer (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of the use of *populis** by political actors (classified as populists and mainstream parties and their leaders) from six Western European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland) on Twitter in the period between 2011 and 2021. Tweets (n=1274) were analysed quantitatively in order to determine who uses *populis**, and then manually coded by several analysts. The coding was done according to the following categories: (i) connotation (positive, negative); (ii) negative labelling of actors (non-specific actors, specific actors); (iii) self-description (rejecting populism, accepting populism) (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4). Cohen's Kappa was used to measure inter-rater agreement.

Similarly to the findings regarding the attribution of the populist label in the press (Bale et al., 2011), the random attribution of the populist label as "a meaningless buzzword" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) has been demonstrated in the tweets of political leaders in six Western countries (Schwörer, 2021). The analysis has shown mainly the pejorative use of the term to attack opponents and a few positive uses when referring to themselves (Schwörer, 2021). The analysis determined that 2019 was the year of the peak of occurrence of *populis**, which might suggest the link between the increased use of *populis** and the European elections held that year. Regarding concrete geographical contexts relevant to this thesis, the findings confirmed the pejorative use of the terms, mainly "by mainstream parties towards their populist competitors" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 1). For example, 58% of tweets by PP labelled the left-wing/Podemos; PSOE occasionally attributed the label to the left-wing/Podemos. In addition, the analysis suggested that mainstream parties also attributed the populist label to their competitors, who are not considered populists. Namely, in the context of Spain, the populist label was attributed to "government" and "separatists". Such use was characterised by the attribution of different associations to the concept of populism, as well as by "a less demonizing and delegitimizing nature" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 1). Moreover, the use of *populis** by populists themselves had occasionally positive connotations. Specifically, in case of Spanish political actors, only Vox used *populis**

with a positive connotation. Schwörer (2021, p. 11) highlights that “the positive meaning of populism is predominantly associated with a supposed closeness to the people”.

To date, the use of *populis** by laypeople is analysed in one study (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025). This study shows how identity is negotiated in Twitter interactions by means of the use of the phrase “I am not populist”. Filardo-Llamas et al. (2025) analyse the phrase “I am not populist” in Dutch, French, English, and Spanish in the tweets of lay persons. In this study, *populist* is approached as a stigma term (Kranert, 2020). The results show that *populist* in negation appears as a vague and polysemous term and confirms that “populist as a category can refer to a variety of (political) attitudes and orientations” (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025, p. 653). Moreover, a qualitative annotation of each tweet and a detailed examination of its context determine several trends in the data, namely, a tendency to “disalign with properties such as demagogic or anti-elite and with particular ideological and political positions (e.g. kirchnerism, Peronism, the (radical) left-wing)” (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025, p. 663). In addition, the lay users align with “the (far) right, republican or politicians such as Mauricio Macri (Argentina)” (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025, p. 663). Furthermore, these trends appear to be “contextually dependent” and suggest that the meaning of *populist* “is dynamically constructed in relation to events taking place in 2019” (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025, p. 663).

2.3.3 Summary of research gaps

Populism as a recently emerged political buzzword plays a key role in contemporary discourses of many kinds. Yet, its use and its role in media and political discourse have been studied only partially and several gaps still exist. Firstly, there is no systematic comparative analysis of the meanings and semantic prosodies of *populis** in media and political discourse of different sociopolitical and linguistic environments. Secondly, little attention has been paid to the pragmatic potential of *populis**, including its use by actors other than journalists.

Regarding the first aspect, previous research has highlighted several characteristics of the use of the term *populism* in media discourse. For instance, Aslanidis argues that *populism* is a “buzzword” which “has (...) mainly acquired a pejorative sense, and its various negative angles – the links to extremism, the irrational approach to economics,

the authoritarian elements of personalism – converge towards conceiving populism as a menace to liberal democracy" (Aslanidis, 2017, p. 279). Similarly, previous research has determined that populism is a negatively charged "empty signifier" in Greek media discourse (Nikisianis et al., 2019; Stavrakakis, 2014). In other words, it is "a discursive vessel capable of comprising an excess of heterogeneous meanings (…)" (Stavrakakis, 2014, p. 509).

Previous research on the use of these terms suggests that *populism* and *populist* can have positive and negative semantic prosodies, and thus that they pertain to evaluative lexis. However, no systematic comparative analysis of the meanings and semantic prosodies of *populis** has been conducted to date. There are few empirical studies which determine how *populism* and *populist* are evaluated in actual discursive practices and what different uses of these terms help to achieve in discourse. In the previous studies that do analyse whether the terms are used in a positive, negative or neutral way (Bale et al., 2011; Schwörer, 2021) there is no clear explanation of how the negative, positive or neutral meanings and prosodies are determined.

Linguistic analysis, and more precisely pragmatics, corpus linguistics and discourse analysis tools, methods, and theories can help to identify the implicit meanings and determine the "non-obvious meaning" of lexical items (Partington et al., 2013a, p. 11). Previous research in the field of corpus linguistics and specifically corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) has shown how the use of corpora and corpus linguistics tools and methods of analysis can be of great utility in the analysis of political and media discourses within different fields (linguistics, political science) in order "to uncover any non-obvious ideological meanings and messages" contained in different types of discourses (Partington, 2011, p. 41). In addition, numerous existing studies have accounted for the use of the term in different countries. However, their results mostly shed light on who is labelled as *populist* but not how it is done linguistically. Yet, previous comparative linguistic-oriented studies of other salient words in public discourse, that is '(sociopolitical) keywords' (Johannsen, 2025; Porto & Romano, 2025; Rondiat, 2025; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor, 2017) have highlighted the cross-linguistic nature of such words. Moreover, Hambye et al. (2025) argue that "the meaning or discursive role of a single keyword can vary in different times, different genres, or different languages" (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 3). Thus, the

study of the use of *populis** would benefit from including a cross-linguistic aspect to the analysis.

Previous research has focused mainly on the question of the referent denoted by the use of *populism* and on its connotations. The question of what a particular act of referring to an entity in the world as *populism* (or *populist*) conveys *pragmatically* has been minimally addressed.

Yet, previous studies looking specifically into the *pragmatic functions* (that is the communicative goals achieved by the speakers through the use of a particular linguistic unit) of the terms in media discourse have concluded that *populism* is a "stigma term" (Knobloch, 2012; Kranert, 2020) which functions to order the political landscape, to discredit political actors, and to name political actors outside of the established centre (Kranert, 2020, p. 54). In addition, Hamo et al. (2019, p. 1) have shown that *populism* in Israeli mass media is "a highly flexible and multi-functional" keyword in discourse. These findings suggest that the term *populism* can perform a variety of pragmatic functions. However, the way speakers actually *do* something when they choose the term *populism* out of other possible terms has been documented only partially. We still know very little regarding the full pragmatic potential of the term *populism*. For instance, the following questions still need to be answered: How concretely the use of *populism* discredit a political opponent on the level of utterance and on a broader level of discourse? Can the use of *populism* help to achieve something else than a stigmatising effect? In addition, a contrastive perspective on the use of *populism* is needed. Specifically, the following questions remain unanswered: To what extent does a particular meaning and function conveyed through the use of *populism* depend on the genre of discourse and the interlocutors in discourse? Does referring to something as *populist* convey different meanings in different languages and cultures?

In order to fill the gaps in the literature, this thesis is elaborated around three main dimensions of the use of *populis**: its meanings and semantic prosodies; its pragmatic functions, and its context- specificness. The latter dimension concerns the similarities and differences in the use of *populis** across languages, sociopolitical contexts, discourses, and types of actors.

By analysing these three dimensions, a more complete picture can be obtained, beyond the findings presented in previous studies. Integrating a comparative aspect into the analysis of the meanings and functions of *populis** to account for the possible similarities and differences in the way *populis** is used in different languages, sociopolitical contexts, and by different actors is a novel aspect in the literature on discourses about populism. Moreover, grounding the analysis of *populis** in the theoretical framework of sociopolitical keywords implies approaching it not just as a buzzword – a mere trendy word "empty of meaning" – but as a semantically dense and a multifunctional word, i.e. able to perform a variety of pragmatic functions and flexible depending on the speaker and the target of its use in discourse.

To analyse the usage of *populis** comparatively across these three dimensions, this thesis builds on existing research on keywords. The following section reviews this literature and outlines the theoretical foundation of the approach.

2.4 Theoretical framework: studying keywords in discourse

2.4.1 An overview of the main frameworks to study keywords

There is a rich tradition of studying words that stand out in discourse within specific contexts. Scholars have examined these items from various theoretical perspectives using a range of terminology, including statistical keywords (Scott, 1997), *Grundbegriffe* or 'basic concepts' (Koselleck, 2004), 'cultural keywords' (Wierzbicka, 1997; Williams, 1983), 'discourse keywords' (Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016), 'sociopolitical keywords' (Jeffries, 2003; Jeffries & Walker, 2018; Kranert, 2020), and *formules* (Krieg-Planque, 2003, 2009). Across these varied labels lies a shared foundational premise: certain words act as entry points that provide access to, and help elucidate, the essence of a culture, society, historical era, or discourse.

We can broadly distinguish between two theoretical traditions of studying keywords: (i) a quantitative perspective on keywords, which takes into account a word's statistical significance (the frequency and distribution of a word in a corpus) and (ii) a qualitative perspective on keywords, which takes into account a word's cultural, historical, societal, and political significance.

In line with the first theoretical tradition, which originates in the field of Corpus Linguistics, a keyword appears “statistically more often in one text than the other” (P. Baker, 2004, p. 346). The notion of keywords defined in statistical terms was mainly developed by Scott and popularised with the corpus linguistics program WordSmith Tools and its procedure to extract keywords from a corpus (Scott, 1997; Scott & Tribble, 2006). This software’s KeyWords tool locates and identifies key words in a target dataset by statistically comparing the words in the data with a reference set of words from a large corpus. In this tool, a key word is any word which is found to be outstanding in its frequency in a text or a set of texts. Thus, any word can be a keyword if it is frequent enough compared to a reference corpus.

Studies focusing on the quantitative approach to keywords analysis focus on the *keyness* of a particular word in terms of its statistical significance. Keyness is defined as “quality possessed by words, word-clusters, phrases etc., a quality which is not language-dependent but text-dependent” (Scott, 2010, p. 44). Moreover, Scott (2010, p. 44) highlights the “prominence” and “outstandingness” of such words, stating that keywords “are prominent in some way” in a given text. Thus, a statistical method of determining words which are key to certain discourses and types of texts has been used in corpus linguistic approaches to analyses related to language education, register and genre analysis, and discourse analysis (see Scott & Tribble, 2006). In the context of studies adopting corpus linguistics and discourse analysis tools and methods, a vast range of questions has been addressed through keyword analysis. While keyword analysis in corpus linguistics has yielded valuable insights across register analysis, genre studies, and applied linguistics, this thesis does not treat *populis** primarily as a statistical keyword. Instead, it approaches the term as a sociopolitical keyword – a choice informed by a qualitative understanding of keyness.

In line with the second theoretical tradition, keywords are culturally, historically, socially, and politically resonant words. This approach traces its roots back to conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and the study of *Grundbegriffe* (Koselleck, 2004). The main objective of previous analyses in this strand is to trace the changing meanings of a term in history. For example, such keywords as *Staat* ‘state’, *Bürger* ‘citizen’, *Freiheit* ‘freedom, liberty’, *Gleichheit* ‘equality’ are studied. In addition, in this type of work on keywords, there are dictionaries of words deemed significant in the

historical, social and political lexicon in Germany. As Spira (2015, p. 22) observes, the contested nature of basic concepts demonstrates that "many people are concerned about them," making them particularly attractive to political actors because they "are actively employed to mobilize and motivate people." Although classical conceptual history focuses primarily on long-term historical shifts, these politically charged terms remain central to understanding contemporary discourse (e.g. Kurunmäki & Marjanen, 2018).

This focus on language as a site of discursive struggle aligns closely with political science and linguistics research on (re)framing strategies using polysemic concepts such as ‘people’ and ‘democracy’ among others (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Truan, 2019). Such a (re)framing process is a central battlefield for actors in society. Indeed, attributing a new meaning to a word is a way to (re)frame the political debate as a whole as this process contributes to establishing which topics are open to debate and how they get discussed. Within linguistics research, these impactful terms are conceptualised as ‘keywords’. As Williams (1983, p. 15) notes, keywords "bound together certain ways of seeing culture and society" and serve to "open up issues and problems." Moreover, even when a term's raw statistical frequency is low, a sudden surge in usage or shifts in context can signal broader sociopolitical transformations (Hambye et al., 2025).

Despite some nuanced differences across the terminology regarding keywords, they share several core features: such words are inherently polysemous, highly contested, and context-dependent. They perform crucial pragmatic functions – such as categorising, legitimising, or delegitimising actors and ideas – while exerting strong rhetorical and argumentative force (Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Mercuri, 2025; Rondiat, 2025). It is precisely these dynamics that underpin the ideological power of a term like *populism*.

Williams (1983, p. 24) suggests that a study of “variations and confusions of meanings” may help us understand the changing social and political contexts. Williams traces the historical development, the use and the meanings of a hundred words considered to be key to the intellectual discourse of Great Britain in the 20th century, for example ‘culture’, ‘democracy’, ‘private’, or ‘industry’. Williams (1983, p. 15) describes cultural keywords as “a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions,

in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as culture and society". In terms of method, Williams focuses on those words deemed key and then uses the attested citations in the Oxford English Dictionary as empirical evidence.

In the same vein, Wierzbicka (1997, p. 15) analyses the semantics of shared keywords which are "particularly important and revealing in a given culture" in order to compare different languages and cultures. Wierzbicka (1997, p. 16) argues that "the question is not how to 'prove' whether a particular word is one of the culture's key words, but rather to be able to say something significant and revealing about that culture by undertaking an in-depth study of some of them". The semantic analysis of the use of terms such as 'friendship', 'freedom', 'homeland' in different languages, mainly in literary discourse, highlighted the value of cross-linguistic and comparative perspectives to reveal cultural specificities. However, Wierzbicka's analysis does not provide a systematic methodology.

In contrast to Williams (1983) and Wierzbicka (1997), more recent research on analysing keywords combines quantitative and qualitative methods and provides a detailed analysis of one specific keyword as well as a comparison of the same keyword in different languages (Jeffries & Walker, 2018; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016). Such keywords are referred to in these studies as 'sociopolitical keywords' or 'discourse keywords'. Studies within this category analyse large amounts of textual data with the help of Corpus Linguistics tools and methods. Moreover, previous studies within this category frequently combine Corpus Linguistics with Discourse Analysis.

Jeffries and Walker (2018) identify and analyse a set of sociopolitical keywords in the coverage of New Labour years in the British broadsheet newspapers. Their methodological proposal relies on corpus linguistic methods, and a particular attention is given to a detailed concordance analysis. It also relies on the framework of critical stylistics. The term 'sociopolitical keywords' is used to highlight the sociopolitical significance of the selected words.

Furthermore, previous research on discourse keywords has significantly contributed to comparative discourse analyses (see, for instance, the study of discourses of migration, mainly the analyses of such terms as *multiculturalism* and *multicultural* in

British, French, German, Italian media discourses (Schröter et al., 2019), *community* and *comunità* in the UK and Italian media discourses (Taylor, 2017), and *intégration* and *Integration* in French and German media discourses (Schröter & Veniard, 2016)).

Discourse keywords are "semantic nodes in discourses" (Schröter et al., 2019, p. 15) and "one of the most interesting concepts for its ability to really bring corpus and discourse work together" (Taylor, 2022, pp. 609–610). On the methodological level, Schröter and Storjohann (2015, p. 46) highlight the three main points in the analysis of discourse keywords: namely, "the discursive background and development" of a keyword, its "discourse-related functions", and the patterns of its use, such as "frequencies of occurrence, co-occurrences, position in texts and intertextual semantic/pragmatic coherence". This category of studies often involves cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparative perspectives, examining the use of a word in different types of discourses, in multiple datasets, and by combining different analytical tools available to corpus linguists (Jaworska & Kinloch, 2018; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Storjohann, 2015; Schröter & Veniard, 2016).

For many authors, a word is not a keyword simply because it belongs to a category of politically charged terms, such as various isms. Rather, a word becomes a keyword at a given time due to its widespread, often heterogeneous use, its circulation across different arenas – and thus types of discourse – and its controversial character (Krieg-Planque, 2003, 2009; Schröter, 2008; Williams, 1983). Krieg-Planque (2009, p. 17) argues that a word *« ne naît pas « formule » : il le devient, d'abord par le jeu des usages, des accélérations, des transformations dans l'ordre du discours auxquels il est soumis mais aussi par son inscription fondamentale dans l'Histoire, et enfin par les enjeux sociopolitiques qu'il cristallise tout en leur donnant corps dans l'espace public ».*[4]

Other authors point to the following specificities of keywords. According to Durant, keywords are "relatively abstract names for general practices, theories or standards of

[4] [A word] is not born a 'formula': it becomes one, first through the interplay of uses, accelerations, and transformations in the order of discourse to which it is subjected, but also through its fundamental inscription in History, and finally through the sociopolitical issues that it crystallises while giving them form in the public sphere. (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 17).

judgment" (Durant, 2008, p. 135). For Jeffries & Walker (2018), sociopolitical keywords are those everyday words which acquire socially and politically significant meanings in a concrete period. For Krieg-Planque (2009), these are more often nominal phrases, rather than a single-unit lexical item, which emerge as keywords at a given time due to the controversies about their meaning and use, as well as their circulation and heterogeneous use by different actors.

Therefore, there are no clear-cut established criteria of what makes a word a keyword and of how to select a word which is key according to this qualitative perspective. With respect to the previous studies seeking to map a culture, a society, a historical period, Baker (2004, p. 346) argues that "the earliest writers who referred to keywords intuitively focused on words that they believed embodied important concepts that reflected societal or cultural concerns (e.g., Firth, 1957; Williams, 1983)". Furthermore, Wierzbicka (1997, p. 16) argues that "there is no finite set of such words in a language, and there is no 'objective discovery procedure' for identifying them. To show that a particular word is of special importance in a given culture, one has to make a case for it". She emphasises that "the question is not how to 'prove' whether or not a particular word is one of the culture's key words, but rather to be able to say something significant and revealing about that culture by undertaking an in-depth study of some of them" (Wierzbicka, 1997, p. 16).

2.4.2 Distinguishing features of keywords

A review of previous keyword studies suggests several features particularly relevant to analysing *populis** in discourse, which are discussed below in detail: (i) a specific period of use, newness, and recentness; (ii) statistical and interpretative significance; (iii) the capacity to capture a culture, society, discourse, or ideological position; (iv) use by multiple actors and struggle over a keyword's meaning; and (v) context-specificness.

I. Specific time of use, newness and recentness

The relative recentness of a word's widespread emergence is one of the central aspects establishing its status as a keyword. Terms such as *populism*, *woke*, *fake news*, and *polarisation* have recently become ubiquitous across diverse public, media, and political discourses globally. Although the term *populism* has existed for over a

century, its frequency has surged dramatically in contemporary public debate, marking its transition into a prominent keyword. For instance, Kranert (2020, p. 36) demonstrates that *populism* and *populist* "developed into socio-political keywords" in British political discourse between 2012 and 2017, contrasting sharply with their lower profile in earlier periods (e.g. Bale et al., 2011).

This dynamic aligns with Krieg-Planque's (2009) conceptualisation of a *formule*, which emerges during a particularly dense phase in a word's trajectory, that is a *« moment où la 'vie du mot' (...) entre dans une période particulièrement dense »"*[5] (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 17). At this stage, a formula becomes *« une unité qui signifie quelque chose pour tous en même temps qu'elle devient objet de polémique »*[6] (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 54).

Keywords become so closely tied to specific issues that discussing those topics without employing the term becomes nearly impossible. Even when absolute statistical frequency remains modest, a sudden widespread emergence reflects underlying historical and sociopolitical shifts (Hambye et al., 2025). Analysing *populis** through a keyword lens thus allows researchers to capture emerging sociopolitical issues or identify novel framings of longstanding debates (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 5).

II. Significance (statistical and interpretative)

In addition, for some authors, a word's significance is related to the question of frequency. Some studies analyse statistically frequent words as keywords, while others do not apply the frequency-based argument and follow the principle of the interpretative significance. Previous studies on both discourse keywords (Schröter & Storjohann, 2015; Schröter & Veniard, 2016) and sociopolitical keywords (Jeffries & Walker, 2018) take into account statistical significance when establishing which lexical items in the chosen discourse can be viewed as keywords. However, qualitative interpretative significance is taken into account alongside statistical significance in some studies of keywords (e.g. Jeffries & Walker, 2018).

[5] (...) a moment when the 'life of the word' (...) enters a particularly dense period" (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 17).

[6] a unit that means something to everyone while simultaneously becoming a subject of controversy (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 54).

Furthermore, a single, strategic occurrence such as the deliberate deployment of *populist* in a candidate's campaign tweet can carry profound sociopolitical weight. As Jeffries and Walker (2018, p. 28) emphasise, a word's "interpretative significance" must complement quantitative metrics. While statistical significance is certainly a very useful criterion to decide whether a word can be considered key in a particular context, a more qualitative perspective taking into account the word's prominence and outstandingness in discourse also plays an important role in the study of keywords. For instance, as we will see in Chapter 5, a sole mention of a keyword, such as the use of the noun *populist* in a tweet during an election campaign might point to the term's outstanding political significance in a particular discourse and timeframe.

III. Capacity to capture a culture, society, discourse, or ideological position

For some authors, the outstandingness of keywords is linked to "the fact that they can summarise a particular worldview, ideology or political positioning, or a whole set of problems and questions, and thus function as a proxy for a long and explicit evocation of such viewpoints and issues" (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 6). Similarly, Schröter (2008, p. 43) highlights the capacity of keywords to capture "discourse in a nutshell", to act as "semantic nodes" in discourse (Schröter et al., 2019, p. 4), and as a "focal point around which entire cultural domains are organized" (Wierzbicka, 1997, p. 156). These findings thus point to the role of keywords as "central phenomena in discourses" (Schröter & Storjohann, 2015, p. 47). Krieg-Planque (2009, p. 84) defines *formule* as *« un ensemble de formulations qui, du fait de leurs emplois à un moment donné et dans un espace public donné, cristallisent des enjeux politiques et sociaux que ces expressions contribuent dans le même temps à construire »*[7]. Keywords are thus primarily discursive phenomena (*notion discursive*), as Krieg-Planque (2009) emphasises, and it is precisely language use within repeated social practice that elevates a term like 'populism' to a central, polemical lexical unit.

This capacity can be explained by the polysemy of keywords. Previous studies on keywords using different labels to refer to them align on the idea that keywords have

[7] (…) a set of formulations which, by virtue of their use at a given time and in a given public space, crystallise political and social issues that these expressions simultaneously contribute to constructing (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 84).

multiple meanings and connotations. For instance, Durant (2006) argues that a keyword “is polysemous, having multiple, concurrent senses that are historically and semantically related” (Durant, 2006, p. 14)l. Durant (2006, p. 14) provides an example of the word ‘liberal’, stating that it “is used in a narrowly technical, party political sense, but also in a broader political sense that characterises a spectrum of positions, not all of which are ‘liberal’ in the first sense. The word is also widely used in other, non-political senses, for example meaning ‘generous’; and each sense is amenable to a positive or negative spin depending on context and the assumed beliefs of the addressee”. In the same vein, previous studies adopting the concept of ‘sociopolitical keywords’ have highlighted the idea that keywords have several different meanings and are subjected to different interpretations in a particular period (Jeffries & Walker, 2018, p. 209).

Furthermore, some authors point to the fact that keywords are at the same time polysemous and vague (Jeffries & Walker, 2018). For example, the term *populism* has been claimed to be vague and empty of meaning (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). At the same time, we can observe that *populism* actually has a multiplicity of meanings, as suggested by the empirical analyses of the use of *populis** in discourse (e.g. Demata et al., 2020; Kranert, 2020; Thornborrow et al., 2021). In addition, Hambye et al. (2025, pp. 7–8) points out that “many SPKW [sociopolitical keywords] are *overloaded* with semantic elements rather than ‘empty’”. They furthermore argue that “words like ‘populism’ and ‘wokism’ or ‘integration’ and ‘sustainable’ are strongly loaded with sets of meaning elements because of their role as semantic nodes and their frequent association with other words, values, etc.” (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 8). Thus, keywords may be perceived as vague precisely because of this “meaning ‘concentration’” (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 7).

By referring to *populism* as a polysemic and at the same time vague term, I highlight the fact that it has multiple concrete or unspecified meanings (whether stable and constant or contingent to the context).

IV. Use by different actors and struggle over the meaning of a keyword

Another defining characteristic of keywords is the process of circulation and the heterogeneous use of a keyword by different actors. Maingueneau (1991, p. 85, as

cited in Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 99) notes that *«à un moment donné, tout le monde est contraint de se situer par rapport à ces formules, de les faire circuler d'une manière ou d'une autre en luttant pour leur imposer sa propre interprétation »*[8] (Maingueneau, 1991). Thus, a formula has a variety of uses shaped by different speakers and types of discourses in which it is used and because of the process of circulation. Similarly, previous studies on cultural keywords suggest that keywords are "construed differently on different occasions of use" (Durant, 2006, p. 135).

Circulation of a keyword and its use by different actors influences the controversy around the keyword itself or what Kranert (2020, p. 34) calls "semantic struggle". Keywords tend to be subject to controversies and can be themselves the main subject of a debate. Moreover, these words are used in a variety of contexts and by a variety of speakers. Such words "play a role in some kind of social debate or dispute" (Durant, 2008, p. 135). Similarly, Schröter (2008, p. 51) suggests that the "most crucial characteristic of key words is that they refer to issues that are controversially debated in the public arena". Schröter (2008, p. 51) furthermore points to the presence of keywords in "metalinguistic comments", and hence, to "a public awareness of the role of certain expressions in the related discourse".

Furthermore, the use of a keyword by different actors is related to a less studied question of its pragmatic potential. Yet, this question is crucial to further our understanding of the role of keywords in discourse. Specifically, socially and politically significant words often function as political labels. As such, they participate in processes of classification and categorisation. For instance, determining who or what is populist is a way to differentiate, hierarchise, and consequently legitimise or disqualify objects, groups, or ideas. As tools for categorisation, keywords are used to grant legitimacy to the speaker's position or, on the contrary, to devalue and delegitimise political opponents.

Thus, it seems crucial to explore the idea that a keyword plays a role in discourse because it can be used with a purpose, that is, a keyword has a function. Moreover,

[8] At some point, everyone is forced to position themselves in relation to these formulas, to circulate them in one way or another, striving to impose their own interpretation (Krieg-Planque, 2009, p. 99).

as motivated by the abovementioned features of keywords, it can be argued that keywords do not have a sole function, but multiple functions. For this reason, I propose to call this characteristic of keywords *multifunctionality*. In previous research, the question of the function of keywords is described in terms of the following aspects. The work of Jeffries and Walker (2018) focuses on the syntactic context of a keyword and uses the term 'textual-conceptual functions', a concept borrowed from Critical Stylistics (Jeffries & Walker, 2018, p. 39). Other authors study the 'argumentative function' of keywords, that is, the role of a keyword in argumentation (Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Mercuri, 2025; Rondiat, 2025). Furthermore, Kranert (2020) analyses *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword and uses the term 'pragmatic function'. In line with Kranert (2020), I will use the term 'pragmatic function' in this thesis to highlight the pragmatic potential of *populis**, which of course also ties in with its argumentative capacity. However, the analysis of specifically argumentative functions of a keyword can be suggested as a potential area for future research.

V. Context-specificness

Previous research has pointed out that populism is articulated differently in different geographical and sociopolitical contexts. Hence, the question arises of what the meanings of *populism* are in different contexts. What are the similarities and differences in the way it is used? To what extent are (sociopolitical) keywords context-specific?

Some authors have discussed whether keywords are context-specific (Hambye et al., 2025; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Wierzbicka, 1997), pointing to features such as "discourse-specificness, temporal specificness, and linguistic and/or cultural specificness" (Hambye et al., 2025, p. 11). Previous research suggests that some keywords might have a cross-linguistic relevance because of their universal or transnational nature. However, this does not necessarily imply that they is used similarly everywhere. Some of the words approached as keywords do have a universal character (e.g. the analysis of the cultural keyword 'friendship') (Wierzbicka, 1997), which make them an interesting candidate for a comparative analysis, which sheds light on the specificities of the cultures or contexts involved in the analysis (Wierzbicka, 1997).

Furthermore, Hambye et al. (2025, p. 12) argue that “the presence of the same SPKW in various languages can be explained by the fact that the societal debates or challenges to which they refer are transnational, e.g. climate change, political polarisation, populism, disinformation, increasing awareness of discrimination based on ethnic or gender criteria”. Hambye et al. (2025, p. 12) highlight that many of such words “are relevant beyond the border of a specific country”. In the case of the word *populism*, we can discuss its transnational nature, as it has been claimed to be a global phenomenon (Moffitt, 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Indeed, as we have seen in the review of the studies on populism (Sections 2.1–2.3 of this chapter), there are numerous examples of actors and actions worldwide that are classified as populists. Moreover, previous studies have determined a rapid growth of the use of the term, especially in academic and media articles in different languages. The word *populism* is attached to disparate phenomena and has been used differently in different historical periods. However, Hambye et al. (2025, p. 13) suggest that the keywords’ “pervasiveness does not necessarily imply that they have exactly the same meaning in different languages and countries and/or that they function similarly in sociopolitical debates”. Thus, a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparison can determine the similarities and point to possible differences.

2.4.3 Empirical studies of keywords and their methodologies

As established in the review of literature on the use of populism in media discourse, there is a lack of studies in which a systematic analysis of meanings and semantic prosodies of *populism* is conducted. Previous research on sociopolitical and discourse keywords using corpus approaches provides tools necessary to conduct such analysis, including from a cross-linguistic perspective. In addition, the multifunctionality of *populis** has been studied only minimally. The three dimensions are covered in the studies using corpus and discourse approaches to analysing (sociopolitical) keywords, which I will now present.

Corpus- and discourse-driven analyses of keywords can be broadly categorised into three distinct analytical types. First, studies vary in their language scope, adopting either a monolingual or a multilingual (cross-linguistic) design. Monolingual approaches focus on the discursive behaviour of a single keyword within a single language. For instance, (Bolívar, 2009) analyses the usage and evolving meanings of

the keywords *democracia* “democracy” and *revolución* “revolution” in the Venezuelan political talk show *Aló Presidente*, hosted by former President Hugo Chávez and broadcast on state television and radio channels. Combining Corpus Linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines the raw frequency of these terms alongside their collocational profiles and concordance lines to evaluate their implications for public political dialogue. A central contribution of Bolívar’s (2009) approach is determining how these key terms are evaluated and constructed in discourse, and how this can be systematically operationalised using Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis in Spanish.

Secondly, multilingual approaches examine translation equivalents across two or more languages to trace cross-cultural patterns. Prominent examples include the analysis of *populism* and *populist* in English and German (Kranert, 2020) and in English, French, Greek, and Swedish (Thornborrow et al., 2021); the analysis of the keywords *multicultural and multiculturalism* in English, French, German and Italian (Schröter et al., 2019); the analysis of the term *polarisation* in English and Spanish (Porto & Romano, 2025).

Thirdly, the analyses of keywords can be done at different levels; that is, at the lexical level (for example, by determining a collocational profile of a keyword) and above the lexical level (for example, by analysing semantic fields, discourse frames, rhetorical features). However, there are studies of keywords which combine several types of analysis of keywords. For example, Schröter et al. (2019) analyse news discourse of several countries and determine the lexical profile of *multicultural(ism)* in four languages, as well as conduct the analysis above the lexical level by comparing semantic categories.

Existing studies on the usage of keywords in discourse predominantly rely on quantitative tools from Corpus Linguistics, such as collocation profiles and concordance analyses. While statistical corpus tools enable the processing of vast amounts of decontextualised language data, there is a growing imperative to analyse fully contextualised data by incorporating qualitative analytical methods. To bridge this gap, numerous scholars adopting a qualitative understanding of keywords integrate Corpus Linguistics with Discourse Analysis, most notably through Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), an approach of particular relevance to this thesis, including

cross-linguistic comparative research (Alcántara-Plá, 2020; Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Storjohann, 2015; Taylor, 2017). For instance, drawing on Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, Alcántara-Plá (2020) investigates the usage of *democracia* on Twitter by combining quantitative collocation metrics with qualitative analyses of tweets posted by major Spanish political parties (PSOE, PP, Podemos, Cs, and Vox) during late 2019, a critical period encompassing the Spanish general elections.

Furthermore, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) has been widely applied in cross-linguistic comparative analyses of migration discourses. Notable examples include studies examining *multiculturalism* and *multicultural* across British, French, German, and Italian media discourses (Schröter et al., 2019), *community* and *comunità* in UK and Italian press coverage (Taylor, 2017), and *intégration* and *Integration* in French and German media (Schröter & Veniard, 2016). This body of research yields key methodological insights into tracking the meanings and evaluative orientation of keywords: considerations that directly inform the analytical framework in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

As Schröter (2008, p. 48) emphasises, examining discourse keywords requires "studying the meaning and the evaluations associated with the use of the key word by certain groups and in certain contexts." She further notes that keyword analysis "involves looking at a relatively large number of texts, and it certainly requires some general background knowledge about the period, the political landscape and discursive constellations" (Schröter, 2008, p. 48). Subsequent empirical scholarship on discourse keywords reinforces this multifaceted approach, stressing the importance of combining frequency and distribution metrics with collocational profiling, metaphorical uses, and metalinguistic comments (Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Storjohann, 2015; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor, 2017).

In addition, another category of studies focuses on the pragmatic dimension of keywords. Filardo-Llamas et al. (2025) have focused on the function of *populist* in tweets produced by laypeople, thus providing new findings on the topic regarding the way *populis** is used by actors other than journalists and politicians. The pragmatic distinctiveness of the term populist has been determined in the analysis of tweets containing the phrase ‘I am not populist’ (IANP) in four languages. The study uses

inductively established analytical categories and focuses on the qualitative analysis of four dimensions: (i) characteristics associated with populist from which users disalign, alongside the contrasting features with which they align; (ii) the patterns of use of IANP in context; (iii) features specific to the interactional context of Twitter; and (iv) formal features (e.g. position of IANP within the tweet). This study serves as a valuable example of a qualitative analytical framework as well as of the challenges involved in the qualitative analysis of multilingual data on social media.

In a similar vein, Kranert (2020) examines *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword in German and English, comparing its usage by journalists and politicians across news media discourses. Methodologically, Kranert's (2020) study adopts "a combination of a quantitative corpus driven analysis and qualitative concordance line analysis" (Kranert, 2020, p. 36), wherein the qualitative component relies on manual data annotation using inductively derived analytical categories. Specifically, to systematically identify and categorise the pragmatic functions of *populis** within a randomised sample of concordance lines, Kranert (2020) operationalises four analytical parameters: the political spectrum; the entity or phenomenon to which *populis** is attributed; the presence or absence of explicit metalinguistic comment; and the broader thematic topic of the article. The qualitative framework employed in Chapter 5 of this thesis directly adapts this approach, using a systematic manual annotation process based on inductively established analytical categories to investigate the pragmatic dimension of *populis**.

In sum, previous research has identified several defining features of *populism* and *populist* that underscore their role as prominent sociopolitical keywords in contemporary public debate: namely, the absence of a single consensus definition, persistent controversy over their meaning and attribution, and their rapid, widespread diffusion across diverse global discourses. Approaching *populis** through the lens of keyword studies provides the necessary framework to achieve the core objectives of this thesis. Specifically, this approach enables a systematic investigation into the evolving meanings and evaluative connotations of *populis**, illuminates its multifunctional pragmatic roles in discourse, and facilitates a systematic cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparative analysis.

Building upon the theoretical and empirical insights established in this chapter, the following chapter outlines the overall research design and analytical framework developed to operationalise these concepts. Specifically, Chapter 3 overviews the methodology, detailing key research choices such as the research contexts and data sources selected for analysing discourses containing *populis**. Furthermore, it discusses the two complementary empirical approaches applied in this thesis: the corpus-assisted methodology used to examine collocational profiles of *populis** across the four public spheres in Case study 1 (Chapter 4) and the discourse-analytic annotation scheme implemented to analyse pragmatic functions of *populis** in the tweets by political actors and laypeople in Case study 2 (Chapter 5).

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction: A mixed-method analysis of the use of *populis** in mass media and social media discourses

As established in the previous chapters, this thesis approaches the terms *populism(s)*, *populist(s)* (nouns) *and populist* (adjective) – collectively designated via the search stem *populis** – as sociopolitical keywords, i.e. socially and politically significant items that crystallise power relations, ideological divides, and contested meanings within a specific time span. Rather than treating *populis** as an analytical concept denoting an objective external reality (e.g. an ideology, a specific style, or a type of party organisation), this study investigates *populis** as a discursive object. It focuses on how the term itself is used, evaluated, and contested (or not) by journalists, political actors, and laypeople in public discourse.

To address this objective, the empirical investigation is structured into two complementary case studies using a mixed-method approach and integrating different methods of analysis and multiple sources of data. The analytical chapters show how a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach can be used to comparatively investigate sociopolitical keywords across languages and communicative environments (Kranert, 2020; Schröter, 2008; Taylor & Del Fante, 2020; Thornborrow et al., 2021).

First, the analysis zooms out to conduct a systematic contrastive analysis of *populis** across three languages (Dutch, French, and Spanish) and four public spheres (Spain, France, French-speaking Belgium, and Dutch-speaking Belgium) in 2019. It compares the frequency of *populis** across four corpora, groups collocates into inductively established semantic categories, and examines concordance lines of the most salient collocates in each public sphere. The comparison is focused mainly on the specificities related to the grammatical form of *populis** and the languages and sociopolitical contexts of the four public spheres. Where relevant, the analysis of the collocates of *populis** takes into account how differences in the use of *populis** can be related to different types of media outlets. A systematic study of the difference between media outlets is however beyond the scope of this thesis.

Second, the analysis zooms in on a single linguistic context (Spanish) to compare the pragmatic functions of *populis** across different types of actors (political actors vs. laypeople) in Twitter discourse. Through a manual annotation of data following deductively and inductively established analytical categories, it looks into the contexts of use of *populis** focusing on the pragmatic differences regarding the meanings and functions of *populis**.

In Section 3.2, I present the key methodological considerations of this thesis which are guided by the interdisciplinary nature of the TrUMPo project. Section 3.3 details the analytical framework introducing the pilot studies and then moving to the discussion of how the CADS approach to the analysis of *populism* and *populist* as sociopolitical keywords helps to answer the research questions of this thesis. The specific methods of the two case studies are then examined in depth across Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

3.2 Methodological considerations

This thesis is part of the ARC-funded (*Actions de recherche concertées de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*) research project entitled "Tracking the uses of *populism* in media and political discourse" (TrUMPo) held at UCLouvain (Belgium). This interdisciplinary research project has gathered scholars from political science, communication studies, and linguistics backgrounds from 2020 till 2026. This thesis studies *populis** from the perspective of linguistics and contributes to the understanding of the use and the role of *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword in contemporary media discourses about populism in Western democracies: Belgium, France, and Spain. In what follows, I outline the TrUMPo project's key methodological choices regarding the countries, the period, and the data selected for the analysis.

3.2.1 Selection of countries and timeframe

Over the past two decades, parties and movements labelled as populist have achieved considerable electoral success across Europe. This phenomenon spans both ends of the political spectrum. Western Europe features a notable right-wing populist presence in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, and the Netherlands. Eastern Europe has also recently seen various right-wing populist parties and leaders. In Southern Europe, populism initially gained traction through left-wing movements in countries such as Greece and Spain. Accelerated by the 2008 economic crisis and the

Great Recession, this broad European surge in populist politics has intensified the public and scholarly use of the term *populis** to refer to a diverse array of political actors.

For this study, Belgium, France, and Spain are selected on the basis of the fact that they are consolidated democracies and established members of the European Union, but have also seen parties labelled as populist in recent years, as I will detail below. The choice of the period to study discourses about populism is determined by the multiple elections that have occurred in all three countries in 2019, including the European elections. The focus on an electoral year is justified by this being the moment where political competition in a democracy is at its peak and where most discourses are produced, possibly including the word *populism*. Specifically, Schwörer (2021) determined a peak of occurrences of *populis** in a corpus of tweets of European politicians in 2019. Examining media coverage surrounding the 2019 European elections informs how media outlets construct the link between populism and Euroscepticism, and whether populism is discursively presented as a threat to democracy in the media discourse of the countries selected. A comparative perspective on the use of *populis** in several European countries will allow for observing whether the meanings and the evaluation of *populis** overlap or differ across countries. Alongside strong convergences between the discourses of European countries presented in the literature review there are the differences in political constellations. Hence, the analysis of the use of *populis** requires the issue to be approached from a comparative perspective.

Finally, the choice of these geographical contexts is also motivated by the possibility of comparing terms which have direct equivalents in various languages, which is an important question to address when designing a cross-linguistic study (Taylor & Del Fante, 2020; Vessey, 2013).

The choice to include these three countries to analyse discourses about populism has implications for the results. Selecting France, Spain, and Belgium introduces distinct contextual dynamics that influence how *populis** might be evaluated in mass media coverage, social media, and political discourse. The choice of these countries to observe the use of *populis** is justified by the coexistence of political parties classified as populists on both sides of the political spectrum (Rooduijn et al., 2024) (e.g. right-

wing *Rassemblement national* or left-wing *La France insoumise* in France, left-wing *Podemos* and right-wing *Vox* in Spain, right-wing *Vlaams Belang*, and left-wing *Parti du travail de Belgique/Partij van de Arbeid van België* in Belgium). Such political contexts provides an opportunity to observe the association of *populis** with left and right-wing parties and politicians, and determine how these associations are framed and evaluated.

In France, where pejorative references to radical-right populism dominate public discourse (Hubé & Truan, 2016), mainstream press coverage (Deringer & Ströbel, 2022) tends to align with ideational approaches that frame populism as an illiberal threat to democratic norms (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

In Spain, the left-wing coalition *Unidas Podemos* participates in General Elections in 2019 and later, in 2020, enters the coalition government with PSOE. Previous research suggests that left-wing populism (e.g. early *Podemos*) can be framed as a democratic corrective against elite corruption (Laclau, 2005). Consequently, we might expect that references to *populis** could have positive evaluations. However, *Podemos*'s openness to regional self-determination in the context of the polarised Spanish politics in the aftermath of the Catalan Independence referendum in 2017 might fuel a negative framing of left-wing populism.

The Belgian mass media data are treated separately, as the country is divided into different linguistic communities. Moreover, the linguistic divisions are present in the media, thus suggesting the need to distinguish between the public spheres and to analyse separately the media from the Dutch-speaking community and the French-speaking community (De Cleen & Van Aelst, 2016). Furthermore, the Belgian case provides a compelling internal contrast the prominence of a populist radical-right party in Flanders, compared with its absence in Wallonia, where the *cordon sanitaire médiatique* formally excludes the radical right from legitimate debate, and conversely the much stronger presence in Wallonia of a populist left-wing party (de Jonge, 2021). This may have an impact on discourses containing *populis** and is especially relevant for analysing how ideological orientation shapes media coverage of populism across distinct linguistic communities.

3.2.2 Selection of data to analyse uses of *populis**

In this thesis, the use of *populis** in the discourse from the mass media and social media sources will be analysed. The integration of media sources from different types of media allows for observing the use of *populis** in traditional media (e.g. printed press, TV, and radio) containing discourse "oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer" who "very often cannot make instantaneous responses to the producer(s) of the discourse, (...)" (O'Keeffe, 2011, p. 441). By also integrating discourse from new media – social media platforms – the use of *populis** can be studied in contexts in which the information is not only communicated but can also be reacted to and discussed. Moreover, social media messages are not only produced by professional journalists, but also by laypeople and politicians, among others.

Mass media are understood in this research as broadcast mass-market media which "adhere to professional norms and news values" (Engesser et al., 2017, p. 1110), i.e. in which "professionals judge what constitutes worthy information or not" (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018, p. 3). Moreover, mass media offer extensive accessibility and scope, and therefore "can serve as both reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases, and discourse styles" (Spitulnik, 1996, p. 162). In order to build a highly representative corpus of mass media discourse, the data analysed in this thesis contain texts with the token *populis** published during 2019 on the websites of the following types of media: (1) an established source, (2) a serious-popular source, (3) a free daily and traffic distributed newspaper, and (4) a public-owned media which includes information that appears on TV and radio (see Table 1). The established media sources are "established media [that] typically operate within the consensus, displaying a clear tendency to adopt the hegemonic-official position on issues" (Wiesslitz & Ashuri, 2011, p. 1038). The serious-popular media are defined by Sparks (2000, p. 15) as those outlets "which have a strong stress upon visual design and contain a large dose of scandal, sports and entertainment but that still demonstrate all, or a significant part, of the same inventory of news values as their more serious cousins" (Sparks, 2000, p. 15). A free daily media refers to the "popular mass medium" (Lamour, 2019, p. 1167), that is, those outlets which contain "short, illustrated and easily consumed content, distributed in large urban areas during the morning or evening peak hours" (Lamour, 2017, p. 1). Thus, the main criteria for the choice of mass media sources was to select the most important outlet in terms of print run for

each category. The supposed political leaning of each outlet has not been taken into account even though it cannot be considered as equivalent for each newspaper in the same category. Defining the political leaning was not easy and the choice of the outlet guided by the political leaning would affect the possibility of finding equivalent outlets in each country for each category.

Type of data source	Spain	France	Belgium (French)	Belgium (Dutch)
Established media	*El País*	*Le Monde*	*Le Soir*	*De Standaard*
Serious-popular media	*El Español*	*Le Parisien*	*La DH*	*HLN*
Free daily media	*20 Minutos*	*20 Minutes*	*Metro*	*Metro*
Public-owned media	*RTVE*	*France info*	*RTBF*	*VRT*

Table 1. Data sources selected for the analysis of the occurrences of *populis** in mass media discourse.

Analysing the use of *populis** in a wide range of media sources helps to get a broader picture of how *populis** is used in different types of media outlets and media genres. The subcorpora contain different types of media outlets and thus different types of articles, such as news, editorials, opinion-based articles, and interviews with experts. The different types of media do not allocate equal weight to these genres, which has an impact on the distribution of *populis** across the corpora. Marchi and Taylor (2018) point out that “work on media discourse has been dominated by newspaper discourse” due to the relatively easy access and compilation of a corpus or a dataset (Marchi & Taylor, 2018, p. 9). News media offer a rich site for corpus and discourse analysis precisely because of what Marchi identifies as its defining characteristics —"its relevance and its abundance" (Marchi, 2022, p. 576). Moreover, Jaworska and Kinloch (2018, p. 114) suggest paying more attention to the “diversity of text types within this medium”. Jaworska and Kinloch argue that “studying how a discursive phenomenon

behaves across contexts with multiple data sets (...) helps the researcher discover differences and commonalities (...) in the ways in which discursive phenomena are constructed and this depends on the participants, their roles, relations and domain in which they operate as well as the constraints and affordances of the medium" (Jaworska & Kinloch, 2018, p. 114).

In this thesis, Twitter has been selected among different social media platforms. The term 'social media' is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Ellison & Boyd, 2013, p. 158). Social media networks can also be described as social media platforms. Such a label highlights how social media are made up of a material infrastructure layer that is far from neutral. Social media follow a "media logic" different from the mass media news industry, allowing users to bypass professional gatekeepers, i.e. journalists. They are built upon a "network media logic" where "popularity among like-minded users, not professional gatekeepers, decides whether information is relevant and passed on (i.e. goes viral) or not" (Klinger & Svensson, 2015, p. 9). This social media platform was considered as a major news source and as an important channel of communication of public figures (Berber Sardinha, 2022). Moreover, Taylor (2022) suggests that Twitter is a valuable source for political discourse analysis arguing that "now it would be unthinkable to look at any election campaign without considering social media texts" (Taylor, 2022, p. 610). This choice is furthermore relevant from an ethical point of view since the public nature of most messages on this platform makes it possible to collect data while respecting the privacy choices of the users (Woo-Yoo & Gil-de-Zúñiga, 2014).

The analysis of how *populis** is used in Twitter discourse is motivated by the interest in observing the similarities and differences which depend on the type of actor, namely political actors versus laypeople, as well as by the need to fill the existing gap in the literature identified in Chapter 2. The choice of including tweets by lay users is motivated by the almost complete absence of research on the way laypeople use *populis** in discourse. The tweets by political actors analysed in this thesis were published by public political figures on the official accounts of political parties and leaders. These tweets exemplify the use of the platform with a potential for political

communication and interaction with the citizens and represent a professional use of Twitter. In contrast, the tweets by lay persons analysed in this thesis were published on the personal accounts of people who are not politicians, media professionals, or experts in the fields of political science. These tweets exemplify the lay use of the platform in opposition to the professional use by the people in power. Analysing two datasets comparatively makes it possible to highlight tendencies regarding the use of Twitter by laypeople engaged in discussing sociopolitical issues and posting content related to politics.

In this thesis, the tweets analysed pertain to the Spanish-speaking Twitter space deemed as a shared linguistic space which serves to explore and compare the use of *populis** by different categories of Twitter users. All tweets by political users have been published on the accounts of political actors who hold a mandate in Spain. The selection of tweets by lay users is not limited to Spain but includes different geographic locations. Indeed, the accounts of lay users may be located in Spain but discuss topics related to other Spanish-speaking countries, and vice versa.

This delimitation is motivated by the research interest in further analysing the impact of the sociopolitical context on the use of *populis** which is also observed in the collocational analysis of media data. Moreover, focusing only on the Spanish case is motivated by practical reasons, namely conducting a detailed analysis focusing on one variable, that is observing the similarities and differences in relation to the actor who uses the term. The integration of other variables, such as other languages, to the qualitative annotation of *populis** is a possible avenue for future studies on discourses about populism.

3.3 Analytical framework

3.3.1 Pilot studies

To develop the analytical framework of this thesis, three preliminary pilot studies were conducted (Shchinova, 2023, 2024; Shchinova et al., 2024). These exploratory investigations tested different methodological approaches ranging from manual close reading and annotation of every occurrence of *populis** in its immediate context inspired by discourse analytic and pragmatics studies (Kranert, 2020; Hamo et al.,

2019) to establishing the collocational profiles of *populis** inspired by Corpus Linguistics research and the analyses of discourse keywords cross-linguistically (Kranert, 2020; Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Thornborrow et al., 2021).

The first pilot study (Shchinova, 2024) investigated the use of *populis** in institutional discourse focusing on parliamentary debates produced in 2019 in the French *Assemblée nationale* and the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*. Given the relatively low frequency of *populis** in the transcripts of parliamentary debates, the analysis relied on manual annotation and close qualitative analysis of *populis** in its immediate context (a window of several sentences to the left and right of the node word).

By examining these specific political contexts through a comparative framework and manual annotation, this study revealed key observations that offer a more nuanced perspective on previous findings. Specifically, it showed that there are differences in the meanings and associations with *populis** related to the grammatical form: noun vs. adjective. In the French parliamentary corpus, *populis** occurred predominantly as an adjective (*populiste*), functioning primarily to modify entities and to refer to them and to describe them. In contrast, the Spanish corpus displayed a marked preference for plural person-referring nouns (*los populistas*), operating as a categorising device to delegitimise and to stigmatise via the use of *populis**.

The second pilot study (Shchinova, 2023) examined the pragmatic potential of *populis** in the Twitter discourse of Spanish political actors. This study highlighted the need to distinguish between the object of *populis** (i.e. what is conceptually characterised as populist) and the target of *populis** (i.e. the specific political actor being targeted either implicitly or explicitly). To illustrate this nuance, consider the following examples from Spanish political tweets published during the electoral campaign in November and December 2019:

(1) *El domingo nos jugamos* ***seguir progresando*** *o* ***ir hacia una deriva populista*** *que está entre Bolsonaro, Le Pen, Trump,* ***Vox, PP*** *y* ***Cs****.* (@psibpsoe, 8/11/2019)

(On Sunday it will be at stake whether we continue to make progress or **go down a populist path** between Bolsonaro, Le Pen, Trump, Vox, PP and Cs.)

(2) *Europa ha garantizado durante años nuestra paz y prosperidad. Hoy ese proyecto está* ***amenazado*** *por* ***populismos*** *y* ***totalitarismos****.* (@Sánchezcastejon, 21/05/2019)

(Europe has guaranteed our peace and prosperity for years. Today that project is **threatened by populism and totalitarianism**.)

In both instances, the word carries a strongly negative evaluation, signalled co-textually by pejorative terms (*deriva* "drift", *amenazado* "threatened"). However, their pragmatic targets differ significantly:

In Example (1), published immediately prior to an election, the speaker (PSOE) constructs an explicit list combining international far-right figures (*Bolsonaro, Le Pen, Trump*) with national right-wing and centre-right rivals (*Vox, PP, Cs*). Here, while international actors form the conceptual object of populism, the true pragmatic targets are the three domestic competing parties. By grouping domestic opponents with controversial global figures under a single umbrella term, the speaker is able to make use of the stigmatising effect of *populis**, and to indirectly discredit concrete national actors who are the speaker's main political opponents. In Example (2), the referents of *populismos* and *totalitarismos* are left abstract and unspecified. *Populismo* operates as a vague ideological scare word.

These observations raise a question: What distinct pragmatic purposes does *populis** help actors achieve beyond the established functions documented in existing literature? Moving beyond the notion of *populism* as merely a generic pejorative label, this research investigates how its strategic deployment allows political actors and citizens to perform complex discursive tasks — such as ideological categorisation and indirect opponent delegitimisation.

The first and the second pilot studies served to refine the analytical categories used to manually annotate the data in this thesis. Determining how the term is used implies annotating its contextual, semantic and pragmatic features, that is in which contexts the term is used (e.g. in debates regarding questions of what is considered a democratic measure vs. in the news reporting the election results), what is referred to as *populis**, what meanings and evaluations are attributed to the term, and with what function the term is used (e.g. to stigmatise a political opponent).

The third pilot study (Shchinova et al., 2024) shifted the empirical focus to news discourse in French- and Dutch-speaking Belgium. Drawing on Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) of sociopolitical and discourse keywords (e.g. Schröter et al., 2019), this pilot study implemented a mixed-methods design integrating collocation analysis and concordance lines analysis. This pilot established the viability of CADS for capturing cross-linguistic variations in how *populis** is evaluated and with what entities it is associated across Belgium's French- and Dutch-language media outlets. Using a range of corpus linguistics methods to understand the object of study in a large amount of data offered several entry points to the data and made it possible to determine statistically significant shared patterns of use of *populis** across two contexts.

Together, these three exploratory studies provided key empirical and methodological foundations for the overarching design of this thesis:

First, they confirmed that analysing *populis** requires capturing subtle similarities and differences in meaning, semantic prosody, and pragmatic function. Doing so requires combining the analysis of different grammatical forms of *populis** alongside dedicated attention to its heterogeneous use by varied speakers.

Second, they demonstrated the efficacy of a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) framework, which successfully bridges the quantitative rigour of corpus linguistics with the qualitative depth of discourse analysis.

Third, they validated the necessity of a comparative research design capable of observing how *populis** functions across distinct sociopolitical contexts and types of discourses.

I will now present how the integration of methods and data sources to analyse the use of *populis** is achieved in this thesis.

3.3.2 Methodological integration: CADS approach to the analysis of the terms *populism* and *populist* as sociopolitical keywords

As presented in the Introduction to this thesis, the analysis is organised into two complementary case studies. The corpus-assisted methodology is used to examine

collocational profiles of *populis** in Case study 1 (Chapter 4) and the discourse-analytic annotation scheme is implemented to analyse pragmatic functions of *populis** in Case study 2 (Chapter 5). These two complementary case studies provide a broader view of *populis** by accounting for the three dimensions of *populis** understood as sociopolitical keyword: its meanings and semantic prosodies; its pragmatic function, and its context-specificness.

The CADS approach offers a methodological framework to answer the research questions and to fill the existing gaps determined in the review of the literature. Moreover, Gillings et al. (2023, p. 7) argue that "CADS is ultimately about finding out how *discourse* works". The first case study helps to make conclusions about how *populis** as a discursive phenomenon is linked to social and political issues present in current-day public discourse from a broad and cross-linguistic perspective, while the second case study helps to observe discourse about populism at the micro level.

The two case studies will answer an overarching research question of this thesis:

> **Main RQ:** What are the meanings and functions of *populis** in mass media and social media discourses and how do they compare and contrast across different public spheres and types of actors?

The rationale behind a contrastive endeavour is the idea that sociopolitical keywords are polysemic and can be invested with different meanings and functions by different actors. Thus, the analysis of the use of *populis** in different linguistic, sociopolitical, and interactional contexts may nuance the understanding of *populis** as a negative catch-all term.

Furthermore, the first case study will answer two specific research questions:

> **RQ 1a:** What similarities and differences emerge in the frequency and distribution of specific word forms of *populis** in mass media discourse across the four public spheres studied?
>
> **RQ 1b:** What are the meanings and semantic prosodies of *populis** and how do they converge and diverge in mass media discourse across the four public spheres studied?

In doing so, it provides findings regarding different patterns of use of *populis**. These patterns can be quantitatively and qualitatively determined. For example, determining the trends related to the use of different word forms of *populis**, namely abstract nouns (*populism(s*)), person-referring nouns (*populist(s*)), and adjectives (*populist*) is an understudied aspect in previous studies on populism since prior studies sometimes look into the form *populist*, without distinguishing adjectival vs. noun use.

RQ 1a addresses the frequency and the distribution of *populis** in different media sources and provides insights into which grammatical form is used in media sources from different sociopolitical contexts and with different editorial positioning and readership. Moreover, the patterns of use of *populis** determined through the analysis of collocations and through the contextual manual annotation of the function will provide complementary results, thus offering a broader view on the object of study.

RQ 1b addresses the meanings of *populis** cross-linguistically. In this thesis, meaning is "understood as a *fait social*" and as emerging from use in lexical, discursive and social contexts (Schröter & Veniard, 2016, p. 2). In order to study a word's meaning, empirical studies of its occurrence in real language data are crucial. A substantial amount of studies suggest that corpus linguistic approaches help to achieve this objective. Corpus linguistics enables researchers to uncover evaluative meanings that escape conscious awareness or casual observation. By analysing large sets of data, it becomes possible to map the broader discursive patterns activated by individual lexical choices. Hence, the first case study combines quantitative and qualitative interpretative steps of analysis of *populis**.

In this thesis, the collocational meanings and the pragmatic functions of *populis** are studied in two complementary case studies. The first case study helps to draw conclusions about how *populis** as a discursive phenomenon is linked to social and political issues present in current-day public discourse from a broad and cross-linguistic perspective, while the second case study helps to observe discourse about populism at the micro level. Both case studies shed light on the evaluative orientation of *populis**. The notions of 'semantic preference' and 'semantic prosody' (Bednarek, 2008; Louw, 1993) used in Corpus Linguistics, are relevant to the understanding of the meaning and function of a lexical item. In this thesis, 'semantic preference' refers to the collocational phenomenon of lexical items to co-occur with those words which

"share a semantic feature" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 12). Bednarek (2008, p. 122) emphasises the fact that semantic preference can be "observable by looking at corpus evidence", although the process of grouping words into semantic sets is to some extent subjective, i.e. "the labels that are assigned to the semantic subsets to which collocates belong (…) are necessarily the analyst's – it is s/he who decides how to interpret, categorize, and classify the collocates semantically". Semantic preference has "an effect on meaning, and depending on the semantic field, might also give rise to a semantic prosody" (Jeffries & Walker, 2018, p. 37). The notion of 'semantic prosody' broadly refers in this thesis to "the connotations of a lexical items (including those of 'individual' words and extended units of meaning)" (Bednarek, 2008, p. 130). Analysing the word's semantic prosodies offers crucial insights into the evaluative nuances of co-occurring lexical items.

In order to complement the findings of the first case study, the second case study will answer the following question:

> **RQ 2:** What are the pragmatic functions of *populis** in the social media discourse of political actors and laypeople?

RQ 2 addresses qualitatively determined patterns of use of *populis** by focusing on the comparison of the pragmatic functions of *populis**. In the second case study, the research context is restricted to one language (Spanish), but incorporates a comparison of the use of *populis** by two types of actors, namely political actors and laypeople in social media discourse on Twitter. Qualitative discourse analysis of data is conducted on a small sets of data with the aim to determine patterns of use of *populis** derived from the interpretative analysis of the function in context. Such analysis allows for observing how the features of sociopolitical keywords such as polysemy, vagueness, and contestedness or the "semantic struggle" (Kranert, 2020, p. 34) are used by different types of speakers. This, furthermore, helps to determine whether *populis** serves as "*passage obligé*" (Krieg-Planque, 2009) in social debates and to what extent its use is controversially debated in public discourse. Discourse analysis involving manual qualitative annotation will then shed light on the way in which speakers engage in debates and on the issues which are at stake. The qualitative analysis of the function of *populis** is closely connected to the meanings of *populis** analysed systematically in Case study 1. Case study 2 also provides an opportunity to

observe these aspects of the use of *populis**, but through another type of method and in different discursive contexts.

3.4 Case study 1: The use of *populis** in mass media discourse: a cross-linguistic perspective

3.4.1 Data

In this case study, the use of *populis** is analysed in four synchronic comparable monolingual corpora. The corpora are comparable because they contain articles with *populis** collected from similar sources in each public sphere: Spain, France, French-speaking Belgium, and Dutch-speaking Belgium (see Section 3.2.2 for details). All articles with *populis** were collected and compiled into four corpora representing the public sphere analysed. Each set of corpora contains four subcorpora in which articles, saved as plain text, are grouped according to the type of media (see above Section 3.2.2 for details).

Overall, there are 16 subcorpora which contain all articles with *populis** published in each type of media in each of the four public spheres. The sizes of each corpus per public sphere and of each subcorpus per type of medium are provided in Tables 2-5. These are corpora of unequal sizes which has implications for statistical analysis. However, including media sources from different types of outlets was considered as the main aspect relevant to the research aims of the project.

The data analysed were published on the websites of each media outlet[9], which made possible for the projects' data managers to scrape all articles containing *populis** running Python scripts. The extracted articles were then stored as separate text files. These files were then filtered to remove those texts where *populis** appeared outside the title and the body of the article. Moreover, there were many duplicated articles. I excluded those articles which contained duplicated text published in the same source

[9] Spain: https://elpais.com/, https://www.elespanol.com/, https://www.20minutos.es/, https://www.rtve.es/noticias/; France: https://www.lemonde.fr/, https://www.leparisien.fr/, https://www.20minutes.fr/, https://www.franceinfo.fr/; Belgium: https://www.lesoir.be/, https://www.dhnet.be/, https://www.metrotime.be/fr, https://www.rtbf.be/info, https://www.rtbf.be/, https://www.standaard.be/, https://www.hln.be/, https://www.metrotime.be/nl, https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/.

both on the same day and on different days. These duplicates are often updated articles and are common practice in online sources. I included those articles which contained duplicated text published in different sources because they are accessible to different readerships.

Tables 2–5 show the number of articles with *populis** in each type of media in each public sphere studied. It is not possible to determine whether the difference in the number of articles in each data source is statistically significant, as only the articles containing *populis** were extracted from the websites of each media outlet and not all the articles published in 2019. However, differences in the size of some of the subcorpora and in the number of articles with *populis** already indicate some of the differences between the sources studied. For example, the average length of the articles in an established source tends to be greater than in a free daily source. However, the important information which can be obtained from these tables is that the numbers are not high and that *populis** is not massively used in the mass media of the countries studied.

Spanish media	Articles containing *populis**	Occurrences of *populis**	Tokens	*populis** per thousand words
El País	989	1,719	138,4241	1.2
El Español	960	1,789	645,626	2.7
20 Minutos	102	151	165,086	0.9
RTVE	79	144	21,475	6.7
SPA4 = all sources merged	2,130	3,803	2,216,428	1.7

Table 2. Breakdown of the Spanish media subcorpora (media source, number of articles containing *populis**, corpus size, frequency of *populis** per thousand words).

French media	Articles containing *populis**	Occurrences of *populis**	Tokens	*populis** per thousand words
Le Monde	361	813	461,662	1.7
Le Parisien	276	433	247,297	1.7
20 Minutes	90	124	62,962	2
Frnaceinfo	318	535	215,885	2.4
FR4 = all sources merged	1,045	1,905	987,806	1.9

Table 3. Breakdown of the French media subcorpora (media source, number of articles containing *populis**, corpus size, frequency of *populis** per thousand words).

French-speaking Belgian media	Articles containing *populis**	Occurrences of *populis**	Tokens	*populis** per thousand words
Le Soir	642	1,184	667,968	1.7
La DH	150	189	103,345	1.8
Metro	141	176	60,513	2.9
RTBF	194	276	131,969	2.1
BeFr4 = all sources merged	1,127	1,825	963,795	1.9

Table 4. Breakdown of the French-speaking Belgian media subcorpora (media source, number of articles containing *populis**, corpus size, frequency of *populis** per thousand words).

Dutch-speaking Belgian media	Articles containing *populis**	Occurrences of *populis**	Tokens	*populis** per thousand words
De Standaard	284	561	351,976	1.6
HLN	306	454	233,714	1.9
Metro	194	230	54,591	4.2
VRT	398	888	401,783	2.2
BeNl4 = all sources merged	1,182	2,133	1,042,064	2

Table 5. Breakdown of the Dutch-speaking Belgian media subcorpora (media source, number of articles containing *populis**, corpus size, frequency of *populis** per thousand words).

3.4.2 Methods of analysis of mass media discourse containing *populis**

In this case study, I analyse comparable terms in three languages and four public spheres. In French and Spanish, the lexemes *populisme(s)* and *populismo(s)* are nouns; *populiste/s* and *populista/s* are both nouns and adjectives. However, in Dutch, there are separate forms for the adjective and noun with reference to humans related to populism, respectively *populistisch/populistische* and *populist/populisten*. Thus, the analysis focuses on (i) abstract nouns *populismo/populismos* in Spanish, *populisme/populismes* in French, and *populisme/populismes/populismen* in Dutch; (ii) person-referring nouns *populista/populistas* in Spanish, *populiste/populistes* in French, and *populist/populisten* in Dutch; (iii) adjectives *populista/populistas* in Spanish, *populiste/populistes* in French, and *populistisch/populistische* in Dutch.

The analysis is divided into two parts. In the first part I address RQ 1a, in which I seek to determine the frequency and the distribution of each word form of *populis** in each corpus and thus to observe the similarities and differences in the use of the abstract

nouns, person-referring nouns and adjectives across the type of media in each public sphere. This will provide information regarding how *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* are discussed as a phenomenon (singular or plural, presented in various guises or a single phenomenon), and whether *populis** is used to qualify persons as populists and with what semantic prosodies.

Then, I measured the total chi-square statistic. In addition, I calculated chi-square standardised residuals to determine which word form is linked to a particular type of media and whether the distribution of *populis** across different types of media in each corpus presents statistically significant differences. Indeed, the standardised residuals indicate whether a word form "is significantly more frequent in a corpus than in the others (…)" (Bestgen, 2014, p. 165). A positive value indicates that a word form "occurs too frequently in a corpus when compared to the expected frequency; the residual is a negative value when the opposite is true" (Bestgen, 2014, p. 165). The standardised residual greater than 2 in absolute value indicates a significant deviation from the expected value (i.e. if the independence hypothesis were true).

In the second part, I focus on the semantic prosody and the semantic preference of *populis** which can be drawn from the analysis of the collocates of *populis**. I systematically analysed the collocational profiles of each word form of *populis** across the public spheres and types of media using Sketch Engine software (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). In the first step of the analysis of the collocational profiles of *populis**, I retrieved a list of collocates of each word form of *populis** in the four corpora. In Spanish and French, there are six word forms of *populis** (singular and plural abstract nouns, singular and plural person-referring nouns, and singular and plural adjectives) and thus, there are six sets of collocates in the Spanish media corpus, French media corpus, and French-speaking Belgian media corpus. However, in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus, there are four sets of collocates (singular abstract noun *populisme*, singular and plural person-referring nouns *populist/en*, and the lemma of the adjective *populistisch(e)*). The word forms *populismen* and *populismes* "populisms" were not attested in the data, even though these plural nouns are theoretically possible in Dutch. As for the adjective, a list of collocates was retrieved by searching the lemma *populistisch*. This was done because it is not possible to determine whether *populistische* is singular or plural, as the final *e* is the end-of-word marker of both gender and number.

I conducted several corpus queries in the corpora and the subcorpora. I worked with each of the four corpora containing all articles with *populis** merged in order to obtain a panoramic view across the public spheres. I retrieved the lists of collocates of each word form of *populis** with a minimum raw frequency of three within a span of five words to the left and five words to the right, in order to identify broader patterns of the use of *populis**, rather than immediate patterns. The chosen collocation span has an impact on the number and the type of collocates retrieved. Indeed, I applied different collocation windows for different word forms in different languages in order to see which span would provide "a representative and useful set of collocates based on the research aims" (Gillings et al., 2023, p. 28). The collocation span of five words to the left and to the right was deemed adequate because it worked well across the corpora and subcorpora of different sizes to obtain a higher number of collocates of a wider variety of grammatical types than in the case of a smaller span.

The collocates of *populis** were calculated by applying the logDice statistical measure. The logDice score was chosen because it "has a reasonable interpretation, scales well on a different corpus size, is stable on subcorpora, and the values are in reasonable range" (Rychlý, 2008, p. 7). LogDice "takes the harmonic mean (a type of average appropriate for ratios) of two proportions that express the tendency of two words to co-occur relative to the frequency of these words in the corpus" (Gablasova et al., 2017, p. 164). LogDice score does not depend on the size of the corpora. Other association scores for collocations (e.g. MI-score) do not have a fixed maximum value, while the theoretical maximum of logDice is 14, making this score preferable in comparative studies including several corpora (Gablasova et al., 2017; Rychlý, 2008, p. 9). I provide the lists of collocations of *populis** across four corpora in Appendices 1–4.

Then, I scrutinised the entire list of collocates taking into account the frequency and the saliency of the collocate as per the logDice score. The collocates were sorted according to the decreasing logDice values indicating the strength of association score of the co-occurring lexical items. In order to proceed with a systematic comparison of collocates, I further selected the first one hundred collocates in each corpus with the strongest collocation values according to logDice score. Overall, it is mainly content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) which are included in the analysis. However, some function words appear in this selection, mainly prepositions (e.g. *contre* "against"), because of their semantic load when used in the patterns of use of

*populis**, as well as their presence and statistical significance in the shared patterns of use across languages. Overall, across all the lists of collocates of each word form of *populis**, the logDice values of the collocates within the selected cut-off range from approximately 11 to 7. The highest logDice values of approximately 13 appear in the list of collocates in French, namely *montée* collocating with *populismes* in the French media corpus (12,65) and in the French-speaking Belgian media corpus (12,83). This step also included the process of highlighting either negatively or positively evaluated lexical items in the lists of collocates, thus focusing on the semantic prosody of *populis**.

In the second step of analysis of the collocational profiles of *populis**, I grouped the collocates of each form of *populis** into inductively established semantic categories. This step is a useful method to observe and compare the use of *populis** across languages (Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor & Del Fante, 2020). This process of semantic categorisation relates to the concepts of semantic preference and semantic prosody and helps in "abstracting out above the lexical level" (Taylor & Del Fante, 2020, p. 39). The process of grouping the collocates of *populis** into emerging categories moves the analysis to the levels of discourse and pragmatics. Taylor and Del Fante (2020, p. 41) point out that "the focus on collocates is a corpus linguistics entry point, but one which relies on semantic and discourse-grounded understandings of how language works". The classification of collocates of *populis** into semantic categories was based on the contextualised occurrences, that is, by reading the extended concordance lines. Taylor and Del Fante (2020) highlight the fact that grouping collocates into emerging categories is a subjective process, which is, however, "an inevitable part of the work we do and so the crucial element lies in recognising this and accounting for it in our research" (Taylor & Del Fante, 2020, p. 41). As will be presented in Chapter 4, in Tables 15–17, I provide a full list of collocates grouped into inductively established semantic categories. I carried out several rounds of classifying collocates into semantic groups, every time checking the extended concordance lines. When ambiguous cases emerged, I searched for the information related to the cultural and sociopolitical context of each public sphere. Furthermore, following Schröter et al. (2019), this step was done together with two researchers on a sample of data including French and Dutch, with each researcher individually categorising the collocates in each language based on their examination of the

expanded concordance lines. The authors subsequently compared their classifications and collectively identified a shared template. The classification of collocates was then used in Shchinova et al. (2024) and Shchinova (2025), which include data in French, Dutch, and Spanish and are replicated in this case study.

In the third step, I focused on the five strongest collocates according to the logDice score in each corpus and each media subcorpus in order to determine the similarities and differences across the public spheres and types of media. I analysed the most statistically significant collocates of each form of *populis** in detail by examining the concordance lines of the most salient shared collocates and of those that were most distinctive for a specific type of media and public sphere.

3.5 Case study 2: The use of *populis** in social media discourse: a cross-actor perspective

3.5.1 Data

The Twitter data were obtained via Tweet Binder. All tweets with *populis** in the studied languages were gathered in Excel format. This document was first filtered using OpenRefine according to the languages studied in the project. Some of the tweets were in languages other than those of the project because they exist in the same form, as for example *populismo* in Spanish and in Italian or *populisten* in Dutch and in Swedish, and *populisme* in French and in Catalan. Only tweets with *populis** in Spanish, French, and Dutch were kept. Then, the tweets which contained geolocation were filtered keeping only tweets in Spanish from Spain, in French from France and Belgium, and in Dutch from Belgium as well as those tweets which contained some kind of reference to geolocation (e.g. name of the hometown in Twitter bio) were filtered running a Python script. After the filtering process, the tweets in each language studied in the project were stored in separate sets of data in Excel format. In order to create specific datasets for qualitative analysis, a random sampling of 1000 tweets was done. The sampling was complemented by a parallel filtering process involving the selection of tweets “that would be read and considered a relevant part of the reading experience of users” from the countries studied (De Cock et al., 2026, p. 16). Thus, the selection of tweets by lay users is not limited to Spain, but includes different

geographic locations. Indeed, the accounts of lay users may be located in Spain but discuss topics related to other Spanish-speaking countries, and vice versa.

In order to obtain a dataset containing tweets by political actors, I selected all tweets in Spanish posted on the official Twitter accounts of the five main political parties (PSOE, PP, Cs, Vox, and the parties from the coalition UP including *Podemos* and *Izquierda Unida*) by searching the usernames of the political party, its leader, its general secretary and the spokesperson. Regarding UP, I searched for the tweets both by *Podemos*, the core of the alliance, and *Izquierda Unida*, two political parties that remained in the alliance in 2019 and presented UP for the general elections in November 2019; EQUO is not included in the study as it left the alliance in September 2019. Regarding Cs, Albert Rivera was the leader until 11 November 2019. Inés Arrimadas became his successor after his resignation. In this study, I analyse tweets by both politicians.

This search resulted in a considerably different number of tweets per political actor, namely Vox (5), UP (6), PSOE (22), PP(80), Cs (441). Thus, the two parties at the extremes of the political spectrum that are described by others as populists (UP and Vox) are those that used the terms the least. The two traditional political parties (PSOE and PP) use *populis** more than UP and Vox, but much less than Cs. In addition, Cs, the political party that emerged as a response to the two-party system, is the one that is most involved in the debate about populism and appears as the one that targets others or at least evokes the most *populism(s)* and *populist(s)*. This tendency was observed in the pilot study involving two months of 2019 and is confirmed in the data from the whole year.

In the dataset analysed in Chapter 5, all available tweets were included for UP, Vox, PP, and PSOE. Given the much higher frequency of tweets published in the accounts of Cs if compared with other political actors in the dataset, I added a random sample of 87 tweets by Cs to my dataset, in order to reach a total of 200 tweets. Since these tweets were produced by public figures, they have not been anonymised.

In order to obtain a dataset containing tweets by lay users of Twitter, I randomly selected 200 tweets from the Excel sheet containing all other tweets in Spanish and excluding tweets from the accounts of political actors and media professionals in order to establish the laypeople dataset. These examples are anonymised and slight

changes are made, such as deleting some parts of the tweet, in order to reduce retrievability. These tweets exemplify the lay use of the platform in opposition to the professional use by the people in power. Analysing these tweets allows us to highlight tendencies regarding the lay use of Twitter by laypeople engaged in discussing sociopolitical issues and posting content related to politics.

The size of the datasets has been considered adequate to allow for a detailed qualitative analysis of the use of *populis**. However, it is important to note that this number of tweets does not allow for generalising conclusions about the use of *populis** on Spanish-speaking Twitter.

In what follows, I provide several points crucial to understanding the sociopolitical situation in Spain in 2019 and to contextualise my data.

In 2019, Spain was characterised by political uncertainty and instability due to numerous elections which took place (local, regional, European, and two national general elections), civil protests across the country related to the Catalan crisis and the historic surge of the far-right Vox (Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2020). After a first inconclusive election in April 2019, a second general election was held in November 2019. The results of the first general election implied the victory of the centre-left PSOE, and the need for support from the left-wing electoral alliance UP (*Unidas Podemos* 'United, we can', formed by *Podemos*, *Izquierda Unida*, EQUO) and the regional parties from Catalonia (ERC) and the Basque Country (PNV) to form a coalition government. However, no agreement was reached between PSOE and UP. Furthermore, the April election showed the impossibility of another potential alliance, namely that of the right-wing parties Cs, PP, and Vox. The latter, however, grew considerably and became the third political party after PSOE and PP.

This period was also marked by the trial and the imprisonment of Catalan independence leaders involved in the organisation of the 2017 Independence referendum followed by numerous protests, such as *Marxes per la Llibertat* "Marches for Freedom" and a general strike held on the 18th of October. In addition to the actions organised by the pro-independence movement in 2019, there were also several demonstrations led by the right-wing political parties (Cs, PP, Vox) in support for the unity of Spain and in objection to Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) as well as to the left-wing

national and pro-independence regional parties mainly from Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The government of Pedro Sánchez was dissolved following the parliamentary vote of the General State Budget bill and the general election was called. The November election resulted again in a victory of PSOE; however, the Socialist party again fell short of a majority and needed to proceed with the negotiations with UP and the regional political parties, ultimately forming a coalition government headed by Sánchez. PSOE's traditional rival PP came in second, and Vox doubled its seats in the Congress of Deputies. The sharp drop of the centre-right Cs resulted in the resignation of its leader Albert Rivera, which led to the arrival of Inés Arrimadas at the head of Cs.

3.5.2 Methods of analysis of Twitter discourse on populism

Methodologically, this case study builds upon the pilot study presented in Section 3.3 (Shchinova, 2023). To manually annotate the data, I adopted the procedure developed in the interdisciplinary group of researchers working in the TrUMPo project (Hambye et al., 2026), and in the pragmatic analyses of the use of *populis** conducted by Kranert (2020), Filardo-Llamas et al. (2025), and Aulit and De Cock (2025).

The qualitative reading of the data and the manual annotation of each occurrence of *populis** were done in both the immediate linguistic and discursive contexts and the extralinguistic context by looking for information outside the actual tweet (by reading the thread, comments or replies and by checking the events and topics discussed in the tweet analysed). The analysis presented in chapter 5 covers mainly the pragmatic dimension of the use of *populis** and is done following a qualitative interpretation of the function of *populis** in context. Marchi and Taylor (2018, p. 11) point out that "as researchers expand the use of corpora into discourse and pragmatic levels, the use of annotation becomes increasingly important and, concurrently, so does the need for transparency about the origins of those tags." Analytical categories were developed both deductively, by drawing on previous research using qualitative analysis (Bale et al., 2011; Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020), and inductively, by reading the data and manually coding samples of the data, in several instances by several researchers.

The manual annotation of the data seeks to identify the pragmatic, co-textual, contextual, interactional, and formal features. All of these serve as cues to understand

the meanings and the functions of *populis** by different Twitter users. In this study, the data were coded for grammatical category, topic, co-occurrences with *populis**, author, object, target, conceptual field, discursive action, and pragmatic function. I also distinguished between the occurrence of *populis** in reported speech and an original use of *populis** by the author. Moreover, I annotated Twitter-related features, such as whether it is a new post, a reply or comment and whether it contains formal features such as links, mentions, emojis, capital letters, inverted commas, hashtags and whether *populis** appears in a hashtag.

Grammatical category

This variable was annotated by indicating the grammatical form of the occurrence of *populis** such as definite nouns, indefinite nouns, and adjectives. The grammatical category of *populis** aims to identify whether there is a link between a specific word form and its function, since the use of a different grammatical category, for example *populist* as a qualifying adjective or as a person-referring noun, may reveal different functions attached to the concept.

Topic

The topic of the tweet was annotated in order to determine the contexts evoked in the tweet containing *populis**. The coding of the topic of the tweet was done by taking into account the lexical items within the tweet. In addition, in the cases where the topic was not clear from the immediate context, I manually searched Twitter for the preceding and following tweets to be able to access the broader online context. The topic of the tweet can also be determined through extralinguistic knowledge. Moreover, a hashtag might also suggest the topic of the tweet.

Author

The author of the tweet with *populis** was annotated only in the dataset with political actors' tweets and not in the laypeople' dataset for ethical reasons. If *populis** appears in the reported speech, I coded the author of the original use of *populis** (e.g. a quote from a media outlet or a political actor).

Object

The object of the use of *populis** was annotated by identifying the reality (person, group, event, measure, action, proposition, discourse) associated with *populis**. It can be a clearly identified reality, or it can be an unspecified reality (but which in many cases can be identified by inference). The annotation of the object of *populis** makes it possible to identify who and what is associated with *populis** and to determine what features associated with *populis** are shared among the speakers. A special case in the annotation of the object of *populis** is the case when the use of *populis** is self-referential, that is when the term is used to talk about populism itself, as illustrated in Example (a):

(a) *Sí, entiendo que* ***el populismo*** *es algo complicado de definir* (…)*.*

("Yes, I understand that **populism** is something complicated to define (…)").

Value

The value of *populis** was coded following the distinction between positive, negative, neutral, and undetermined. In addition, I coded what elements help to determine the value (e.g. the lexical items co-occurring with *populis**, inference, or extralinguistic knowledge). An undetermined value was annotated in the cases where the meaning of *populis** was not clear either because of the lack of co-textual and contextual cues or because of the lack of the broader online context, which is the case of deleted tweets. This analytical category echoes the notion of 'semantic prosody'. However, in this qualitative approach, the focus on the value of the term *populis** is located within a single occurrence and involves the identification of the lexical items surounding *populis** which can clearly indicate the evalutive load or can signal the association with an entity clearly presented negatively from the point of view of the author of the tweet analysed.

Conceptual field

The category of the conceptual field of *populis** refers to what *populis** is linked to or associated with in the tweet. Specifically, this category was developed both deductively, by drawing on previous research using qualitative analysis (Bale et al., 2011; Hamo et al., 2019; Kranert, 2020), and inductively, by reading the data and manually coding samples of the data. The coding was done by attributing codes such

as undetermined; demagogy; radicalism/nationalism/independentism; euroscepticism; cynicism and inauthenticity; lies and misinformation.

Target

The category Target refers to an entity which is targeted or criticised in the utterance containing *populis**. The target of the use of *populis** was coded following the distinction between explicit target (i.e. explicit labelling of a concrete politician/party/political leaning/ideology) and implicit target, and which co-textual and contextual cues help to understand who or what is implied using *populis**. The target can also be the same as the object of the use of *populis**. However, these categories differ at the pragmatic level (see Section 3.3 for details).

Interactional context

Twitter-determined interactional features: new post, reply or comment. In the case of comments and replies to the content published in the broader online context, I coded whether the tweet which was commented on or replied to contained *populis** or not, and whether the tweet analysed supported or rejected claims made in previous tweets.

Formal features

Formal features: any typographical marks, such as capital letters and inverted commas, hashtags and whether *populis** appeared as a hashtag, part of mentions or links. The annotation of the formal features helps to determine whether *populis** is located in metalinguistic comments.

Pragmatic features

In previous research, Kranert (2020, p. 54) argues that *populis** is used "as a stigma term with two different functions: to discredit policies and rhetoric of political actors, or to name political ideologies and groups that are not part of the established political centre ground". Moreover, Aulit and De Cock (2025) use the term *acción discursiva* "discursive action" to refine the understanding of what can be achieved through the use of *populis** and to link it to a concrete grammatical form of *populis** in the utterance analysed and the target of its use, thus paying attention to possible pragmatic differences in the use of *populis**. For example, referring to a political actor as *populis** does not necessarily have a discrediting effect when it is employed as a fixed epithet

and not as a stigma term (see Chapter 4). One discursive action through the use of *populis** can perform several pragmatic functions in one given utterance (Shchinova, 2023, p. 863). Moreover, the act of labelling an entity as *populis** (either as a reference or as a categorisation) in the reported speech can be used to justify an opinion and to strengthen an argument, but also to reject the populist label attributed to the speaker. Hence, there is a need to distinguish a discursive action and a pragmatic function of *populis**. I adopt the terminology from Aulit and De Cock (2025) and I annotate the discursive action carried out through the use of *populis** in the tweet.

Thus, the coding of the discursive action is done by attributing the action carried out by the use of *populis**. Namely, I distinguish between the action of referring to something or someone by the use of *populis** and categorising something or someone as *populis**. Both actions can be done to label (i) a phenomenon/type of politics/ideology, (ii) a type of actor, (iii) a type of discourse, (iv) a type of action, policy, bill, proposition, but they have different pragmatic functions.

Moreover, I annotate the pragmatic function of *populis** as follows: description; criticism towards a person/group; explicit attack; denial; (de)legitimisation.

In Table 6, I provide the examples from the data to illustrate these categories.

The category ‘Description’ refers to the use of *populis** to describe and to identify a reality (e.g. a person, a group, an event), as in Example (i) in which *populis** is used to identify that reality without the purpose of discreditation.

The category ‘Criticism’ refers to the use of *populis** to negatively categorise a reality (an abstract phenomenon present in society, a person or a group, a measure or a specific action). In Example (ii), the negative value is apparent through elements such as negatively charged words and the explicit association with a politician.

The category ‘Attack’ refers to the explicit attack of the person/group through the use of *populis** as an insulting label, as in (iii). The difference between criticism and attack is in the violence of discourse and the intention to directly discredit and attack.

The category ‘Denial’ refers to the use of *populis** to reject the attribution of the populist label made by others, as in (iv) or to formulate a disagreement with the previous categorisation as populist in a metalinguistic comment.

The category '(De)legitimisation' refers to the use of *populis** where an opponent is negatively categorised as *populis**. This is predominantly a feature of the tweets by political actors where *populis** is deliberately exploited as a strategic tool to self-promote by positioning themselves as anti-populists or to delegitimise an opponent, but not necessarily the one referred to as populist. In this category, the target is not the object of *populis**, as illustrated in Example (v).

Description	i.	*De Trump, Salvini y Bolsonaro -esto es, del **populismo de extr. derecha**- se pueden sacar muchas lecciones (…)*. ("There are many lessons to be learned from Trump, Salvini and Bolsonaro - that is, from **far-right populism** (…)").
Criticism	ii.	***El populismo de Colau** y su nefasta gestión no tienen límites. Cuatro años más de Colau en Barcelona sería nefasto.* ("**Colau's populism** and her disastrous management know no bounds. Four more years of Colau in Barcelona would be disastrous").
Attack	iii.	*Despierta caray!!!!! Estás fallando en todo, eres un **populista**, mentiroso, demagogo y necio*. ("Wake up, dammit! You are failing at everything, **you are a populist**, a liar, a demagogue and a fool").
Denial	iv.	*NOSOTROS NO SOMO **POPULISTAS*** (…) ("WE ARE NOT **POPULISTS** (…)").

(De)legitimisation	v.	*¡Puro teatro es lo que ha traído Pedro Sánchez a la #SesiónDeInvestidura!@Albert_Rivera \"Mientras negocia con los separatistas y* ***populistas*** *no habla de Cataluña en su discurso. El plan Sánchez es malo para las familas españolas\" #SánchezNO* (“Pure theatre is what Pedro Sánchez brought to the #InvestitureSession! @Albert_Rivera "While he negotiates with separatists and **populists**, he doesn't mention Catalonia in his speech. The Sánchez plan is bad for Spanish families." #SánchezNO”)

Table 6. Examples of tweets which illustrate the category ‘Pragmatic function’.

I completed two rounds of annotation. Firstly, I randomly selected 25 tweets by political actors and 25 tweets by laypeople and manually annotated the two datasets simultaneously with another researcher using a shared template of analytical categories. Then, we discussed the results of the annotation and refined the analytical categories referring to the function of *populis**. Overall, the analysis of the tweets by political actors resulted in a similar annotation, possibly due to the cultural competence and the extralinguistic knowledge of the Spanish political context. However, the annotation of the laypeople’ tweets resulted in numerous divergences, mainly due to the challenges that came from the lack of extralinguistic context and knowledge, and due to the specificities related to the medium, such as deleted tweets in the interaction. After discussing the annotated sample of data, I manually annotated all the tweets from the two datasets.

Having presented my research design and described the methodological and analytical frameworks of this thesis, the next chapter will answer RQ 1a and RQ 1b.

Chapter 4. The use of *populis** in mass media discourse: a cross-linguistic perspective

4.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the review of the literature has determined an important gap regarding the comparative aspect of the analysis of the use of *populis** in media discourse. In order to fill this gap, in this chapter, I take a cross-linguistic perspective on analysing *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword in mass media discourse in three Western democracies: Belgium, France, and Spain. The Belgian mass media data are treated separately, as the country is divided into different linguistic communities. Moreover, the linguistic divisions are present in the media, thus suggesting the need to distinguish between the public spheres and to analyse separately the media from the Dutch-speaking community and the French-speaking community (De Cleen & Van Aelst, 2016). Thus, the analysis of the use of *populis** involves three languages and four public spheres (see Chapter 3 for details regarding the selection of the research context).

This case study employs the methodological framework for the contrastive analysis of keywords (Schröter et al., 2019; Schröter & Veniard, 2016; Taylor, 2014; Thornborrow et al., 2021). These studies largely draw upon a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach (Gillings et al., 2023; Partington et al., 2013b; Taylor & Marchi, 2018), as well as a more specialised approach of CADS, that is, a cross-linguistic CADS (Taylor, 2014; Vessey, 2013).

The analysis seeks to compare the use of *populis** across four corpora by focusing on the frequency and the distribution of *populis** (Section 4.2) and the collocational profiles of *populis** across the type of media in each public sphere (Section 4.3). Ultimately, the analytical work involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses at the lexical level and above the lexical level (Taylor & Del Fante, 2020) with the help of corpus linguistics tools and methods of analysis, respectively, Sketch Engine software (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) and collocation and concordance lines analyses.

4.2 The frequency and distribution of *populis**

I. The frequency and the distribution of *populis** across types of media in Spain

The distribution of the word forms of *populis** in the Spanish data is presented in Table 7.

Word form	*El País*		*El Español*		*20 Minutos*		*RTVE*		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
populismo	585	**34**	589	**33**	48	**32**	32	**22**	1375	**33**
populismos	145	**8**	246	**14**	18	**12**	48	**33**	524	**12**
populista	501	**30**	389	**22**	25	**16**	7	**5**	995	**24**
populistas	488	**28**	565	**31**	60	**40**	57	**40**	1309	**31**
Total	1719	**100**	1789	**100**	151	**100**	144	**100**	4103	**100**

Table 7. The absolute frequency and the percentage of each word form of *populis** in the Spanish media data.

Word form	*El País*	*El Español*	*20 Minutos*	*RTVE*
populismo	0,76	-0,04	-0,25	-2,25
populismos	-4,28	2,12	-0,03	7,38
populista	4,13	-2,15	-1,92	-4,72
populistas	-1,78	0,62	1,99	1,91

Table 8. The standardised residuals (the Spanish media data). Chi-square value is 141,7.

The calculation of the standardised residuals (Table 8) in the Spanish data points to the differences in the distribution of *populis** across media and within each source. While the free daily source *20 Minutos* displays no strong deviations, the distribution of *populis** in other sources shows significant differences, such as a significantly low frequency of *populismos* in *El País* and a higher frequency than expected of the word form populista; *El Español* displays a tendency to use *populismos*; and *RTVE* displays a strong deviation with significantly high frequency of *populismos*, and uses *populista* and *populismo* less than the expected frequency.

We can observe more nuanced differences with respect to the frequency of each word form across media and within each source by comparing the percentages. The word

form *populismo* shows similar proportions in three media sources, that is, in the established outlet *El País* (34%), in the serious-popular outlet *El Español* (33%), and in free daily outlet *20 Minutos* (32%), and slightly lower percentage of use in the state-funded broadcaster *RTVE* (22%). This tendency may suggest that, in the Spanish media, there is a preference to perceive and portray populism as a unique phenomenon, rather than present the idea of a variety of forms and political practices that this phenomenon can represent. We can observe that in the Spanish data, the plural noun *populismos* is used significantly less than other word forms with the exception of the state-funded broadcaster. Such a tendency might indicate that the state-funded broadcaster pays more attention to populism in its different guises, for example, in different countries and/or on different sides of the political spectrum, than other types of media do.

This difference in the use of different word forms of *populis** might be due to the types of articles in these two sources. It is possible that we find news reports, results of the elections, etc. in *RTVE*, and thus *populismos* is used to qualify a range of actors rather than discussing the political phenomenon, as is more likely to be the case in *El País* containing editorials, op-eds, and interviews with experts, possibly containing analytical discourse about populism.

Moving to the word forms *populista* and *populistas*, we can observe a sharp difference in the frequencies of *populista* in *El País* versus *RTVE*, respectively 30% versus 5%, while showing fairly similar percentages in *El Español* (22%) and *20 Minutos* (16%). As for the plural form *populistas*, *El País* and *El Español* use this word form to a similar proportion, respectively 28% and 31%, while the plural form *populistas* has the highest percentage of use in both *20 Minutos* and *RTVE*.

II. The frequency and the distribution of *populis** across types of media in France

The distribution of the word forms of *populis** in the French media data is presented in Table 9.

Word form	*Le Monde*		*Le Parisien*		*20 Minutes*		*Frnaceinfo*		Total	
	N	**%**	N	**%**	N	**%**	N	%	N	%

populisme	356	**44**	69	**16**	15	**15**	118	**22**	655	**29**
populismes	45	**5**	36	**8**	8	**8**	57	**11**	178	**8**
populiste	226	**28**	173	**40**	61	**61**	182	**34**	805	**34**
populistes	186	**23**	155	**36**	40	**40**	178	**33**	691	**29**
Total	813	**100**	433	**100**	124	**100**	535	**100**	2205	**100**

Table 9. The absolute frequency and the percentage of each word form of *populis** in the French media data.

Word form	*Le Monde*	*Le Parisien*	*20 Minutes*	*Frnaceinfo*
populisme	7,64	-5,14	-3,54	-3,09
populismes	-2,19	0,49	-0,49	2,50
populiste	-2,90	2,24	2,97	0,13
populistes	-3,40	2,48	0,60	1,68

Table 10. The standardised residuals (the French media). Chi-square value is 161,5.

The calculation of the standardised residuals (Table 10) points to a significant deviation within *Le Monde*, displaying the highest positive value for the word form *populisme* across the media sources and negative values for the three other forms. We can also observe that Franceinfo overuses the plural form *populismes*, while showing no strong deviation for *populiste* and *populistes*; *populiste* stands out in 20 Minutes; *populismes* is used significantly less across the four media sources. The established media *Le Monde* clearly stands out in the French data. Specifically, the frequency of the singular noun *populisme* is significantly higher compared to other word forms in this outlet and compared to the other three media sources. This tendency might be explained by the presence of analytical discourse in the established media outlet Le Monde, possibly containing academic definitions and meta-discourse regarding the phenomenon rather than labelling political actors, more expected to appear in other types of media. Furthermore, we can observe a clear tendency shared across the serious-popular source *Le Parisien*, the free daily source *20 Minutes*, and the state-funded broadcaster *Franceinfo*, namely, the word forms *populiste* and *populistes* are used more frequently than the forms *populisme* and *populismes*. However, the difference in the percentages of use of these forms is very sharp in *Le Parisien* and *20 Minutes*, respectively 16% and 15% for *populisme* but 40% and 61% for *populiste*, and 36% and 40% for

populistes. This tendency might suggest a preference for qualifying and attributing populist traits and characteristics to somebody or something, rather than discuss the phenomenon of populism.

III. The frequency and the distribution of *populis** across types of media in French-speaking Belgium

The distribution of the word forms of *populis** in the French-speaking Belgian media data is presented in Table 11.

Word form	*Le Soir*		*La DH*		*Metro*		*RTBF*		*Total*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
populisme	326	**28**	49	**26**	17	**10**	54	**20**	530	**24**
populismes	98	**8**	25	**13**	10	**6**	13	**5**	178	**8**
populiste	359	**30**	67	**35**	91	**52**	131	**47**	812	**36**
populistes	401	**34**	48	**25**	58	**53**	78	**28**	705	**32**
Total	1184	**100**	189	**100**	176	**100**	276	**100**	2225	**100**

Table 11. The absolute frequency and the percentage of each word form of *populis** in the French-speaking Belgian media data.

Word form	*Le Soir*	*La DH*	*Metro*	*RTBF*
populisme	2,15	0,41	-3,97	-1,64
populismes	0,34	2,54	-1,09	-1,93
populiste	-2,99	-0,01	3,61	3,33
populistes	1,10	-1,62	0,21	-1,11

Table 12. The standardised residuals (the French-speaking Belgian media data). Chi-square value is 72,9.

The plural form *populismes* is used significantly less frequently than the singular form *populisme*. However, the calculation of the standardised residuals (Table 12) shows that in the serious-popular media source *La DH* the plural form *populismes* has positive values and thus the frequency of this form is statistically more significant in this outlet

than in the other three. The percentage of use of the singular noun *populisme* and the standardised residuals point to the prevalence of this form in the established media *Le Soir*. The lowest percentage and the standardised residuals for the singular form of the abstract noun *populisme* are in the free daily source *Metro*. The state-funded broadcaster *RTBF* also has negative residuals for this word form, meaning it is not used as frequently as the expected frequency. These two sources also show a similar tendency of using the word form *populiste* significantly more than the established media and serious-popular media do, as well as a significantly higher use than other word forms. By contrast, the word form *populiste* is used significantly less in the established media *Le Soir*.

Thus, in the French-speaking Belgian media data, the preference for abstract nouns in the established media and the serious popular media leads one to expect more discussions of populism as a phenomenon. In contrast, in the free daily source and in the state-funded broadcaster, there is a clear preference for the use of the word forms *populiste(s)*. This tendency may suggest that in these two media sources, these terms are used to label and to qualify actors and entities as populist, rather than to provide a discussion concerning populism as a phenomenon or a reality.

IV. The frequency and the distribution of *populis** across types of media in Dutch-speaking Belgium

The distribution of the word forms of *populis** in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media data is presented in Table 13.

Word form	*De Standaard*		*HLN*		*Metro*		*VRT*		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
populisme	216	**39**	126	**28**	27	**12**	224	**25**	697	**28**
populist	51	**9**	44	**10**	10	**4**	58	**7**	193	**8**
populisten	185	**33**	71	**16**	38	**17**	202	**23**	585	**23**
populistisch	19	**3**	41	**9**	6	**3**	46	**5**	132	**5**
populistische	90	**16**	170	**38**	149	**65**	358	**40**	926	**36**

Total	561	**100**	452	**100**	230	**100**	888	**100**	2531	**100**

Table 13. The absolute frequency and the percentage of each word form of *populis** in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media data.

Word form	*De Standaard*	*HLN*	*Metro*	*VRT*
populisme	4,79	0,02	-4,63	-1,47
populist	1,23	1,60	-1,81	-1,20
populisten	4,76	-3,33	-2,12	-0,33
populistisch	-1,93	3,54	-1,75	-0,10
populistische	-7,88	0,57	7,28	2,15

Table 14. The standardised residuals (the Dutch-speaking Belgian media data). Chi-square value is 233.

We can observe significant differences in the distribution of *populis** across the four media types. The established media outlet De Standaard is the only source that uses the noun forms of *populis** significantly more frequently. Particularly the abstract noun *populisme* and the plural form of the person-referring noun *populisten* are the most used in this media source. In contrast, the serious-popular source *HLN*, the free daily source *Metro*, and the state-funded broadcaster *VRT* show a preference for the adjective *populistisch(e)* rather than nouns. In addition, the free daily source *Metro* and the state-funded broadcaster use *populistische* significantly more than other word forms of *populis**. The four media outlets show a similar tendency, that is, the singular form of the person-referring noun *populist* is used proportionally less than other word forms. Among the adjectives, the word form *populistisch* is significantly more present in the serious-popular source *HLN*, while *populistische* is statistically more frequent in *Metro* and *VRT*.

Overall, in the Dutch-speaking Belgian data several differences in the distribution can already give some insights on how populism and populists are discussed. The free daily source has negative residuals (Table 14) and the proportionally lowest use of nouns and positive residuals and highest use of the adjectival form of *populis**, while the established source shows the opposite tendencies, with a clear preference for the nouns rather than adjectives.

V. Overview of the four corpora

Across all four corpora, we can observe significant differences in the distribution of *populis** in different types of media sources. Indeed, across all tables, chi-square values are large and p-values well below 10E-10, indicating a strong dependence between word forms and media outlets. In the four corpora, the plural form of the abstract noun is the least used form, and it is even absent in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media data. Moreover, the standardised residuals consistently reveal that the singular form of the abstract noun appears to be used significantly more in the established newspapers across the public spheres, possibly indicating a more abstract discussion of the topic of populism, as well as pointing to the link between the type of journalistic texts and media sources in which *populis** occurs. Furthermore, a pronounced tendency to use the adjectives and the nouns referring to persons as *populist(s)* in other media sources possibly points to the types of use characterised by the act of labelling and qualifying actors or realities. Specifically, the distribution of the word forms of *populis** in French in the Belgian and French data shows similar tendencies, that is, the word forms *populiste(s)* are used proportionally more than the word forms *populisme(s)*. This may, however,be related to French as a language than to the context-related specificities of the use of *populis**.

However, the French established media source *Le Monde* clearly stands out in regard to the use of the singular form of the abstract noun *populisme*, while in the Belgian established source *Le Soir*, this tendency is less pronounced. Furthermore, in the Spanish data the plural form of the abstract noun *populismos* is used proportionally more than in the data in French from Belgium and France. This might suggest possible influence of the sociopolitical context, that is, the coexistence of several political parties classified as populist and their participation in the general elections and thus the need to talk about those actors using the plural form. In addition, this tendency might suggest the discussion of populism not as a unified phenomenon, but rather as a variety of different forms of populism in the national and international political scene. It is also important to note that the plural form of the *abstract* noun is completely absent in the Belgian data in Dutch, even though *populismes* and *populismen* are theoretically possible in this language. A possible explanation is that the reference to various types of populisms can be done by using a singular form of the abstract noun in Dutch and through the use of adjectives (e.g. *populistische tendenzen* “populist tendencies”,

populistische stromingen “populist currents”), while the plural forms might be used to a greater extent in the scientific texts in order to distinguish different forms of populism on the terminological and theoretical levels.

A similar tendency can be observed in the free daily sources in Belgium (Dutch- and French-speaking media) and France, that is, the abstract noun is used significantly less frequently than the adjectives and the person-referring nouns. In the Spanish corpora, the free daily source displays a more even distribution of these word forms. In addition, in the Spanish data, the state-funded broadcaster stands out within the Spanish data and across the public spheres in regard to use of the plural form of the abstract noun *populismos*. In France, the established source *Le Monde* clearly stands out and shows significant preference for the abstract noun, while three other sources are similar in regard to the distribution of the word forms.

In the next subsection, I proceed with the analysis of the collocational environment of *populis**.

4.3 The collocational profiles of *populis** in Belgian, French, and Spanish mass media discourse

In Tables 15–17, I provide a full list of collocates grouped into inductively established semantic categories. I carried out several rounds of classifying collocates into semantic groups, every time checking the extended concordance lines. When ambiguous cases emerged, I searched for the information related to the cultural and sociopolitical context of each public sphere. Furthermore, following Schröter et al. (2019), this step was done together with two researchers on a sample of data including French and Dutch, with each research individually categorising the collocates in each language based on their examination of the expanded concordance lines. The authors subsequently compared their classifications and collectively identified a shared template. The classification of collocates was then used in (Shchinova, 2025; Shchinova et al., 2024) which include data in French, Dutch, and Spanish and are replicated in this case study.

4.3.1 Semantic grouping of the collocates of *populis**

The first one hundred collocates of *populis** (according to logDice values) in the four corpora were examined and grouped into inductively established semantic categories.

I analysed the collocates of the abstract nouns, person-referring nouns, and adjectives separately. Semantic groups and subgroups are slightly different across the word forms and are presented in the following subsections.

By comparing the results of the semantic categorisation of the collocates of *populis** in each public sphere, I aim to account for the lexical environment of different word forms of *populis** across the public spheres. In Tables 15–17, I present the full list of categorised collocates. Some words appear in the lists of collocates for both the singular and the plural form, in which case I indicate the frequency and logDice first for the singular form and then for the plural form.

I. Semantic grouping of the collocates of the abstract nouns

Firstly, I categorised the collocates of the abstract nouns in singular and plural forms in each corpus corresponding to all media sources from one public sphere merged. Table 15 shows the semantic grouping of the collocates of the abstract nouns *populismo(s)* / *populisme(s)* / *populisme*. The collocates of the abstract nouns are subdivided into five groups and their subgroups, namely (1) words related to politics, such as (i) orientations, ideologies, attitudes, political labels, (ii) actors (individuals and groups), (iii) generic words related to people, and (iv) events; (2) words related to places and locations, such as (i) words referring to concrete geographical locations, (ii) generic words related to places; (3) words related to time; (4) description of *populism* as a phenomenon; and (5) miscellaneous.

Semantic group	Subgroup	Spanish media	French media	French-speaking Belgian media	Dutch-speaking Belgian media
(1) Words related to politics	(i) orientations, ideologies, political labels	nacionalismo (99; 10,8736) nacionalismos (74; 11,99513) / (8; 7,56641) extremismos (15; 9,94111) derechas (65; 10,3437) / (17; 9,35614) izquierdas (46; 9,84057) / (18; 9,43014) identitarios (11; 9,53462) izquierda (33; 8,78996) nacionalistas (12; 8,7616) radicalismos (9; 9,2995) extrema (7; 8,63743) extremos (7; 8,63743) derecha (31; 8,35335) excluyentes (4; 8,1143) nacional (16; 8,11278) político (21; 8,01348) ultraderecha (6; 7,81843) comunismo (9; 7,80033) independentismo (9; 7,6444) centro (13; 7,61383) separatismo (8; 7,5842)	nationalismes (4; 9,65127) gauche (27; 9,12008) / (4; 6,76878) nationalisme (8; 8,71923) progressisme (4; 7,88886) droite (13; 7,88186) / (8; 7,53036) extrêmes (4; 7,82258) autoritaire (4; 7,77841) démocratie (6; 7,53784) / (3; 7,19695) racisme (3; 7,37551) fascisme (3; 7,36822) nationaliste (3; 7,20126) extrême (5; 7,01245) / (3; 6,80196)	extrémisme (16; 10,10518) nationalismes (8; 10,73321) extremismes (6; 10,27208) libéral (5; 10,06454) identitaire (9; 9,18693) droite (39; 9,48693) / (3; 6,0371) racisme (7; 8,87072) / (3; 8,89846) extrême (14; 8,63493) nationalisme (6; 8,62207) démocratie (9; 8,26303) national (6; 8,1905) antisémitisme (4; 8,12348) opportunisme (3; 7,81678) gauche (7; 7,81442) autoritarisme (3; 7,78083) xénophobie (3; 7,76798) politique (12; 7,35675)	nationalisme (30; 10,54276) rechts (34; 10,25774) racisme (15; 9,48693) extremisme (12; 9,40257) links (11; 8,77468) rechtse (11; 8,72472) extreem (6; 8,3323) antisemitisme (6; 8,30419) euroscepsis (5; 8,19781) extreemrechtse (6; 8,00753) democratie (14; 8,36131) anti-establishment (4; 7,86557)

		fascistas (4; 7,98598) comunistas (4; 7,97209) proteccionismo (7; 7,48317) democracias (3; 7,33941) independentista (3; 7,30419) xenofobia (6; 7,2451) liberalismo (6; 7,18302) fascismo (6; 7,1566) económico (7; 7,06084) totalitario (5; 7,01929) antieuropeo (5; 7,00791) dictadura (5; 6,8831)			
	(ii) political actors (individuals and groups)	Vox (27; 7,8544) Trump (12; 7,5877) Podemos (16; 7,53138) Errejón (6; 7,10316) Colau (7; 6,93622)	Macron (3; 6,61055)	Trump (7; 7,78776) / (4; 7,44158) Matteo (4; 7,36338) PTB (3; 7,35374) Johnson (3; 7,29725) Orban (3; 7,1608) Salvini (4; 7,01558)	Regenboogcoalitie (4; 7,87847) Jackson (4; 7,86814) Jesse (4; 7,84518)
	(iii) generic words related to people		peuple (7; 7,97605)	peuple (5; 7,88939) citoyens (3; 6,96291)	
	(iv) events			Brexit (10; 8,35614) / (9; 8,68611)	Brexit (6; 8,04774)

				gilets (jaunes) (3; 7,92675) élections (3; 6,47775)	
(2) Words related to places and locations	(i) words referring to concrete geographical locations	Europa (31; 8,38814) / (16; 7,10027) catalán (13; 8,11173) América (4; 7,71229) europeos (8; 7,70538) latinoamericanos (3; 7,68108) Venezuela (9; 7,66411) Chile (6; 7,16922)	Europe (24; 8,59983) / (27; 9,07629) Hongrie (3; 8,40009) américain (3; 7,09913)	États-Unis (5; 8,04774) Europe (13; 7,91091) / (12; 8,1978)	Louisiana (4; 7,87847) Amerikaans (4; 7,83007) Duitsers (4; 7,80771)
	(ii) generic words referring to places	continente (6; 8,20775) mundo (8; 7,22439)	monde (6; 7,88279) oriental (4; 7,89671) partout (4; 7,71691) pays (3; 5,82092)	partout (7; 8,68323) /(6; 9,48693)	
(3) Words related to time		tiempos (4; 7,50414) domingo (5; 7,25449)	temps (6; 7,69774) aujourd'hui (6; 7,60482)	époque (3; 8,05749) aujourd'hui (3; 7,18408)	
(4) Description of populism(s) as a phenomenon	(i) words pointing to the idea of expansion	auge (31; 10,4683) cultivo (5; 8,36773) ascenso (15; 8,47122) ola (8; 7,62931) crecimiento (8; 7,25685) caldo (6; 7,26191)	montée (35; 10,58239) vagues (4; 7,89409) grandissant (3; 7,50015) vague (4; 7,72388)	montée (27; 10,44427) /(78; 12,83007) puissance (5; 8,35326)	opkomst (28; 10,33365) groeiende (11; 9,16711) golf (6; 8,35374) stromingen (5; 8,16206)

		creciente (6; 7,17451) avance (6; 7,1194)			
	(ii) words pointing to the idea of danger	desastre (4; 7,82258) asolando (6; 8,73947) veneno (6; 7,29034) enemigo (6; 7,14825) opresor (4; 8,15138) alarmantes (4; 8,12964) amenazan (4; 8,0429) amenaza (6; 7,9813) peligrosos (3; 7,69318) huida (6; 7,2709) peligro (3; 7,13995)		ennemi (3; 7,69622)	
	(iii) words pointing to the war semantic field	combate (11; 8,1007) combatir (11; 8,04158) desfiles (7; 7,51964) lucha (7; 7,19541)	lutter (7; 8,57134) stratégie (3; 7,12758)	combattre (4; 9,54879) lutter (8,66312)	strijdt (4; 7,8733) strategie (6; 8,30884)
	(iv) words pointing to the idea of prevention / confronting / stopping populism/ist	vacuna (10; 9,4030) frenar (9; 8,93391) / (6; 7,14202) contra (40; 8,55457) / (41; 8,96041) frente (14; 8,32455) / (22; 8,77819) antídoto (8; 7,6848) alternativa (9; 7,56537) muro (6; 7,20126)	(faire) barrage (3; 9,18408)	face (10; 9,19007) contre (25; 9,07685) défi (3; 8,89148)	

		parar (5; 7,0192) freno (5; 6,99213)			
	(v) words pointing to personification of populism	nacen (4; 8,13891)	nourrit (7; 8,68065)	nourrir (3; 9,22741) visage (3; 7,72388)	voedt (zich) (7; 8,58599)
	(vi) words pointing to the discourse about populism / self-referential use of *populis**	puro (14; 8,4675) demagogia (12; 8,22741) rancio (10; 8,0135) nuevos (6; 7,99812) viejo (4; 7,82258) concepto (9; 7,74471) libro (4; 7,27719) peor (7; 7,16892) estilo (5; 6,89148)	pur (5; 8,19781) terme (5; 8,18622) passager (3; 7,50815) demagogie (3; 7,4975) concept (3; 7,44286) nouveau (5; 7,30651) mot (3; 7,26078) contexte (3; 7,23402) / (4; 8,95015) débat (7; 8,83581)	introduction (5; 8,51136) Cas (5; 8,51136) politologue (5; 8,27208) connoté (4; 8,23513) Mudde (4; 8,18943) discours (7; 8,10518) simplisme (3; 7,81347) simplification (3; 7,80689) livre (4; 7,79055) contexte (3; 7,57094) débat (3; 7,7146) nouveau (3; 7,09712) conférence (6; 8,60482)	vorm (9; 8,79271) soort (13; 9,05478) demagogie (7; 8,65506) plat (6; 8,43522) genoemd (7; 8,50129) woord (6; 8,14825) goed (6; 7,54194)
(5) Miscellaneous		incidencia (4; 8,12656) reformas (6; 7,98877) cambio (3; 7,69622) pobreza (8; 7,5685) desigualdades (3; 7,5,54604)	positions (4; 7,77359) conséquence (3; 7,07123) effet (3; 7,02272)	insatisfaction (3; 9,33703) crispations (8; 9,33703) réponses (6; 8,71768) incompatible (4; 8,23513) choix (6; 8,20992)	jeugdwerkloosheid (14; 9,65507) meningsuiting (14; 9,59547) klimaat (16; 9,44733) vrije (14; 9,41075) leugenachtig (6; 8,45054)

		vanidad (7; 7,51503) libertad (9; 7,45912) división (3; 7,36096) improvisación (6; 7,2869) preocupa (6; 7,1566) hipocresia (5; 7,01929) problemas (7; 6,98797) electoral (9; 6,98381) intereses (3; 6,97209)		dénoncer (4; 8,1143) climat (3; 7,92318) perspective (3; 7,75841) situation (3; 8,703564) sexisme (3; 7,8036) désenchantement (3; 7,8035) victoire (4; 7,74026) mondialisation (3; 7,66015) conséquences (3; 7,69622) crise (3; 7,47122) médias (3; 7,30651)	uitsluiting (6; 8,41504) onvrede (6; 8,37551) woordenstrijd (5; 8,19781) onfrisse (4; 7,8733) polarisering (5; 8,11004) pro-samenwerking (4; 7,87847) pro-arbeider (4; 7,87847) neiging (4; 7,82507) Google (4; 7,78083)

Table 15. Semantic grouping of the collocates of the abstract nouns across the corpora.

The first group of collocates of the abstract nouns in singular and plural constitutes words related to politics and has the largest number of collocates across all the semantic groups, particularly in the Spanish corpus. In the four corpora, the collocates in this group have logDice scores ranging between 6,8 and 10,9. Among the collocates referring to political leanings, ideologies and political labels, there are (i) terms pointing to the structure of the political spectrum (e.g. “left”, “centre”, “right”), and (ii) abstract concepts and more generally words which can be candidates for the status of sociopolitical keywords (e.g. “democracy”, “nationalism”, “liberalism”, “liberal”). In the examples of the use of *populis** together with other political labels, abstract concepts, and terms referring to political leanings and ideologies, the negative evaluation of the concept of *populism* is apparent from the co-occurring lexical items.

Terms which serve to structure the political spectrum are used in all four corpora. The terms “right” / “right-wing” have the highest logDice values in the Spanish and Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpora, respectively the terms *(de) derechas* (10,34) and *rechts* (10,26), and a slightly lower logDice value in the French-speaking Belgian media corpus (9,49). In the French corpus, the term *droite* has a logDice of 7,9, which is lower than in other corpora. The terms “left” / “left-wing” have the highest LogDice score in the French corpus (9,12) and a similar score in the Spanish corpus (9,84) for the singular form *populismo* and (9,35) for the plural form *populismos / (de) izquierda(s)*. In the Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus, the logDice of the term *links* is slightly lower (8,7) and in the French-speaking Belgian media corpus, the term *gauche* has the lowest LogDice value among the four corpora (7,8). The terms “left” and “right” are among the most statistically significant collocates in the four corpora.

A distinctive element in the data is the term ‘centre’. It only appears as the collocate of *populis** in the Spanish corpus. With an absolute frequency of 13 and a logDice value of 7,61, the term *centro* co-occurs with *populismo(s)* in the contexts in which right-wing political actors in Spain target their rivals. Example (1) illustrates the use of *populis** by a politician from PP who is targeting all forms of populism (the left, the right, and the centre) and specifically labels Ciudadanos, the political rival of PP, as *populismos de centro* “populism of the centre”.

(1) *García Egea ha insistido en la definición del partido y ha criticado a unos y a otros. La artillería pesada ha llegado al hablar de Ciudadanos: "Ni populistas*

de derechas, ni populismos de izquierdas... ni ***populismos de centro****, que son los "peores".*

("García Egea has insisted on defining the party and has criticised both sides. The heavy artillery came when speaking about Ciudadanos: "Neither right-wing populists, nor left-wing populism... nor centrist populism, which is the 'worst'.")

All the occurrences of *populismo de centro* in the Spanish corpus appear in the direct or indirect reported speech of the right-wing political actors, mainly the politicians from PP who target their rival political party Cs as "populism of the centre". The use of the populist label in these cases serves to disqualify the opponents across the whole political spectrum: using populism without any explanation or specification and just as a mere label and buzzword to target several political actors with one word.

In addition, there are adjectives which serve to clarify what type or form of populism is discussed (e.g. adjectives such as "political" and "economic" in the Spanish and Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus. In addition, there are adjectives pointing to the far-right ideologies, such as *nacional* "national", *identitarios* "identitarian" *excluyentes* "exclusionary" in the Spanish corpus and *national* "national", *identitaire* "identitarian" in the Belgian French corpus. Furthermore, all four corpora share collocates such as "extreme" and "extremism(s)": *extremismos* and *extrema*, *extremos, ultraderecha* in Spanish; *extrême(s)* in the French corpus; *extremismes* / *extreme* in the French-speaking Belgian media corpus, and *extremisme* / *extreem* / *extreemrechtse* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus. The association of populism with extremist ideas is thus a shared feature across the public spheres.

The collocates in the first semantic group are predominantly negatively charged words. There are lexical items which point to the association of *populis** with both (far) left and (far) right-wing ideologies. The collocates in this group in the four corpora are mainly terms associated with right-wing ideologies, and more specifically with far or extreme right politics, such as, "xenophobia", "antisemitism", "racism". In all four corpora there are terms pointing to attitudes of intolerance, rejection, or anti-foreigner sentiments: "racism" in French, French (BE) (*racisme*) and Dutch (BE) data (*racisme*); "xenophobia" in Spanish (*xenofobia*) and French (BE) (*xénophobie*), and "antisemitism" in French (BE) (*antisémitisme*) and Dutch (BE) corpora (*antisemitisme*).

In the Spanish corpus, the uses of *xenofobia* collocating with *populism(s)* are characterised by the presence of several lexical items enumerated, such as terms denoting political leanings and ideologies as presented in Examples (1–3). Such uses may appear in analytical articles in which populism is discussed and commented upon by experts (Examples 2–4), as well as in quotations of politicians in the media (Example 4).

I provide Examples (2) and (3) to illustrate the use of *populis** in the analytical discourse in which the term *populis** appears in metalinguistic comments and functions as a self-referential label, that is, its use serves to refer to populism and to discuss it as a phenomenon present in society or in the current-state sociopolitical situation in a specific context. The meaning of *populism* in these examples can be identified by looking at other lexical items with which it co-occurs. In Example 2, the form of populism referred to is specified (*de derechas* “right-wing”). Among the co-occurrences are *nacionalismo* and *xenofobia,* which appear among the strongest collocates of *populis** in the Spanish corpus. In addition, we can observe in these examples the presence of other lexical items which share a semantic feature with *populism,* and which pertain to the same lexical field (e.g. *autoritarismo* “authoritarianism”).

In contrast, Example 4 illustrates a different use of *populis** as a self-referential label. This use of *populis** is a quotation of a political actor (Theresa May). In this example, the negative evaluation of populism is apparent from the co-occurring lexical items: *populismo* collocates with *xenofobia* “xenophobia” and *descarado racismo y fascismo* “blatant racism and fascism”. Through the use of a group of lexical items and by specifying that the realities mentioned have taken and are taking place in Europe, a politician uses *populis** to talk about populism in a negative way and to distance themselves from this and similar phenomena. *Populism* in this list appears to be one of the phenomena present in society which raises concern. In doing so and presenting oneself as very different from *populism*, the use of *populism* in this example points to the discursive function of self-legitimisation.

(2) ***"El populismo de derechas significa más xenofobia**, nacionalismo, retroceso de los derechos humanos y una cooperación internacional más débil", desgrana Wolf.*

("'Right-wing populism means more xenophobia, nationalism, a rollback of human rights and weaker international cooperation,' Wolf explains.")

(3) *Emerge una nueva derecha que gana espacios no sólo en Europa, sino en EE UU y en América Latina; una derecha extrema que, hasta ahora, ha descartado los rostros más violentos y que se embandera en fenómenos como el autoritarismo, el nacionalismo, el conservadurismo,* ***el populismo****,* ***la xenofobia****, la islamofobia, el desprecio al pluralismo, etcétera.*

("A new right wing is emerging that is gaining ground not only in Europe, but also in the US and Latin America; an extreme right wing that, until now, has discarded the most violent faces and that embraces phenomena such as authoritarianism, nationalism, conservatism, populism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, contempt for pluralism, etc.")

(4) *"Somos un sólido bloque de ciudadanos liberales que desean plantar cara al resurgir de* ***la xenofobia****,* ***al populismo****, y hasta al descarado racismo y fascismo que se está extendiendo por toda Europa", proclama.*

("'We are a solid bloc of liberal citizens who want to stand up to the resurgence of xenophobia, populism, and even blatant racism and fascism that is spreading throughout Europe,' he proclaims.")

In the French-speaking Belgian corpus, the uses of *populisme(s)* co-occurring with *xénophobie* are also characterised by the use of terms pertaining to the same lexical field, all pointing to the negative evaluation of populism. Examples 5 and 6 illustrate the uses of *populism* in the first semantic category. As in the examples from the Spanish corpus, the use of *populis** as a self-referential label appears in analytical articles. The use of *populis** together with other political labels, abstract concepts, and terms referring to political leanings and ideologies, the negative evaluation of the concept of *populism* is apparent from the co-occurring lexical items.

(5) *Malgré la montée des extrémismes,* ***des populismes****,* ***de la xénophobie****, du nationalisme et les stigmates des divisions du passé – rien qu'en Italie, Alessandra Mussolini, la petite-fille du Duce et eurodéputée PPE, a un jour déclaré qu'il valait mieux « être fasciste que pédé », cependant que l'arrière-*

petit-fils, Jules... César, se présente au scrutin sur la liste postfasciste Fratteli d'Italia...

("Despite the rise of extremism, populism, xenophobia, nationalism, and the lingering effects of past divisions – in Italy alone, Alessandra Mussolini, the Duce's granddaughter and EPP MEP, once declared that it was better "to be a fascist than a faggot," while her great-grandson, Julius … Caesar, is running for office on the post-fascist Fratteli d'Italia list...")

(6) *L'écrivain a aussi abordé le sujet de la liberté et du combat dos au mur qu'elle mène à l'échelle mondiale. Partout où l'on regarde, note Döpfner, on observe une hausse de* ***la xénophobie, du populisme et de l'antisémitisme****.*

("The writer also addressed the subject of freedom and the uphill battle it is waging on a global scale. Everywhere you look, Döpfner notes, there is a rise in xenophobia, populism, and antisemitism.")

In the Dutch-speaking Belgian corpus, *populisme* co-occurs with other negatively evaluated lexical items, such as *racisme* "racism" and *antisemitisme* "antisemitism". Example 7 illustrates such use in the Dutch (BE) corpus, in which *antisemitisme* is one of the strongest collocates of *populism*. In this example, *populis** appears in a quotation from the speech pronounced by a Belgian political actor elected President of the Parliament of the French Community of Belgium. Rudy Demotte uses *populism* and other negatively connoted terms presented as growing to express concern; *populis** itself functions as a reference to a phenomenon present in society.

(7) *In zijn openingstoespraak zei Demotte onder meer dat hij van het parlement een "plaats van moed, verzet en voorstellen" wil maken die ook het hoofd biedt aan de ongerustheid die voortkomt uit de mondialisering****, het groeiende populisme, racisme en antisemitisme.***

("In his opening speech, Demotte said, among other things, that he wants to make Parliament a "place of courage, resistance and proposals" that also addresses the concerns arising from globalisation, growing populism, racism and antisemitism.")

Furthermore, collocates such as “fascism” appear only in the Spanish and French corpora. In the Spanish corpus, the collocate *fascismo* co-occurs with *populismo(s)* in the analytical articles where *populis** is used as a self-referential label. The term “fascism” is referred to with its denotational meaning (Examples 8 and 9).

(8) *“Cuando deja de haber elecciones reales, deberíamos hablar de dictadura, no de* ***populismo****", explica en una entrevista Finchelstein (Buenos Aires, 1975), profesor de Historia en la New School for Social Research y en el Eugene Lang College de Nueva York, y autor de varias obras sobre* ***fascismo, populismo y el Holocausto****.*

("‘When there are no longer real elections, we should be talking about dictatorship, not populism," explains Finchelstein (Buenos Aires, 1975), professor of History at the New School for Social Research and at Eugene Lang College in New York, and author of several works on fascism, populism and the Holocaust, in an interview.’")

(9) *Hemos pasado de 1938 a 2019,* ***del fascismo al populismo*** *(…).*
(“We have gone from 1938 to 2019, **from fascism to populism** (…)”)

In the French corpus, *populisme* co-occuring with *fascisme* also appear in the analytical articles in which these terms are used as a label to refer to a phenomenon which was present in history, but also to compare the current situation with the past, as in Example 10:

(10) *Selon lui, "un fascisme", un "****populisme réactionnaire****", est en place aujourd'hui au Brésil.*

(“According to him, ‘a fascism’, a **‘reactionary populism’**, is in place in Brazil today.”)

After having described the collocates referring to the right and the centre, I move to the examples pointing to the left-wing ideologies. Regarding the association of

populism with left-wing ideologies, in the Spanish corpus, there are such abstract nouns and collective nouns, as *comunismo*, *comunistas, independentismo, independentista, separatismo, separatistas*. The negative connotations of *populismo(s)* are apparent due to the association of *populism* with such ideologies as *communism* and linking it to the regimes in the Latin American countries, thus linking populism to the left-wing ideologies in the Spanish media discourse, specifically the association of communism with Podemos. The use of *populismo(s)* co-occurring with such terms as as *comunismo, independentismo, separatismo* points primarily to the debates concerning the state of the autonomous communities of Catalonia and the Basque Country and links the use of *populis** to the debate concerning the questions of independence and regional autonomy. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate the co-occurrence of *populismo* with *comunismo* in which the latter is discussed in the historical and sociopolitical contexts in Argentina (11) and in the current political situation in Spain (12). The term *populism* carries negative connotations as it is metaphorically presented as a drug. Moreover, Example 12 illustrates the quotation of a political actor from the right-wing political party (PP) who expresses the need to distance himself from populism and communism using the metaphor of a wall.

(11) *El populismo es como la heroína. (...) Irónicamente, el creador de ese gran caldo de cultivo para* ***el populismo que es el comunismo,*** *Marx, acuñó la frase de "la religión es el opio de los pueblos". Podríamos decir, más bien, que el populismo es el opio de los pueblos.*

(“**Populism** is like heroin. (...) Ironically, the creator of that great breeding ground for populism which is communism, Marx, coined the phrase "religion is the opium of the people." We could say, rather, that populism is the opium of the people.”)

(12) *Defendiendo el pasado de su partido, pleno de éxitos económicos y casos de corrupción, para garantizar que en el presente es el* ***"muro de contención contra el comunismo y el populismo".***

(“Defending his party's past, full of economic successes and corruption cases, to guarantee that in the present it is the **‘bulwark against communism and populism’**.”)

All these collocates point to the context-specific use of these terms, labelling national actors (Example 13), pro-Independence regional movements (Example 13) or referring to political regimes in the Latin American countries (Example 11). Furthermore, in the Spanish corpus, the co-occurrence of *populismo(s)* with the abstract nouns *comunismo*, *comunistas*, *independentismo*, *separatismo* touches upon the context of the general elections in Spain and appear in the analytical articles analysing different forms of populism in the national political context ahead of the elections (Examples 12 and 13). The concordance lines containing *populismo* co-occurring with *independentismo* target the regional political parties, as well as Sánchez and the possibility of a coalition government with Podemos. Examples 12 and 13 illustrate how the use of *populis** serves as a convenient term for self-promotion and self-legitimisation. In Example 12, it is the abstract use of the term without giving details on who or what is populism but presenting it as a dangerous phenomenon for the Spanish society who needs to be separated from it. Example 13 illustrates how the plural form of the abstract noun is used by the right-wing political actors to target their opponents from the (far) left and right leanings. Example 13 contains a multifunctional use of *populism*, that is, it illustrates how the polysemy of a sociopolitical keyword serves to target several political actors, to delegitimise them all while self-presenting as the alternative solution *constitucionalismo* "constitutionalism" to the apparent danger suggested by such noun phrases as *peligrosos populismos* "dangerous populisms" and *el virus separatista* "the separatist virus", and such verbs as *hacer frente con urgencia* "to urgently deal with", *colapsar* "to collapse" and *amenazar* "to threaten".

> (13) *Algo habrá que hacer, no obstante, porque son impensables unas terceras elecciones y España necesita con urgencia hacer frente a* ***tres peligrosos populismos*** *:* ***el independentista****, que trata de colapsar Cataluña y amenaza con extender el virus separatista a otros territorios;* ***el de la izquierda dogmática,*** *que ha convertido en sus principales enemigos a las empresas del Ibex y a la Constitución del 78 y los consensos a que dio lugar; y* ***el de esa extrema derecha*** *que apela a los sentimientos más bajos para culpar a los inmigrantes y al Estado autonómico de todos los males del país. La alternativa a* ***este radicalismo de tres cabezas*** *está en el constitucionalismo, que ha proporcionado los mejores años de equilibrio y prosperidad a España: ése es*

hoy el voto útil. Por eso pedimos que los conservadores den su apoyo al PP, que la izquierda moderada y los socialdemócratas voten al PSOE y los liberales, a Ciudadanos.

("Something must be done, however, because a third election is unthinkable, and Spain urgently needs to confront **three dangerous populisms**: the **separatist** movement, which seeks to paralyse Catalonia and threatens to spread the separatist virus to other regions; **the populism of the dogmatic left**, which has made the companies listed on the IBEX 35 and the 1978 Constitution and the consensus it fostered its main enemies; and **the populism of the extreme right**, which appeals to the basest sentiments to blame immigrants and the autonomous state system for all the country's ills. The alternative to **this three-headed radicalism lies in constitutionalism**, which has provided Spain with its best years of stability and prosperity: that is the only effective vote today. Therefore, we ask that conservatives support the People's Party (PP), that the moderate left and social democrats vote for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), and that liberals vote for Citizens (Ciudadanos).")

Furthermore, another shared collocate across the four corpora is the abstract noun "democracy". In the Spanish corpus, only the plural form *democracias* is used and mainly appears in the context of the political situation of the Western countries in the analytical articles. In contrast, in the French media corpus, the co-occurrence of *populisme* and *démocratie* is characterised by a diversity of uses in the following contexts. Firstly, in the reported speech of political actors, as for example in the cases of the direct and indirect reported speech of the Minister of Economy, Finance, Industrial, Energy, and Digital Sovereignty at the time of the publication, Bruno Le Maire (Example 14). His quotation is used in several articles in the corpus and appears in the discussion of the debate concerning the privatisation of the airport of Paris. The RIP (i.e. *référendum d'initiative partagée* "shared initiative referendum") is qualified as a populist measure by Le Maire during the parliamentary debates. Secondly, the collocation of *démocratie* and *populisme(s)* appears in the analytical discourse regarding the elections in Tunisia. Thirdly, it appears in the context where a book and a theatrical piece tackle the topic of populism.

(14) *Bruno Le Maire a notamment pris pour cible les parlementaires à l'origine du RIP : "Tous ceux qui se réunissent dans un attelage de circonstances pour proposer un référendum d'initiative partagée, alors que le texte n'est même pas encore voté, font le jeu des* ***populismes*** *et affaiblissent la* ***démocratie*** *représentative", a accusé le ministre à l'ouverture des débats.*

("Bruno Le Maire notably targeted the parliamentarians behind the RIP: "All those who come together in a coalition of circumstances to propose a shared initiative referendum, when the text has not even been voted on yet, are playing into the hands of **populism** and weakening representative **democracy**," the minister accused at the opening of the debates.")

In the Belgian French-speaking media corpus, the uses of *démocratie* collocating with *populisme(s)* appear (i) in the analytical articles in the established media Le Soir in which populism is discussed as a phenomenon on the rise and negatively affecting Western democracies (Examples 15 and 16) and (ii) in the news articles regarding the national political context (Example 17).

(15) *Cas Mudde: «****Le populisme*** *peut se combiner à n'importe quelle idéologie» Pour le politologue Cas Mudde,* ***le populisme*** *est incompatible avec la démocratie libérale dans le sens où il refuse le pluralisme et considère les opposants comme des ennemis.*

("Cas Mudde: 'Populism can be combined with any ideology' For political scientist Cas Mudde, populism is incompatible with liberal democracy in the sense that it rejects pluralism and considers opponents as enemies.")

(16) ***Montée des populismes****, protestation des gilets jaunes... Autant d'indices d'une démocratie en souffrance.*

("**The rise of populism**, the Yellow Vest protests... These are all signs of a democracy in distress.")

(17) *Oliver Paasch, le ministre-président de la communauté germanophone a œuvré pour que cette autre forme de démocratie participative et délibérative soit mise en place. « Le but est de créer une plate-forme pour les citoyens qui*

leur permette de participer à la vie politique, de suivre la politique, de contrôler la politique. En même temps notre ambition c'est de lutter par ces instruments complémentaires de ***notre démocratie contre le populisme, l'extrême droite, l'extrême gauche qui sont des ennemis*** *du système représentatif actuel » explique-t-il.*

("Oliver Paasch, the Minister-President of the German-speaking Community, worked to establish this alternative form of participatory and deliberative democracy. 'The goal is to create a platform for citizens that allows them to participate in political life, to follow politics, and to monitor politics. At the same time, our ambition is to use these complementary instruments of **our democracy to combat populism, the far right, and the far left**, which are enemies of the current representative system,' he explains.")

In the Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus, the uses of *democratie* collocating with *populisme* appear in the analytical articles containing interviews with experts, such as (Example 18) and Example 19, containing metalinguistic comments about populism as a phenomenon and about the actual use of the word *populism* and quotations about populism and democracy as in Example 20.

(18) *Het is niet de schuld van Facebook of Google dat er meer* ***populisme*** *en minder* ***democratie*** *is.*

("It is not the fault of Facebook or Google that there is more **populism** and less **democracy**.")

(19) *Het ongenuanceerde en polariserende onderscheid dat hij maakte, doet denken aan de populaire moderne tegenstelling tussen* ***democratie en populisme****, waarbij democratie soms verengd wordt tot een politiek beleid dat strookt met de eigen idealen. Alle andere beleidsopties worden in de moreel inferieure categorie van* ***het 'populisme'*** *gepropt.*

("The unnuanced and polarising distinction he made is reminiscent of the popular modern dichotomy between democracy and populism, in which democracy is sometimes narrowed down to a political policy that aligns with

one's own ideals. All other policy options are crammed into the morally inferior category of **'populism'.**")

(20) *Ten bewijze van een andere gevleugelde uitspraak van Churchill: de democratie, geprangd* ***tussen populisme en inefficiëntie****, is het slechtste politieke systeem, met uitzondering van alle andere.*

("In proof of another famous quote by Churchill: democracy, squeezed between **populism and inefficiency**, is the worst political system, except for all the others.")

Furthermore, among the words related to politics, there is a variety of political actors in four corpora.

In the Spanish, French (FR) and (BE) corpora, there are collocates referring to contemporary political actors. Only in the Belgian Dutch-speaking media corpus, *populisme* co-occurs with the name of the leader of the American civil rights organisation, that is Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition. The use of *populisme* is self-referential (Example 21).

(21) ***Het populisme van Jesse Jackson*** *in de jaren 80 van de vorige eeuw werd zelfs een Regenboogcoalitie genoemd.* ***Populisme*** *betekent letterlijk dat je strijdt voor het volk.*

("**Jesse Jackson's populism** in the 1980s was even called a Rainbow Coalition. **Populism** literally means fighting for the people.")

In Spanish and French (BE) corpora, among the collocates of *populism(s)*, there are political actors who are commonly presented in the media and classified in the academic literature as populists. In both Spanish and French (BE) corpora, Trump is among the international actors. In the French (BE) corpus, there are also European actors often classified as populists in the context of contemporary political events, such as the Italian politician Salvini, the Hungarian politician Orban, and the British politician Johnson. In the French-speaking Belgian media corpus, the only national actor is the left-wing political party PTB, occurring in the reported speech of the Belgian politician from the right-wing MR who reacts to the discourse of another political actor: *"Cela ne*

va pas de comparer mes méthodes avec le populisme ou le PTB" ("'It's not right to compare my methods with populism or the PTB'").

The Spanish corpus stands out, as it is the only one having mainly national political actors among the words collocating with *populismo(s)*. In the Spanish corpus, four out of five actors are national and regional actors. The collocate Vox has the highest logDice value, referring to the extreme right political party, followed by the left-wing Podemos. Vox appears in such phrases as *el populismo de la derecha* "right-wing populism", *el nacional populismo de Vox* "the national populism of Vox", in which the populist label is attributed to this political party by other national political actors, mainly from the right-wing PP, or it appears in the articles in which Vox is not a target of the stigmatisation, but rather the populist label attached to Vox appears in the articles discussing the current rise of populism and naming different actors, rather than overtly stigmatising them. Podemos is referred to as *el populismo de izquierdas* "the populism of the left wing", *el populismo de Podemos* "the populism of Podemos", or co-occurring with such terms as *el independentismo* "independentism" and *los independentistas* "independentists". Vox and Podemos also appear in the same concordance lines in which the discussion is focused on situating political actors classified as populists on the political spectrum.

Moreover, there are two left-wing regional political actors from Madrid (Errejón) and Barcelona (Colau) mentioned as collocates of *populismo*. The former appears in such phrases as *el populismo puro de Errejón* "Errejón's pure populism". The latter appears in the context of the political actors of the right-wing Cs in Catalonia targeting the mayor of Barcelona directly as *el populismo de Ada Colau* "Colau's populism" or indirectly, by just using the abstract noun with a definite article *el populismo* together with *el independentismo*.

In the French corpus, the only person-referring collocate of *populisme(s)* is *Macron* "Macron's populism" in the context of elections, in which *populis** is used either to refer to a political reality and a phenomenon present in society (Example 22) or is attributed (by a political actor) to the far-right, as in the Example 23.

(22) *A l'approche des élections et dans un contexte de* ***percée des populismes****, Emmanuel Macron a choisi de s'adresser à tous les citoyens européens.*

("With elections approaching and in a context of rising populism, Emmanuel Macron has chosen to address all European citizens.")

(23) *« A partir du moment où nous n'incarnons pas une alternance crédible, un certain nombre de nos électeurs qui veulent voter contre Macron votent pour le Rassemblement national, ceux qui veulent faire barrage au* ***populisme*** *ont voté Emmanuel Macron », a analysé Valérie Pécresse.*

("'From the moment we do not embody a credible alternative, a number of our voters who want to vote against Macron vote for the National Rally, those who want to block populism have voted for Emmanuel Macron,' analysed Valérie Pécresse.")

Furthermore, in the second subcategory, among the collocates there are words referring to events and actions, present only in the Belgian French- and Dutch-speaking corpora, namely, Brexit, in both corpora and *gilets jaunes* "Yellow vests" and *élections* "elections" in the Belgian data in French. *Le mouvement des Gilets jaunes* ("The Yellow vests movement") is an anti-austerity movement that took the form of a series of recurring massive, and at times violent, protests that started in France in 2018 as a reaction to the rise of the fuel tax and of the price of petroleum, and the government's austerity measures. The movement expanded to Belgium and to some extent to other countries in the world. The movement is often associated with populism and labelled populist in the media.

In the third subcategory, the words related to people are only present in the data in French. We find seven occurrences of the collocate *peuple* "people" in the French media corpus and five occurrences of this collocate in the French (BE), both having a logDice score of around 8. In the French (BE) corpus, there are also three occurrences of the collocate *citoyens* "citizens". The low frequency of the collocate 'people' and other related terms and its absence in Spanish and Dutch is an unexpected result. Previous studies on populism have shown that *people* is one of the keywords in political discourse in general and in discourse of or about populism and populist actors

in particular (Truan, 2019). In the corpora studied, the token *peuple* appears in the French and French-speaking Belgian media in articles providing theoretical debate on populism and about the results of the elections. The use o*f peuple* by both expert and political actors are provided in Examples 24–26.

(24) *La philosophe postmarxiste Chantal Mouffe, théoricienne du populisme de gauche avec Ernesto Laclau, confirme : « La différence entre "populisme de droite" et "populisme de gauche" tient à la façon dont ils construisent le "nous" du* ***peuple*** *et le "eux" de l'establishment. »*

(“Post-Marxist philosopher Chantal Mouffe, a theorist of left-wing populism along with Ernesto Laclau, confirms: ‘The difference between 'right-wing populism' and 'left-wing populism' lies in the way they construct the 'we' of the people and the 'them' of the establishment.’”)

(25) *Cette fois, l'antienne des tories, les conservateurs, sera le bon vieux fond de sauce du* ***populisme*** *électoral : le «* ***peuple*** *» contre les « élites ». Johnson défend le « peuple » contre un « Parlement » qui tergiverse, chicane, chipote sur l'application d'une décision voulue par le « peuple ».*

(“This time, the Tories' refrain, the Conservatives' refrain, will be the good old stock of **electoral populism**: the ‘**people**’ against the ‘elites’. Johnson defends the ‘people’ against a ‘Parliament’ that dithers and quibbles over the implementation of a decision desired by the ‘people’.”)

(26) *Pour la juriste Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, il faut réécrire une théorie du bien commun à l'échelle universelle, chevillée autour de la notion de liberté. Les démocraties prennent l'eau. Élections après élections, de plus en plus de* ***citoyens*** *sont tentés par* ***le populisme,*** *l'autoritarisme.*

(“For legal scholar Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, a theory of the common good must be rewritten on a universal scale, anchored in the notion of freedom. Democracies are floundering. Election after election, more and more **citizens** are tempted by **populism** and authoritarianism.”)

As for the words referring to locations and places, there are words referring to concrete geographical locations, as well as generic words referring to places. The collocate “Europe” appears among the top collocates of ‘populism’ in three corpora. It has the highest logDice value in the Spanish, French (FR) and (BE) corpora. We also find references to concrete European countries, such as Hungary in the French data. In addition, in all four corpora, there are references to the Americas, with mainly the Latin American countries in the Spanish corpus (*populismos latinoamericanos*, Venezuela, Chile), and the USA in the other three corpora. In the Spanish data, however, there are also references to the regional contexts, mainly suggested by the adjective *catalán* “Catalan populism”.

Furthermore, there is a group of generic words referring to places, such as “world” in Spanish (*mundo*) and French (*monde*), and “everywhere” (*partout)* in both Belgian French data, suggesting that populism is not only presented as a local phenomenon, but also as a world phenomenon. Moreover, other co-occurring lexical items in the concordance lines within this subgroup point to the discussion of populism as a worldwide phenomenon on the rise and expanding. Such uses can be further observed in the following group of collocates.

In the group of words referring to time, there are expressions referring to the current period and current-day events. The collocates suggest that populism is discussed as mostly a current-day phenomenon.

The following semantic group of collocates includes several subgroups of words which mainly point to two observations: the idea of the expansion of populism(s) and the discussion of populism as a dangerous phenomenon which needs to be stopped. These observations are supported by several subgroups of collocates of populism(s). The meanings and the negative connotations are suggested by (i) the words referring to the idea of the rise of populism, present in four corpora. The word “rise” is the strongest collocate of populism(s) in four corpora (*auge* in Spanish, *montée* in French, and *opkomst* in Dutch). We can also observe the collocates which metaphorically present populism as a force of nature, suggested by the collocates *ola* “wave” in Spanish, *vague(s)* “wave” in French, *golf* “wave,surge”, and *stromingen* “currents/flows” in Dutch (Examples 27–29). Across the four corpora, in addition to the collocate wave, populism is discussed as a powerful and growing phenomenon,

suggested by the collocates *ascenso* “ascent”, *creciente* “growing”, *avance* “advance” in Spanish; *grandissant* “growing” and *puissance* “force/power” in French, and *groeiende* “growing” as in *het groeiende populisme* “growing populism”. Thus, we can observe that the idea of populism as a phenomenon on the rise is shared across the public spheres, as well as there are shared salient collocates which are used in the four corpora.

(27) ***La ola del populismo*** *que ha azotado Europa y continúa amenazándonos en los últimos meses, está bajando.*

(“**The wave of populism** that has swept across Europe and continues to threaten us in recent months is subsiding.”)

(28) *On peut toutefois gager que l'ordre multilatéral est suffisamment institutionnalisé aujourd'hui pour opposer sa résilience à* ***la vague mondiale de populisme unilatéraliste****.*

(“However, we can wager that the multilateral order is sufficiently institutionalised today to demonstrate its resilience against **the global wave of unilateralist populism**.”)

(29) *Nu surfen ze op de* ***wereldwijde golf van populisme.***

(“Now they are surfing **the global wave of populism**.”)

Moving to the collocates pointing to the idea of danger which include words within the semantic fields of danger and war, as well as words suggesting the need to stop, prevent, and/or confront populism(s), we can observe that the Spanish corpus really stands out. Specifically, in the Spanish data, among the collocates of *populismo(s)* there are such nouns as *desastre* “disaster”, *veneno* “poison”, *enemigo* “enemy”, *opresor* “oppressor”, amenaza “threat”, peligro “danger”, *vacuna* “vaccine”, *antídoto* “antidote”, *muro* “wall”, *freno* “brake”; such qualifying adjectives as *alarmantes* “alarming” and *peligrosos* “dangerous”, and such verbs as *frenar* “to curb” and *parar* “to stop”. Thus, populism in the Spanish data is associated with the words that transmit the idea that populism is a dangerous phenomenon which needs to be prevented or stopped.

In addition, this idea is present across the four corpora (Examples 30–34) as suggested by the shared collocates which pertain to the war semantic field, such as combatir “to fight”, *combate* “fight”, *lucha* “battle” in Spanish; *lutter* “to fight”, *combattre* “to fight”, and *strijdt* “to fight” in Dutch. Also, in the French data, we observe the verb *faire barrage* “to block”. The concordance lines containing these collocates across the corpora point to the perceived need to stop populism. In the Belgian Dutch corpus, however, the verb *strijden* “to fight” co-occurs with *populisme* in a specific context of the political activism of Jesse Jackson in the US in the 1980s. Example 34 illustrates a positive connotation of populism in which a specific instance was classified as populist in the past. It is also an example of the self-referential use of *populism* in a metalinguistic comment.

(30) **La lucha contra el populismo** debe ser incesante.

(“**The fight against populism** must be relentless.”)

(31) *“Elle choisit de mener ce combat en France et au niveau européen pour affronter le Rassemblement national et* ***lutter contre une forme de populisme*** *qui gangrène l'Europe depuis plusieurs années”.*

(“‘She chose to wage this fight in France and at the European level to confront the National Rally and **combat a form of populism** that has been plaguing Europe for several years.’”)

(32) *Dans une tribune au Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France, Mohed Altrad Président du groupe Altrad et président du MHR (Montpellier Hérault Rugby) insiste sur la nécessité d'aller voter aux élections européennes, pour* ***faire barrage aux populismes****.*

(“In an opinion piece in Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France, Mohed Altrad, President of the Altrad group and president of MHR (Montpellier Hérault Rugby), insists on the need to vote in the European elections, **to block populism**.”)

(33) *Nous devons* ***combattre les nationalismes et les populismes*** *qui conduisent à de telles situations », a-t-il lancé devant une foule de partisans du maintien du Royaume-Uni dans l'UE.*

("'We must fight the nationalisms and populisms that lead to such situations,' he declared to a crowd of supporters of remaining in the EU.")

(34) (…) **Populisme** betekent letterlijk dat je **strijdt voor het volk**.

("**Populism** literally means **fighting for the people**.")

Furthermore, within the group of collocates referring to the discussion of populism as a phenomenon, there are words pointing to the presence of the analytical discourse about populism, apparent through collocates referring to experts and scholars, such as Cas, Mudde, and *politologue* "political scientist" in the French-speaking Belgian corpus, and through such collocates as *libro / livre* "book" in the Spanish and French (BE) corpora. In the latter corpus, there are also such terms as *introduction* "introduction" and *conférence* "conference". In addition, we can observe the lexical items pointing to the presence of metalinguistic comments and discussing the definition and the use of the term *populism*, as suggested by such collocates as *concepto* "concept" (Example 35), *estilo* "style" in the Spanish corpus; *terme* "term" (Example 36), *concept* "concept" in the French corpus; *connoté* "connoted" in the Belgian French corpus, and *woord* "word" (Example 37), *vorm* "form", *soort* "kind", and *genoemd* "called" in the Belgian Dutch corpus. Moreover, across the corpora, there are terms which are typically present in the academic literature on populism, such as *demagogy* present in the Spanish, French and Belgian data in French (Example 38), and *simplisme* "simplicity" and *simplification* "simplification" in the French (BE) corpus (Example 39).

(35) *En estos tiempos, hablando de Donald Trump, es imposible no hablar* ***del concepto de populismo****.*

("In these times, when talking about Donald Trump, it is impossible not to talk about **the concept of populism**.")

(36) *Précision : **le terme « populisme »** s'entend ici non pas de manière péjorative, mais au sens large où il est utilisé dans le contexte de la démocratie libérale.*

("Clarification: the term 'populism' is understood here not in a pejorative sense, but in the broad sense in which it is used in the context of liberal democracy.")

(37) **De opkomst van populisme** maakt duidelijk dat het niet zo goed gaat met onze democratie. **Populisme**, daar valt **het woord** al, maar wat is dat dan precies?

("The rise of populism makes it clear that our democracy is not doing very well. Populism—there goes the word—but what exactly is it?")

(38) *Er zijn nu vele analyses van **demagogie**, soms ook **populisme genoemd**, dat zich op diverse manieren kan uiten (...).*

("There are now many analyses of **demagoguery**, sometimes also called **populism**, which can manifest itself in various ways (...).")

(39) Donc, oui, **le populisme est une simplification** mais plus fondamentalement, comme je l'ai dit, c'est un monisme et un moralisme et c'est ce qui le rend dangereux, car cela conduit à la polarisation.

("So yes, **populism is a simplification** but more fundamentally, as I said, it is a monism and a moralism and that is what makes it dangerous, because it leads to polarisation.")

Moreover, across the corpora there are adjectives modifying *populism(s)*. The modifying adjectives express different meanings. In the Spanish and French corpora, *puro* and *pur* "pure" are the strongest collocates. In the Spanish corpus, populism is presented as *viejo* "old" and *rancio* "stale". Populism is also presented as "new" *nuevo* / *nouveau* in the Spanish, French (FR) and French (BE). The latter adjective highlights the newness of the phenomenon and its negative outcomes. Moreover, there are modifying adjectives which point to the side of the political spectrum.

In Spanish and in Dutch, there are also instances of comparing different forms of populism by using the evaluative adjectives *peor* “worse” in Spanish (Examples 40–41) and *goed* “good” and *slecht* “bad” (Examples 42–43).

(40) *No valen los mensajes blandos contra Vox, **"el populismo de la derecha"**. Y ahora tampoco contra Ciudadanos. Porque **"el peor populismo es el de centro"**. Ese es el mensaje que el presidente del partido, Pablo Casado, y su secretario general, Teodoro García Egea, han reforzado este domingo en el mitin celebrado en Águilas (Murcia).*

(“Soft messages against Vox, ‘**the populism of the right**’, are no longer acceptable. And now they're no longer acceptable against Ciudadanos either. Because ‘**the worst populism is centrist’**. That's the message that the party's president, Pablo Casado, and its secretary general, Teodoro García Egea, reinforced this Sunday at the rally held in Águilas (Murcia).”)

(41) *Cuando me hablan **de los populismos de izquierdas**, siempre les digo a mis amigos y a mis interlocutores que solo hay un **populismo peor** que el **populismo de izquierda que es el de derecha**.*

(“When people talk to me about **left-wing populism**, I always tell my friends and interlocutors that there is only one populism worse than left-wing populism, and that is **right-wing populism**.”)

(42) *Zelfs **'goed populisme'** kan niet door de beugel.*

(“Even **'good populism'** is unacceptable.”)

(43) *Als we ervan uitgaan dat we zowel de boodschapper als de boodschap als een bedreiging voor de liberale democratie zien, kunnen we alleen concluderen dat **'goed populisme'** zowel feitelijk als inhoudelijk de verkeerde strategie is om **'slecht populisme'** te bestrijden.*

(“If we assume that we view both the messenger and the message as a threat to liberal democracy, we can only conclude that **'good populism'** is, both factually and substantively, the wrong strategy to combat **'bad populism'**.”)

The last category contains all other words which do not correspond to any of the preceding semantic groups. In the Spanish, French (BE), and Dutch (BE) corpora, the collocates are mainly negatively charged words which point to the causes and consequences of, and the societal issues related to, the rise of populism, such as *pobreza* “poverty”, *desigualdades* “inequalities”, *preocupa* “to concern”, hipocresia “hypocrisy”, *problemas* “problems” in the Spanish data; *insatisfaction* “dissatisfaction”, *crispations* “tensions”, *mondialisation* “globalisation”, *sexisme* “sexism”, *crise* “crisis” in the Belgian French corpus; and *jeugdwerkloosheid* “youth unemployment”, *polarisering* “polarisation”, and *(vrije) meningsuiting* “freedom of speech” in the Dutch (BE) corpus.

Furthermore, there are collocates unique to a country. In the Spanish corpus, a positively charged word *libertad* “freedom” is used in opposition to the term *populism*. Indeed, Example (44) illustrates how the term *libertad* co-occurs with *populismo* to negatively present the phenomenon of populism by opposing it to three positively charged terms, namely *libertad* “freedom”, *igualdad* “equality”, *solidaridad* “solidarity”. Moreover, this example also shows how this contrast helps, at the same time, to target an opponent in the upcoming elections without directly labelling them as populists but rather evoking the phenomenon present in current-day politics, as well as to self-promote and self-legitimise in opposition to populism.

> (44) *"Madrid no necesita cuatro años más de* ***populismo*** *sino* ***libertad****, igualdad, solidaridad; y eso es lo que propone Cs para esta ciudad", ha incidido Villacís en un mitin en el que estaban Albert Rivera y los candidatos para la Comunidad de Madrid, Ignacio Aguado, y el cabeza de lista para las europeas, Luis Garicano.*
>
> ("‘Madrid doesn't need four more years of populism, but rather freedom, equality, and solidarity; and that is what Cs proposes for this city,’ Villacís emphasised at a rally attended by Albert Rivera and the candidates for the Community of Madrid, Ignacio Aguado, and the lead candidate for the European elections, Luis Garicano.”)

In the Belgian corpora, there is a shared collocate *climat / klimaat* “climate” in the last semantic group. This term is used to refer to both the challenges related to climate change (Example 45), as well as to refer to the political climate (Example 46).

(45) *Ze gaan op zoek naar wat jonge Europeanen verbindt en verdeelt. En hoe ze denken over thema's als* ***migratie, populisme en klimaat****.*

(“They explore what unites and divides young Europeans, and how they think about themes such as **migration, populism, and climate**.”)

(46) *« **La montée des populismes** installe un nouveau climat (...) ».*

("‘**The rise of populism** is creating a new climate (...)’.")

II. Semantic grouping of the collocates of the person-referring nouns

Secondly, I categorised the collocates of the person-referring nouns in singular and plural forms in each corpus corresponding to all media sources from one public sphere merged. Table 16 shows the semantic grouping of the collocates of the person-referring nouns *populista(s)* / *populiste(s)* / *populist(en)*. The collocates of the person-referring nouns are subdivided into four semantic groups and their subgroups, namely (1) words related to politics, such as (i) orientations, ideologies, attitudes, political labels, (ii) political entities (absent in the collocates of the abstract nouns), (iii) political actors (individuals and groups), (iv) generic words related to people, (v) events and actions, (vi) words related to elections (absent in the collocates of the abstract nouns); (2) words related to places and locations, such as (i) words referring to concrete geographical locations, (ii) generic words related to places; (3) description of *populist(s)* as a phenomenon; and (4) miscellaneous.

Words referring to political orientations, ideologies and political labels constitute the first semantic group. The collocates in this group are (i) singular or plural nouns which refer to persons sharing particular ideologies (e.g. nationalists, socialists, extremists); (ii) adjectives denoting particular ideologies and leanings (e.g. democratic; extreme, progressive); (iii) nouns and adjectives which serve to structure the political spectrum

(e.g. left, centre, right), and (iv) abstract nouns referring to particular political beliefs, practices and ideologies (e.g. pluralism).

Semantic group	Subgroup	Spanish media	French media	French-speaking Belgian media	Dutch-speaking Belgian media
(1) Words related to politics	(i) orientations, ideologies, political labels	nacionalistas (86;11,45904) separatistas (45; 10,94496) derechas (5; 8,316) / (34; 11,45904) antisistema (4; 9,43014) independentistas (16; 9,01701) extrema (3; 7,78222) / (28; 9,28281) derecha (40; 9,08591) izquierda (8; 7,63587) / (24; 8,81265) extremistas (6; 8,31818) euroescépticos (8,23845) constitucionalistas (6; 8,07519) eurófobos (4; 7,84265) progresistas (4; 7,59912) socialistas (4; 7,40754) sanchismo (3; 7,36579) conservadores (4;	nationalistes (26; 10,80259) progressistes (6; 9,1629) communiste (4; 9,25181) islamiste (3; 9,03807) extrêmes (3; 8,14617) eurosceptiques (3; 8,05749) libéraux (7,8776) droite (10; 7,8666) / (11; 7,83921) gauche (6; 7,37064) extrême (4; 7,24011)	radicale (26; 11,63974) europhobe (6; 10,16711) extrémistes (20; 10,87898) nationalistes (15; 10,12553) droite (38; 9,71168) / (41; 9,68336) communiste (4; 9,35614) extrême (4; 7,25517) identitaires (5; 8,9955) gauche (11; 8,69125) extrêmes (4; 8,53648) radicaux (3; 8,30884) centre (3; 7,57374)	rechtse (22; 10,69456) nationalisten (27; 10,65949) nationalist (4; 9,83007) linkse (8; 9,49221) rechts (17; 9,43641) links (15; 9,42106) autocraten (6; 8,75524) extremisten (5; 8,43929) progressieve (4; 8,17982) Demagogen (4; 8,18302) democratisch (4; 8,16711) demagogen (4; 8,12042) pluralisme (4; 8,15765) radicalen (4; 8,15765) extremistische (4; 8,09311)

		7,21047) ultras (4; 7,70079)			
	(ii) political entities	Ministros (6; 9,9054) coalición (15; 8,51995) gobierno (11; 7,71292) socios (4; 7,299569) formaciones (4; 7,20558) Gobierno (8; 5,95492)	super-groupe (3; 9,44541) alliance (8; 9,01701) dirigeant (3; 8,62496) dirigeants (6; 8,62786) Parlement (5; 7,34895) coalition (3; 7,94472) / (4; 7,84772) alliés (3; 7,90901) parti (7; 7,31851) gouvernement (4; 6,7497)	dirigeant (3; 9,03807) leader (4; 8,75683) formation (4; 8,54057) État (4; 8,08412) parti (4; 6,30651) président (4; 6,70079) dirigeants (3; 7,71152) groupe (4; 7,49816) partis (7; 7,47085)	staatshoofd (3; 9,25405) beweging (5; 9,06454) partijen (12; 7,92586)
	(iii) political actors (individuals and groups)	Sadr (3; 9,59628) Estrellas (6; 9,40505) / (7; 8,3135) Movimiento (6; 9,32757) / (7; 8,28183) Podemos (22; 8,39604) Sanders (3; 9,35614) Johnson (5; 8,38529) Sánchez (23; 7,49462) Socialistas (3; 7,40754) AfD (3; 7,24067)	Nigel (10; 10,51457) Farage (10; 10,41504) Nekkaz (3; 9,41504) Rachid (3; 9,39514) Babis (4; 9,1608) Karoui (3; 8,59061) Mouvement (3; 8,19695) étoiles (3; 8,27662) / (4; 8,07222) Parti (5; 7,8666) Salvini (6,88279) / (3; 7,02989) VVD (4; 8,69166)	Nigel (10; 10,56038) Farage (10; 10,47644) Babis (7; 10,16711) Jair (5; 9,8625) Bolsonaro (6; 9,65423) Thierry (4; 9,42257) Baudet (3; 9,03037) FvD (4; 8,71923) Parti (5; 8,37064) Orban (3; 7,97394) Salvini (4; 7,51417) Trump (3; 7,04969) Forum (4; 8,66461)	Seifeddine (5; 10,18238) Makhlouf (5; 10,18238) Nigel (6; 10,01511) Farage (6; 9,83677) Bolsonaro (4; 9,05749) Mitsotakis (3; 8,91254) Macron (13; 8,816279) Trump (5; 7,47331) / (12; 8,31701) Tayyip (4; 8,14513) Recep (4; 8,13891) Wilders (5; 8,11491)

			FvD (3; 8,27662) Vox (3; 7,88452) Verts (3; 7,65718)	Etoiles (3; 7,94834) Mouvement (3; 7,77118)	Erdogan (4; 8,07222) (De) Gucht (4; 7,99718)
	(iv)generic words related to people		peuple (4; 7,59273)		
	(v) events and actions	pactar (13; 8,94722) acuerdo (14; 7,64119) acuerdos (6; 7,63368)	Brexit (9; 8,57001)	Brexit (5; 7,8625) / (3; 6,84856)	Brexit (4; 8,65127)
	(vi) words related to elections		victoire (6; 8,55706) électeurs (3; 7,26529) élections (3; 6,23292)	scrutin (4; 8,32052) européens (3; 7,27208) sièges (4; 7,8733) électorale (3; 7,74261) sondages (3; 7,57094) campagne (3; 6,88452) élections (3; 6,30884)	winnaar (4; 9,22521) staatshoofd (3; 9,25405) kandidaat (3; 8,45986) topkandidaten (4; 8,16395) proportioneel (4; 8,14825) verkozen (4; 7,78811)
(2) Words related to places and locations	(i) words referring to concrete geographical locations	Italia (9; 7,64832) estadounidenses (3; 7,33466)	Autriche (9; 9,5589) française (3; 8,1051) italien (4; 7,99718) Italiens (3; 7,91254) Europe (3; 5,91874) / (25; 8,83409) européen (3; 6,39267) Rome (3; 7,48167)	brésilien (3; 9,18408) hongrois (3; 8,75841) européennes (7; 8,44322) britannique (4; 8,15765) européens (3; 7,27208) Europe (5; 6,65748)	Turnhout (4; 8,11126) Europese (17; 7,83835)

			Italie (4; 7,03566) France (4; 6,05895)		
	(ii) generic words referring to places		partout (4; 8,38898) monde (3; 6,63222)	partout (3; 7,90197) pays (7; 6,99518)	wereldwijd (8; 8,90724) landen (8; 8,04726)
(3) Description of populism(s)/populist(s) as a phenomenon	(i) words pointing to the idea of expansion	auge (7; 8,14202) avance (5; 7,83007) aumentar (4; 7,65349)	montée (3; 8,15033) progression (3; 8,15033) poussée (3; 8,08911) forces (3; 7,70845)	vague (4; 9,22521) poussée (8; 9,54467) montée (10; 9,39119) puissance (7; 9,33975) force (3; 7,55982) montent (4; 8,73791)	sterker (17; 10,02677) macht (24; 9,7316) opkomst (14; 9,56656) wijdverbreide(3; 9,43522) opmars (8; 8,96108) groeit (5; 8,33609) verspreiden (4; 8,01986)
	(ii) words pointing to the idea of danger	incendiarios (3; 7,47122) miedo (4; 7,31525) debacle (3; 7,38284)	attaques (3; 8,05749)	menacés (5; 9,12717) menace (5; 8,69257) crise (3; 7,15242)	vreest (5; 8,39712) dreigen (4; 8,04872)
	(iii) words pointing to the idea of stopping populism(s)/populist(s)	bloquear (4; 7,68712) bloqueo (4; 7,5182) cerrando (3; 7,45311) contrarrestar (3; 7,36579) vetar (3; 7,39514) combatir (3; 7,18836)	face (7; 8,28183) contre (12; 8,05456)	face (6; 9,15451) oppose (3; 8,26303)	tegen (34; 8,95386) strijd (8; 8,65349) overwinnen (4; 8,12042) bescherming (4; 8,05749)

	(iv) words pointing to the discourse about populism	discurso (5; 7,56537)	qualifié (7; 10,3895) courant (9,06926) qualifier (3; 8,26755) théorie (3; 8,15451)	référence (4; 9,47644) dits (3; 8,38039) débat (6; 8,34417)	etiket (3; 9,35614) zogenaamde (4; 8,04) retoriek (4; 8,08114) simpele (4; 8,08711) nouveau (5; 7,8584) goed (6; 7,54194) geen (13; 7,5349)
	(v) words related to human body/emotions	rostro (3; 9,14202) manos (9; 8,41838) voz (3; 8,25853)			haat (4; 7,93122)
(4) Miscellaneous		exigencias (6; 10,10115) disfrazarse (16; 9,85534) insulto (3; 9,45568) demostración (3; 9,36579) propuestas (6; 8,97763) camino (6; 8,75524) cooperación (7; 8,33365) diferencia (3; 8,11736) palabras (3; 7,57094) estatus (3; 7,40009) refugiado (3; 7,45054) fuerzas (6; 7,42257) opción (4; 7,34358) legalidad (3; 7,33941)	gendarmerie (3; 9,46602) ancien (3; 9,33703) islamiste (3; 9,03807) mesure (5; 9,03191) sillage (4; 8,66908) jeu (5; 8,46706) offre (4; 8,40381) pouvoir (11; 8,23664) arrivée (4; 8,20558) croire (3; 7,92675)	ancien (4; 9,80033) lauriers (3; 9,46602) jouer (4; 8,96658) faux (3; 9,109239) sentir (5; 9,01815) créer (3; 9,01132) juriste (3; 8,38529) réussi (4; 8,61918) forte (5; 8,55044) véracité (3; 8,41504) adeptes (3; 8,40009) sorties (3; 8,36096) ordre (4; 8,30651) champ (3; 8,30419) langue (3; 8,15451)	islamistische (5; 10,1027) zoveelste (10; 10,89566) alfamannen (6; 10,43522) contradicties (4; 9,86045) pseudo-populist (4; 9,87072) macht (24; 9,7316) oplossingen (12; 9,46862) strategie (4; 9,33466) kaart (8; 9,0458) manipulatoren (6; 8,7616) corruptie (3; 8,71324) islam (3; 8,63077)

		concesiones (3; 7,3135) mentiras (3; 7,26981)		rapport (5; 8,22653) nouveau (5; 7,8584)	systeem (9; 8,60387) WOII (4; 8,17345) schilderen (4; 8,16711) monopolie (4; 8,15138) Kakutani (4; 8,15765) moeizaam (4; 8,14202) Rutger (4; 8,13581) verontrustend (4; 8,13272) wantrouwen (5; 8,1198) Bregman (4; 8,09612)

Table 16. Semantic grouping of the collocates of the person-referring nouns across the corpora.

As for the lexical items referring to persons sharing particular ideologies, we can observe the similarity of the terms with the collocates of the abstract nouns. Namely, among the singular and plural nouns referring to persons of a particular leaning or ideology, the terms “nationalists” and “extremists” appear among the top collocates of *populis** across four corpora. In addition, we can observe that the collocates of the person-referring nouns are similar to the collocates of the abstract nouns within each public sphere. Thus, in the Spanish corpus, there are collocates referring to the country’s specific political context, such as *separatistas* “separatists" and *independentistas* "pro-Independence supporters / autonomists". In addition to these terms, there are other context-specific terms which are not present in the list of collocates of the abstract nouns: namely, the term *socialistas* “socialists” referring to PSOE and the negatively connoted abstract noun *sanchismo* referring to the politics of the president Pedro Sánchez and used exclusively by the right-wing Cs. Moreover, in the Spanish data, the terms *populista(s)* also appear in a list of other negatively charged person-referring nouns, as *nacionalistas*, *separatistas*, and *independentistas* and in the reported speech of other Spanish political actors from the right-wing parties PP and Cs (Examples 47–49). In the concordance lines, we can observe that *populistas* can be used without any referent, however, it is inferred that populists are political actors of Podemos (Examples 47–49). It can also be specified, as in *los populistas de Podemos* (Example 50). Such uses may also contain the opposition and the contrast of populists against other political practices or leanings (e.g. by opposing populists to *constitucionalistas* “constitutionalists” in Example 49). We can also observe the representation of the opponent classified as populists or governing with “populists” as illegitimate (e.g. referring to political actors as *banda* “gang” in Example 48), while self-presenting as a legitimate alternative (Examples 47–50).

(47) *"Si nos unimos somos más que el PSOE y, si nos dividimos,* ***el PSOE con los populistas y los independentistas*** *van a gobernar España", ha advertido. (Feijóo)*

("'If we unite, we are stronger than the PSOE, and if we divide, **the PSOE, along with the populists and the separatists**, will govern Spain,' he [Feijóo] warned.")

(48) *Al final va a hacerse realidad la profecía de Albert Rivera de que España acabe gobernada por esa* ***"banda" de populistas y separatistas*** *a la que aludió una y otra vez en su intervención del lunes. (Cs)*

("Albert Rivera's prophecy that Spain will end up governed by that 'gang' of populists and separatists he alluded to repeatedly in his speech on Monday is finally going to come true. [Cs]")

(49) *Sobre las elecciones generales del 28 de abril, Bendodo ha explicado que "sólo hay dos opciones, a modo de referéndum: o bien nos decantamos por* ***el PSOE, de la mano de populistas, independentistas y antiguos miembros de Herri Batasuna, o bien apoyamos a los constitucionalistas,*** *a los que defendemos la unidad del país, y apostamos por la estabilidad y la generación de empleo y riqueza, que es lo que representa el Partido Popular", ha especificado.*

("Regarding the general elections on April 28, Bendodo explained that 'there are only two options, as a referendum: either we choose **the PSOE, hand in hand with populists, separatists and former members of Herri Batasuna**, or we support the **constitutionalists**, those who defend the unity of the country, and we are committed to stability and the generation of employment and wealth, which is what the Popular Party represents,' he specified.")

(50) *"El contrapeso es fundamental", recalcó el líder de los populares. "No permitamos que* ***los independentistas y los populistas de Podemos*** *manden en toda España, no permitamos que Junqueras siga diciendo al poner el pulgar para arriba o para abajo como queda la Mesa del Congreso, los Presupuestos o cómo queda la gobernabilidad de España", reclamó Casado, y planteó la solución "democrática, tranquila y moderada" del PP.*

("'The counterweight is fundamental,' stressed the leader of the People's Party. 'Let's not allow **the separatists and the populists of Podemos** to rule all of Spain, let's not allow Junqueras to continue dictating, with his thumbs up or down, how the Congress's governing board is formed, how the budget is passed, or how Spain is governed,' Casado demanded, and proposed the PP's 'democratic, calm, and moderate' solution.")

Other collocates referring to political labels in the Spanish corpus and pointing to the international political context (e.g. *euroescépticos* “Eurosceptics”, *ultras* “radicals”, *extremistas* “extremists”, *eurófobos* “hard Eurosceptics”) are shared across the other three corpora (Examples 51–52). Moreover, in the Dutch (BE) corpus, there are such political terms referring to persons as *autocraten* “autocrats”, *extremisten* “extremists”, *radicalen* “radicals”, and *demagogen* “demagogues” (Examples 53–54). In Examples 53–54, we can observe that *populis** appears in a set of terms which are all strong collocates sharing semantic features. The set of terms co-occurring with *populis** in these examples points to the association of populists(s) with the far-right ideologies. These examples furthermore illustrate how enumeration is used across the corpora.

(51) *El Brexit había obligado a replantear la composición del Parlamento Europeo que debía pasar de 751 a 705 escaños.* ***La extrema derecha eurófoba****,* ***los conservadores euroescépticos*** *y* ***los populistas*** *esperan aumentar su representación en los comicios de esta semana.*

(“Brexit had forced a rethink of the composition of the European Parliament, which was to be reduced from 751 to 705 seats. **The Eurosceptic far right, the Eurosceptic conservatives**, and **the populists** hope to increase their representation in this week's elections.”)

(52) ***Frente al batallón de populistas, euroescépticos, ultras y hacedores de exits*** *que van a ocupar los escaños de Estrasburgo, aquí hablamos de recolocación de excedentes, liberación de pesos muy pesados, compensación familiar o sustitución de última hora por baja del titular.*

(“In contrast to **the battalion of populists, Eurosceptics, extremists and exit planners** who will occupy the seats in Strasbourg, here we are talking about the relocation of surplus staff, the release of very heavyweights, family compensation or last-minute replacement due to the absence of the incumbent.”)

(53) *Ook in verschillende andere Europese en Italiaanse steden kwamen betogers op straat. "Dit is ons plein, niet dat van de* ***extremisten, de populisten en de fascisten****", klinkt het bij de betogers. De beweging van de*

'Sardienen' ontstond net een maand geleden, naar aanleiding van een toespraak van ***Matteo Salvini*** *in Bologna.*

("'Protesters also took to the streets in various other European and Italian cities. 'This is our square, not that of **the extremists, the populists, and the fascists**,' the protesters chanted. The 'Sardines' movement emerged just a month ago, following a speech by **Matteo Salvini** in Bologna.")

(54) *Donald Tusk, die later op de avond verkozen wordt tot nieuwe voorzitter van de Europese Volkspartij, is in een toespraak op het EVP-congres in de Kroatische hoofdstad Zagreb fel van leer getrokken tegen* ***"politieke populisten, manipulatoren en autocraten"****.*

("Donald Tusk, who is elected the new chairman of the European People's Party later that evening, launched a fierce attack against **'political populists, manipulators, and autocrats**' in a speech at the EPP congress in the Croatian capital Zagreb.")

Moving to the next subgroup of collocates, we can observe terms referring to political entities. This subgroup is not present in the list of collocates of the abstract nouns. Firstly, there are several shared collocates, namely *populis** collocates with "coalition" and "government" in the Spanish and French data; with "party/ies" and *beweging* "movement" in the Belgian data in both languages. In addition, there are collocates of *populis** which point to the persons in leading political roles, such as *Ministros* "Ministers" in the Spanish corpus, *dirigeant(s)* "leaders" in the French corpus, *dirigeant* "leader", *leader* "leader", and *président* "president" in the Belgian corpus in French; and *staatshoofd* "head of state" in the Belgian corpus in Dutch. Furthermore, there are collocates which convey the idea of a collective or a group of persons, such as *socios "*partners" in the Spanish corpus; "*alliance* "alliance" and *alliés* "allies" in the French corpus; and *groupe* "group" in the Belgian corpus in French. In the French corpus, there are also the terms *super-groupe* "supergroup" and *Parlement* "Parliament", suggesting the occurrence o*f populis** in the context related to the European Parliament.

As for the third subcategory of the words related to politics, the populist label is attributed to a range of actors. We can observe some differences with the list of

collocates of the abstract nouns. Firstly, in the list of collocates of person-referring nouns, the number of terms referring to individual actors and groups deemed populist is higher. Moreover, there is a great variety of political actors. While the collocates of populism(s) are mainly European actors (except the data in Dutch), in this list, we can also observe political leaders and parties from such countries as Brazil, Morocco, and Turkey. Moreover, the variety of the European actors is also apparent. The Five Star Movement from Italy appears in the Spanish, French (FR) and (BE) data; Nigel Farage appears in the French (FR) and (BE) and in Dutch (BE) corpora; Trump and Bolsonaro co-occur with *populist(s)* in the two Belgian corpora. Broadly, across the corpora the collocates referring to political actors suggest the attribution of the label to those actors which are traditionally classified as populists (e.g. Trump, Bolsonaro, Salvini, Baudet, Babis, Wilders, etc.).

The Spanish corpus is the only corpus containing national political actors among the collocates of *populist(s)*, namely Podemos, Sánchez and Socialistas. Thus, the Spanish corpus stands out from the other corpora. Indeed, we can observe the tendency to attribute the populist label to the national political actors, while in the other three corpora, populists are mainly external actors, either inside or outside the EU.

However, this does not mean that in the media of other public spheres the national actors are absent. In the other corpora, the national political actors do not appear among the one hundred strongest collocates, but they can co-occur with other terms, mainly political labels. For instance, in Example 55 we can observe how the French political party LFI is targeted by the use of the populist label in the French corpus. However, in this case it is not done directly by collectively labelling the political party as populists, but rather indirectly by qualifying their positions as populist.

> (55) *Constitution d'une union de la gauche jusqu'à la France Insoumise (LFI), ou carrément une alliance avec Jean-Luc Mélenchon, malgré* ***les positions eurosceptiques voire europhobes et populistes des Insoumis.***
>
> ("Formation of a left-wing union up to La France Insoumise (LFI), or even an alliance with Jean-Luc Mélenchon, despite **the Eurosceptic, even Europhobic and populist positions of the Insoumis**.")

As for the next semantic group, generic words related to people are present only in the French corpus and occur in the context of the name of a political party (*Parti du peuple danois*) and in the analytical articles in which the use of the term 'people' is attributed to the populist political actors.

The next subgroup of collocates includes words referring to elections. Such words are not present among the collocates of the abstract nouns. In the list of collocates of the person-referring nouns, such words as *élections* "elections" and *électeurs* "voters" are present in the French data; *élections* "elections", scrutin "election", sièges "seats", sondages "polls", campagne "campaign" in the Belgian data in French; and *winnaar* "winner", *kandidaat* "candidate", *topkandidaat* "top candidate", *verkozen* "elected" in the Belgian data in Dutch.

Thus, the collocates across the three corpora point to the coverage of the (national/European) elections, campaigning and the outcomes of elections. A slightly different tendency can be observed across the public spheres: in the French-speaking Belgian media data, the collocates in this subgroup are mainly generic words referring to the process of elections, while in Dutch, the words also mainly refer to persons involved in elections. In the French data, there is the collocate *électeurs* "voters" also pointing to the persons.

In the group of collocates referring to locations and places, we can observe that the generic words are similar to those collocates of the abstract nouns, suggesting that populists are discussed as actors in concrete countries, mainly the European countries, and as actors present worldwide. The main difference from the collocates of the abstract nouns is that in this group the adjectives referring to specific countries are more prominent, suggesting their use as adjectives which modify the person-referring nouns.

Furthermore, the collocates grouped under the semantic category referring to the description of *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* as a phenomenon point to the negative connotation of the terms. We can observe similarities with the collocates of abstract nouns. Specifically, populist political actors are presented as being on the rise across the four corpora. The shared collocates metaphorically point to the idea of a sudden and powerful increase of populists as suggested by such lexical items as *auge* "rise",

avance “advance” in Spanish, *montée* “rise”, *poussée* “surge”, and *progression* “progression” in French, *vague* “wave”, poussée “surge”, *montée* “rise”, *puissance* “power” in the French-speaking Belgian corpus, and *opkomst* “rise/surge”, *opmars* “advance”, and *macht* “power” in Dutch.

Another similarity with the collocates of the abstract nouns is the presence of the collocates which point to the idea of danger as well as to the need to prevent the expansion of populism, and to confront and stop those labelled as populists. This is apparent through such nouns as *miedo* “fear” in Spanish, *attaques* "attacks" in French, *menace* “threat”; and through such verbs as *bloquear* “to block”, *vetar* “to veto”, *combatir* “to fight” in Spanish and *vreest* “fears” in Dutch.

Furthermore, among the strongest hundred collocates of the person-referring nouns, there are words referring to the human body and emotions which co-occur with *populis** in the Spanish and Dutch (BE) corpora. In the Spanish corpus, there are such words as *rostro* “face”, *manos* “hands”, *voz* “voice” which appear with their denotative meaning as in Example 56. However, these body part references are mostly used in a figurative sense, as in Examples 57–58. In the Dutch (BE) corpus, there is a collocate *haat* “hate”, which is used to negatively portray political actors labelled as populists and to attribute to them certain actions (Example 59).

(56) *Existen pocas dudas acerca de que el auge de los extremismos es hoy la mayor amenaza para la democracia liberal; sin embargo, no deja de resultar sorprendente la soberbia con la que algunos políticos arrojan el ya manido insulto de* ***"¡populista!"*** *al rostro de cualquier nuevo rival en la palestra política, sobre todo cuando éste amenaza con llevarse su queso.*

(“There is little doubt that the rise of extremism is today's greatest threat to liberal democracy; however, it is still surprising how arrogantly some politicians hurl the tired insult of **‘populist!’** at any new rival in the political arena, especially when this rival threatens to take their job.”)

(57) *Desde luego, lo más urgente es cerrar acuerdos municipales para que no caigan* ***en manos de populistas*** *y, fuera de la Comunidad de Madrid, en manos de nacionalistas", ha apuntado.*

("'Of course, the most urgent thing is to close municipal agreements so that they do not fall into the hands of populists and, outside the Community of Madrid, into the hands of nationalists,' he pointed out.")

(58) *Para Briatore, "no se trata de una palabra fea o desagradable, todo lo contrario" ya que "****el populista*** *es quien da* ***voz*** *al pueblo".*

("For Briatore, 'it is not an ugly or unpleasant word, quite the opposite' since 'the populist is the one who gives voice to the people.'")

(59) "Dezelfde **populisten** die **haat en intolerantie verspreiden**, voeden een weerstand die blijft overwinningen boeken", zei Roth.

("'The same populists who spread hatred and intolerance are fuelling a resistance that continues to achieve victories,' said Roth.")

In the last semantic group, there are numerous collocates in each corpus. Only in the Dutch (BE) corpus, we find persons, namely the names of two writers, Kakutani and Bregman. The former appears as the author of the use of *populis** and in a discussion about populism as a current-day phenomenon (Example 60). In contrast, the latter is the target of the use of *populis** by a journalist (Example 61).

(60) ***Populisten*** *werden de afgelopen jaren ook fors geholpen door een terreurgolf.*

(**Populists** have also been heavily aided by a wave of terror in recent years.")

(61) Zoals **alle populisten** weet Rutger Bregman heel goed aan welke touwtjes te trekken om gehoord te worden.

("Like **all populists**, Rutger Bregman knows very well which strings to pull to be heard.")

Furthermore, in two corpora, there are words referring to Islam. In the French corpus, *islamiste* “islamist” co-occurs with *populiste* and refers to a concrete political actor. In the Dutch (BE), the word “islam” appears in a journalist’s question and does not refer to populist political actors. In addition, the adjective *islamistische* co-occurs with the noun *populist* and is used to qualify a concrete political actor, thus intensifying the negative load through the association with the negative connotations of political Islam.

In this group of collocates, the negative representation of populists is apparent through their association with such words as *insulto* “insult”, *mentiras* “lies” in the Spanish corpus, *alfamannen* “alpha males” and *corruptie* "corruption" in Dutch.

III. Semantic grouping of the collocates of adjectives

Thirdly, I categorised the collocates of the adjectives in each corpus corresponding to all the articles from one public sphere merged. Table 17 shows the semantic grouping of the collocates of the adjectives *populista(s)* / *populiste(s)* / *populistisch(e)*. The collocates of the adjectives are subdivided into six semantic groups and their subgroups, namely (1) words related to politics, such as (i) orientations, ideologies, attitudes, political labels, (ii) political entities (absent in the collocates of the abstract nouns), (iii) political actors (individuals and groups), (iv) generic words related to people, (v) events and actions; (2) words related to places and locations, such as (i) words referring to concrete geographical locations, (ii) generic words related to places; (3) description of *populism(s) / populist(s)* as a phenomenon; (4) populist(s) as a qualification of somebody or something; and (5) miscellaneous.

Semantic group	Subgroup	Spanish media	French media	French-speaking Belgian media	Dutch-speaking Belgian media
(1) Words related to politics	(i) orientations, ideologies, political labels	nacionalistas (76; 11,19672) euroescépticos (28; 10,33365) radical (35; 10,06454) separatistas (25; 9,98564) derecha (68; 9,7146) nacionalista (19; 9,24934) izquierda (36; 9,2121) izquierdas (17; 8,87072) xenófobos (8; 8,67807) nacionalismo (18; 8,85364) independentista (12; 8,68259) extrema (21; 8,65001) euroescéptico (10; 8,63193) ultraderecha (12; 8,58215) ultraderechistas (7; 8,49902) demagogos (6; 8,39452)	nationalistes (19; 10,52341) progressistes (9; 9,995) eurosceptiques (8; 9,70998) nationaliste (13; 9,40123) eurosceptique (10; 9,2134) gauche (21; 8,7924) / (4; 6,6512) autoritaire (6; 8,45826) extrême (12; 8,31935) humaniste (3; 7,59912) droite (10; 7,75207) conservatrice (3; 7,48957) identitaire (3; 7,46084) antisystème (3; 7,43776) démocratie (5; 7,32757) anti-immigration (3; 7,55154)	nationalistes (34; 11,26091) droite (54; 9,90158) illibéraux (9; 9,8938) nationaliste (10; 9,06218) extrémiste (8; 8,96108) eurosceptiques (8; 9,50015) extrémistes (7; 9,30751) droite (27; 9,06839) eurosceptique (7; 8,74396) souverainistes (4; 8,6163) opportunistes (3; 8,34656) islamistes (3; 8,29034) radicale (6; 8,28118) / (7; 9,05916) raciste (5; 8,27208) xénophobes (3; 8,27208) extrême (10; 8,06572) / (19; 9,25216) climato-sceptique (4; 8,01986)	radicaal-rechtse (22; 9,95759) nationalistische (11; 9,10628) extreemrechtse (10; 8,66015) radicaal-rechts (7; 8,452) eurosceptische (7; 8,42798) anti-Europese (6; 8,29034) sociaaldemocratische (6; 8,20992) rechts-populistische (7; 8,12261) rechts (7; 7,90649) antimigratiepartij (5; 8,07875) anti-immigrantenpartijen (4; 7,76399) Radicale (4; 7,7616) volksmenners (4; 7,7616)

		antisistema (6; 8,1991) xenófoba (7; 8,1191) nacionalismos (6; 8,03614) nacional (10; 7,83007) conservador (7; 7,80595) derechas (8; 7,78933) extremismos (4; 7,64465) ultranacionalista (5; 7,62844) liberales (7; 7,63868) derechas (6; 7,61198) Socialista (4; 7,48825) verdes (4; 7,48233) europeísta (5; 7,45929) socialdemócrata (5; 7,40306) antisemita (4; 7,34536) izquierdas (5; 7,34179) supremacista (4; 7,33289) batasunos (3; 7,31818) autoritarismo (4; 7,30651) xenófobo (4; 7,29092)		xénophobe (4; 7,9887) souverainiste (4; 7,95561) europhobe (4; 7,9339) anti-immigration (4; 7,93391) extrême-droite (4; 7,81265) gauche (4; 7,20884)	
	(ii) political entities	movimientos (48; 10,86729) partidos (97; 10,3122) líderes (38; 9,98583)	partis (53; 11,03618) mouvements (24; 10,97394) leaders (13; 10,38756)	leaders (33; 11,35091) partis (63; 10,62524) gouvernement (70; 10,35697)	partijen (76; 10,45921) regering (47; 9,5567) leiders (18; 9,54604) politici (23; 9,2521)

		formaciones (14; 8,91861) Gobierno (45; 8,23417) Gobiernos (12; 8,80689) partido (55; 8,71763) líder (22; 8,17114) formación (14; 7,95873) Ejecutivo (10; 7,94147) grupos (6; 7,68108) gobierno (12; 7,6498) administración (4; 7,61198)	gouvernement (59; 10,25511) coalition (21; 9,87072) mouvement (29; 9,71078) dirigeants (11; 9,66827) gouvernements (8; 9,54879) leader (19; 9,53403) parti (39; 9,43335) formations (6; 9,12144) formation (9; 8,7563)	leader (21; 10,00861) coalition (24; 9,89496) formation (20; 9,8361) gouvernements (11; 9,77995) parti (53; 9,74707) Etats (3; 7,72388) mouvement (23; 9,63634)	beweren (12; 9,24957) oprichter (11; 9,18797) partij (41; 9,09018) beweging (12; 8,99812) Senaat (8; 8,4784) coalitie (10; 8,63193) middenpartijen (4; 7,71582)
	(iii) political actors (individuals and groups)	Estrellas (18; 9,26153) Movimiento (17; 9,15525) Liga (15; 8,74324) Wilders (6; 7,92854) Insumisa (6; 7,91608) Cinco (6; 7,83342) Salvini (10; 7,77793) Matteo (7; 7,7616) M5S (6; 7,74733) Boris (6; 7,68561) Johnson (7; 7,6262) Francia (9; 7,57653) Socialista (4; 7,48825) Bolsonaro (6; 7,54742) Vox (18; 7,45182) Jair (4; 7,25517) Abascal (6; 7,17451)	ANO (9; 9,16993) Salvini (19; 9,02272) / (3; 6,6947) Matteo (16; 8,91386) / (6; 6,87244) M5S (7; 8,42798) étoiles (7; 8,39584) Orban (4; 8,32404) Baudet (4; 7,98041) Thierry (4; 7,90724) Andrej (4; 7,8733) Mouvement (5; 7,87278) Parti (7; 7,74936) Ligue (5; 7,67447) FvD (3; 7,58778) Donald (3; 7,48167) Trump (4; 7,41692)	ANO (14; 9,77118) Viktor (8; 8,68485) Orban (9; 8,60768) Andrej (5; 8,23978) Baudet (5; 8,21079) Thierry (5; 8,20299) Nigel (5; 8,13705) Farage (5; 8,10518) Pauline (4; 8,01701) Hanson (4; 7,99718) Trump (8; 7,88756) / (3; 6,76319) Ligue (6; 7,82507) Fidesz (4; 7,75683) Salvini (7; 7,72787) / (4; 7,21864)	Vijfsterrenbeweging (83; 11,52798) Lega (42; 10,46454) M5S (27; 10,25106) ANO-partij (9; 8,922) ANO (9; 8,91254) Volkspartij (9; 8,72284) Beppe (7; 8,54057) Grillo (7; 8,51503) PD (7; 8,2375) Finnenpartij (5; 8,0669)

		Trump (7; 7,17254)	Babis (3; 7,40754) Bolsonaro (3; 7,30419) Viktor (3; 7,30187) / (4; 8,44925) Le Pen (3; 7,17557)		
	(iii) generic words related to people	pueblo (7; 7,54644)	jeunesse (3; 8,16711) élites (3; 8,08512) femme (3; 7,34656) électeurs (3; 7,39267)		volk (8; 8,20396) bevolking (6; 7,90372) massa (5; 7,87319) kiezers (6; 7,71238)
	(iv) events and actions	Brexit (6; 7,09813)	(Gilets) jaunes (7; 7,82722) Brexit (6; 7,43014)		
(2) Words related to places and locations	(i) words referring to concrete geographical locations	italiano (19; 9,14071) europeos (12; 8,12246) Francia (9; 7,57653) Holanda (5; 7,52589) estadounidense (4; 7,37612) hongkonés (4; 7,36156) Roma (5; 7,33182) Europa (15; 7,18964)	italien (28; 10,03092) européens (15; 9,72698) Milan (5; 8,99101) Italie (17; 8,86708) / (7; 7,1158) Rome (9; 8,63077) italiens (4; 8,61198) Europe (18; 8,2121) / (17; 8,32176) hongrois (5; 8,1570) Hongrie (3; 7,96658) européennes (7; 7,63243) Pologne (4; 7,63149)	italien (40; 10,78083) hongrois (16; 9,79055) Hongrie (6; 8,85364) Italie (11; 8,45802) / (3; 6,90021) néerlandaise (5; 8,28851) Finlandais (5; 8,23182) tchèque (5; 8,16206) Europe 13; 8,0236) brésilien (4; 7,9393) européennes (7; 7,80735) Rome (3; 7,67507)	Italië (14; 8,56656) Rome (6; 8,09511) Deense (5; 7,98877)

			/ (3; 7,89496) UE (4; 7,57374)	européens (3; 7,24067) France (3; 6,80689) UE (3; 6,80689)	
	(ii) generic words referring to places	calles (3; 7,19695)	continent (3; 8,13375) pays (6; 6,73869)	internationale (6; 8,40754) monde (5; 7,28851)	
(3) Description of *populism(s) / populist(s)* as a phenomenon	(i) words pointing to the idea of expansion	deriva (20; 9,4795) ola (16; 9,23513) ascenso (11; 8,90676) auge (15; 8,86797) / (24; 9,8167) explosión (10; 8,6495) olas (4; 7,7262) irrupción (4; 7,57374)	montée (10; 9,47018) dérive (10; 9,26123) progression (5; 9,1321) vague (9; 8,98505) poussée (8; 8,88366) / (4; 8,73791) percée (4; 8,776) vent (5; 8,20039)	poussée (11; 9,31223) courants (6; 9,23623) tsunami (9; 9,12827) dérive (9; 9,10115) vague (7; 8,61753) percée (6; 8,50281) onde (5; 8,33041)	golf (8; 8,66238) opkomst (9; 8,60578) opgeschoven (6; 8,30187) opmars (5; 7,92874)
	(ii) words pointing to the idea of danger	alarmistas (4; 7,73556) amenaza (5; 7,20169)	sirènes (4; 8,72854) menace (3; 7,29494) risques (3; 8,42509)	menace (7; 8,54997) dangereux (5; 8,21864) peur (3; 7,75841)	instabiliteit (4; 7,76399)
	(iii) words pointing to war	fuerzas (37; 9,98184) matones (3; 7,31117)	forces (17; 10,38702)	attaques (3; 8,10115) partisans (3; 8,0458) forces (5; 7,95561)	

	semantic field			camp (4; 7,83509) alliés (4; 7,82507)	
(4) *Populist(s)* as a qualification of somebody or something		discurso (34; 9,5025) estilo (20; 9,46706) retórica (15; 9,09793) corte (13; 8,9691) momento (25; 8,77812) políticas (23; 8,71379) discursos (9; 8,6211) medida (13; 8,59322) argumentos (8; 8,4843) mensajes (8; 8,39452) medidas (10; 8,21602) fuerza (11; 8,04475) ideas (6; 7,68712) mensaje (7; 7,56656) solución (6; 7,50948) proyecto (8; 7,40568) agendas (3; 7,29264) puro (4; 7,28232) rumbo (4; 7,22521)	discours (17; 9,39746) / (11; 9,28451) tentation (9; 9,08778) promesses (5; 9,02731) accents (4; 8,93391) mesures (3; 8,01132) moment (6; 7,96291) style (4; 7,94201) rhétorique (4; 7,92586) réaction (4; 7,92586) décision (5; 7,91679) côté (5; 7,67988) mesure (4; 7,59699) logique (3; 7,44286) phénomène (3; 7,42509)	accents (6; 9,25853) idées (6; 8,74891) discours (13; 8,88346) irréalistes (4; 8,72388) propos (6; 8,66908) spectre (4; 8,63806) magiques (3; 8,30419) choc (5; 8,26394) dangereux (5; 8,21864) vote (8; 8,17186) acte (4; 7,81761) tendance (4; 7,74026) régime (4; 7,72155)	macht (23; 9,45076) toer (8; 8,75207) formules (8; 8,73321) remedie (6; 8,33466) succes (7; 8,20558) spel (6; 8,19479) gedachtegoed (5; 7,98654) boodschappen (5; 7,97763) kant (6; 7,85874) dubbelzinnig (4; 7,7497) onrust (4; 7,70844) razernij (4; 7,76399)
(5) Miscellaneous		errores (6; 7,98877) comercio (5; 7,81018) críticas (5; 7,69075) peso (5; 7,66372) promesas (4; 7,54262) oferta (4; 7,50614)	expériences (3; 8,53511) impasse (3; 7,50548) souffle (3; 7,47905) réponse (3; 7,30651)	confrontation (4; 8,63368) défauts (3; 8,32757) réalisation (3; 8,31818) cynisme (3; 8,3135)	ontgoocheling (5; 8,05047) thermometer (4; 7,76652) EU-subsidies (4, 7,76559) hoofdoorzaak (4; 7,75207)

		lenguaje (4; 7,47644) marcha (5; 7,4655)		suspension (4; 7,91785) polémique (4; 7,81265)	zondagavond (4; 7,74513)

Table 17. Semantic grouping of the collocates of the adjectives across the corpora.

Within the first semantic group, there is the largest number of collocates in the Spanish corpus compared to the other three corpora. Across the corpora, we can observe several similarities with the lists of collocates of abstract nouns and person-referring nouns.

In the four corpora, there are words referring to the sides of the political spectrum: in the Spanish corpus, the term *derecha* “right” has the highest logDice value, followed by the terms *izquierda* “left”, *izquierdas* “the left / of the left”, *ultraderecha* “far right”, and *ultraderechistas* “far-right”. These terms are used as adjectives and nouns referring to the adherents of the left or right ideologies. In the French corpus, there are two collocates, namely *gauche* “left” and *droite* “right”. The term *gauche* “left” has the highest logDice value. In the French (BE) corpus, there are such collocates as *droite* “right”, *extrême-droite* “far right”, and *gauche* “left”. In the Dutch (BE) corpus, there are such collocates as *radicaal-rechtse* “far-right”, *rechts* “right”, *extreemrechtse* “far-right”, and *rechts-populistische* “right-wing populist”. We can observe compound adjectives which are common in Dutch, while in French and Spanish there are also such adjectives as *extrema / extrême* or *radical* but they appear as a separate adjective.

Moreover, there are some similarities regarding the use of the political labels and ideologies linked to the left- and right-wing ideologies between the collocates of the adjectives and the collocates of the abstract and person-referring nouns. Among the shared collocates across the corpora, there are terms pointing to the attitudes related to European union, mainly anti-European attitudes apparent through such collocates as “Eurosceptic/anti-European” and “Eurosceptics” in the four corpora. In addition, in the Spanish corpus, there is a collocate *europeísta* “pro-European” which co-occurs with *populista(s)* in such construction as la izquierda europeísta, no populista “the pro-European left, not the populist one” referring to political actors of the centre-left PS in France.

Furthermore, across the corpora there are terms which suggest the association of populist traits with anti-foreigner attitudes, such as *xenófobo/a* “xenophobic” and *antisemita* “antisemitic“ in the Spanish corpus, *anti-immigration* “anti-immigration” and *identitaire* “identitarian” in the French corpus, *anti-immigration* (parties), *xénophobe(s)* “xenophobic”, and *raciste* “racist” in the French (BE) corpus, and *antimigratiepartij*

“anti-migration parties” and *anti-immigrantenpartijen* “anti-immigration parties” in the Dutch (BE) corpora. Moreover, there are collocates referring to the political labels to indicate the adherence to a concrete political party or ideology, such as *verdes* “Greens”, *Socialista* “Socialist”.

The second subgroup of collocates contains terms referring to political entities. We observe similar tendencies across four corpora, namely the co-occurrence of *populist* with such lexical items as “movement(s)”, “party(ies)”, “leader(s)”, “formation(s)”. Moreover, across the corpora, there are lexical items referring to the governing systems. Namely, such terms as *Gobierno(s) / gouvernement(s) / regering* “government(s)” are used across the four corpora to mainly describe the European governments in those countries where political actors classified as populists are in power (i.e. Italy, Hungary, Poland). In addition, in the Spanish corpus, it is used to talk about the Spanish political context to qualify the government of Madrid and its former (until June 2019) mayor Manuela Carmena (Example 62). Furthermore, in the Spanish corpus, the collocate *Ejecutivo* “Executive (government)” is used predominantly to describe the Italian government (*el Ejecutivo populista de Italia*), and *administración* “administration” refers to the government of the US.

> (62) *La candidata de Cs a la Alcaldía de Madrid, Begoña Villacís, ha llamado hoy a los madrileños a movilizarse "más que nunca" para que no haya otro* ***gobierno 'populista'*** *en la capital y ha descartado por primera vez una posible alianza con los socialistas, dado que "el PSOE se ha vetado sólo" manteniendo una "política subalterna" del Gobierno de Manuela Carmena.*
>
> (“The Ciudadanos (Cs) candidate for Mayor of Madrid, Begoña Villacís, today called on Madrid residents to mobilise ‘more than ever’ to prevent another ‘populist’ government in the capital and ruled out for the first time a possible alliance with the Socialists, given that ‘the PSOE has vetoed itself’ by maintaining a ‘subordinate policy’ to the Manuela Carmena government.”)

In the French (FR) and (BE), and Dutch (BE) corpora, the co-occurrence of “government” and “populist” is used exclusively in the context of Italian politics e.g. *le gouvernement populiste italien* “Italian populist government”; *le gouvernement populiste au pouvoir à Rome* “populist government in power in Rome”), *populistische*

regering van M5S en de extreem-rechtse Lega “the populist government of M5S and the far-right *Lega*”, *populistische regering van Italië* “Italian populist government”.

Moreover, such terms as *group(s)* and *coalition* appear in four corpora and suggest the current situation of several countries where the governments are formed by more than one political party, including those classified as populists. The term ‘groups’ also makes reference to the European Parliament.

In the Dutch-speaking Belgian media corpus, the co-occurrence of *populistisch* and *Senaat* “Senate” appears in the references to Belgium's Federal Parliament in the quotation of a political actor (Example 63).

(63) *Anciaux hekelt **"populistisch spel"** rond Senaat.*

(“Anciaux denounces ‘populist game’ surrounding the Senate.”)

Moving to concrete political actors, we observe similar tendencies across corpora and compared to the political actors which co-occur with the collocates of the abstract and person-referring nouns. A wide range of political actors appear in four corpora. These are mainly European political actors classified as populists, and to a lesser extent international actors, such as Trump and Bolsonaro. In addition, there are references to the national political contexts. For example, in the Spanish corpus, the radical right political party *Vox* and its leader Abascal, and the far-left *La France Insoumise* which is not present in other clusters within the Spanish data. In the French corpus, there are few occurrences of Le Pen (Marine), referring to the former leader of the radical right *Rassemblement National*.

Furthermore, contrary to the collocates of the abstract and person-referring nouns, the generic words related to people are more prominent among the collocates of the adjectives. Concretely, the collocate “people”, that is, *pueblo* in Spanish and *volk* and *bevolking* in Dutch. Also, *massa* “masses” and *kiezers* “voters” in the Belgian Dutch corpus. In the French corpus, there are such collocates as *jeunesse* “youth”, *élites* “elites” and *femme* “woman”.

In the Spanish corpus, the word ‘people’ co-occurs with populist in the context of the analytical discourse when discussing the dichotomy between ‘the people’ and ‘the

elites' as one of the features of populism. In contrast, in the French corpus, the term 'the elites' appears is modified by the adjective *populist* and refers to the political actors classified as populists.

Moreover, only in the French corpus, we find references to female politicians as populists. These are the references to the former Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko (*une femme populiste* "female populist"), as well as a reference to a fictional female populist leader from a British TV series. The term *jeunesse* "youth" is also unique to the French corpus and appears in the articles referring to the young supporters of the far-right populist parties in Europe.

In the Belgian Dutch corpus, the collocate *massa* "masses" makes reference to a specific category of voters of the populist political parties (Example 64) and as an unspecified term to refer to a large number of people (*massa's volgen populistische leiders en worden dan gevaarlijk* "the masses follow populist leaders and then become dangerous"). The term *kiezers* "voters" also co-occurs with *populistische partijen* "populist parties" and occurs in the news articles in the context of the discussion of the polling projections and the results of the European election or the national elections in several countries. The collocate *bevolking* "population" is also discussed in the context of the elections, but in the analytical articles, broadly covering the European context (Example 65).

(64) *Deze bonte **massa kiest voor een populistische politicus** die dubbelzinnig genoeg is om ook nog andere groepen aan te spreken, zoals jongeren, ultranationalisten of ook gewoonweg racisten.*

("This motley **mass chooses a populist politician** who is ambiguous enough to appeal to other groups as well, such as young people, ultranationalists, or simply racists.")

(65) *Waar het om gaat, is dat grote delen van **de bevolking** aangetrokken worden door **een populistische beweging.***

("The point is that large parts of **the population** are attracted to **a populist movement**.")

Moving to the next group of collocates, we observe similar tendencies in the collocational environment of the adjectives and the abstract and person-referring nouns. There is a group of words pointing to the idea of expansion of populist political parties and movements and negatively presenting it as a growing and uncontrollable menace. This tendency is apparent through such collocates as *ascenso* "ascent", *auge* "rise", *olas* "waves", and *deriva* "drift" in the Spanish data; montée "rise", *progression* "progression", and *dérive* "drift" in the French data, and *golf* "wave", *opkomst* "rise / surge", *opmars* "advance" in the Belgian Dutch data. In the Belgian French corpus, the terms transmitting the idea of a natural force or disaster and referring to the water semantic field are prominent, i.e. *tsunami* "tsunami", *courants* "currents", *vague* "wave", and *onde* "wave". In addition, across the corpora, the emergence of a political party classified as populist or its electoral success is portrayed as something new coming out of nowhere (*irrupción* "irruption", *explosión* "explosion" in Spanish*; percée* "breakthrough" in French, and *opkomst* "rise / surge" in Dutch).

Also, a group of words pointing to the idea of danger and words pertaining to war semantic field, as well as words denoting the idea of prevention, stopping populists. Similar tendencies as the collocates of abstract and person-referring nouns. The negative connotations are apparent through the following collocates: *instabiliteit* "instability", *menace* "threat", *peur* "fear", *risques* "risks", *dangereux* "dangerous".

4.3.2 The most statistically significant collocates of *populis**

In order to observe the specificities related to use of *populis** in different types of media across the corpora, I will identify the five strongest collocates across contexts. I will proceed with this task in what follows. I present the tables which contain the five strongest collocates of *populis** across different media outlets (Tables 18–29). I discuss the most significant collocates of *populis** in the subcorpora of each corpus in order to observe the similarities and differences in the collocational behaviour across different types of media in the four public spheres. I provide the five strongest collocates of *populis** for each form in each type of media source in the Spanish media (Tables 18–20), in the French media (Tables 21–23), in the French-speaking Belgian media (Tables 24–26), and in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media (Tables 27–29).

The analysis of the five strongest collocates of each word form of *populis** allows us to see the specificities related to different grammatical forms. Firstly, in the four

corpora, among the collocates of the abstract noun *populismo(s) / populisme(s) / populisme*, there are lexemes referring to ideologies, leanings, and orientations ("nationalism", "extremism", "liberal", "economic", "right", "left", etc.). In addition, those words which refer to the discussion of the current sociopolitical situation in relation to the phenomenon of populism: that is, the lexemes referring to where populism happens ("Europe"), what is happening ("rise", "tensions", "youth unemployment").

El País	*El Español*	*20 Minutos*	*RTVE*
derechas "right" (54; 10,82)	*nacionalismos* "nationalisms" (53; 10,91)	*nacionalismo* "nationalism" (12; 12,26)	*frenar* "to curb" (8; 11,52)
izquierdas "left" (39; 10,35)	*nacionalismo* "nationalism" (60; 11,28)	*nacionalismos* "nationalisms" (5; 11,19)	*auge* "rise" (7; 11,28)
auge "rise" (31; 10,20)	*auge* "rise" (32; 10,14)	*libertad* "freedom" (6; 10,99)	*nacionalismos* "nationalisms" (6; 11,14)
nacionalismo "nationalism" (24; 9,96)	*izquierda* "left" (23; 9,66)	*necesita* "needs" (4; 10,73)	*Venezuela* "Venezuela" (5; 10;81)
nacionalismos "nationalisms" (18; 9,57)	*puro* "pure" (13; 9,44)	*auge* "rise" (3; 10,42)	*Elecciones* "elections" (5; 10,80)

Table 18. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populismo* in the Spanish media.

El País	*El Español*	*20 Minutos*	*RTVE*
derecha "right" (56; 9,89)	*nacionalistas* "nationalist" (41; 11,63)	*nacionalistas* "nationalist" (8; 11,68)	*partidos* "parties" (9; 12)
movimientos "movements" (24; 9,85)	*partidos* "parties" (49; 10,39)	*independentistas* "pro-independence/ autonomists" (7; 11,25)	*independentistas* "pro-independence/ autonomists" (6; 11,94)
partidos "parties" (49; 9,78)	*radical* "radical" (24; 10,05)	*socialistas* "socialists" (3; 9,89)	*líderes* "leaders" (6; 11,91)
nacionalistas "nationalists" (23; 9,78)	*movimientos* "movements" (21; 10,00)	*radical* "radical" (3; 10,52)	*nacionalistas* "nationalists" (6; 11,80)

líderes "leaders" (24; 9,51)	*fuerzas* "forces" (21; 9,80)	*discurso* “discourse” (3; 9,84)	*lenguaje* "language" (4; 11,42)

Table 19. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populista* (Adj.) in the Spanish media.

El País	*El Español*	*20 Minutos*	*RTVE*
derechas "right" (24; 10,48)	*nacionalistas* "nationalists" (55; 11,78)	*nacionalistas* "nationalists" (6; 11,64)	*nacionalistas* "nationalists" (6; 12,37)
nacionalistas "nationalists" (19; 10,46)	*separatistas* "separatists” (30; 11,20)	*separatistas* "separatists" (4; 11,41)	*eurófobos* “Eurosceptics” (3; 12,06)
disfrazarse "to disguise" (12; 10,41)	*izquierda* "left" (27; 10,03)	*independentistas* "pro-independence/ autonomists" (8; 11,57)	*pactar* "to make a pact" (3; 11,67)
separatistas "separatists" (10; 10,03)	*derechas* "right" (10; 9,84)	*Estrellas* "Stars" (3; 11,26)	*derecha* "right" (3; 11,19)
euroescépticos "Eurosceptics" (6; 9,45)	*pactar* "to make a pact" (19; 9,66)	*Podemos* (4; 9,02)	*Gobierno* “government” (3; 11,06)

Table 20. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populista* (Noun) in the Spanish media.

Firstly, there are several collocates which can be grouped under the umbrella term *nationalis**. Namely, such collocates as *nacionalismo(s)*, *nacionalistas* (as noun and as adjective) in Spanish, *nationalisme(s)*, *nationalistes* (as noun and as adjective) in French, and *nationalisme*, *nationalisten* in Dutch. In the Spanish data, *nationalis** has the highest logDice scores among the five strongest collocates of *populis**. *Nacionalis** collocates with the abstract nouns in singular and plural forms, with the person-referring noun *populistas* and the adjective both in the plural form. In addition, *nationalis** as a collocate of the person-referring noun in the plural form has the highest logDice scores in the French data and the Belgian Dutch data. Moreover, there are such collocates as *identitaire* “identitarian” in the Belgian French data and *identitarios* “identitarian” in the Spanish data, which also point to the semantic field of *nacionalis**.

Secondly, the collocate “rise” (*auge* in Spanish, *montée* in French, and *opkomst* in Dutch) appears to be among the five strongest collocates of *populis** in the four public spheres. Namely, “rise” collocates with the abstract nouns in singular and plural forms in the Spanish, French, and Belgian French corpora, and with the singular noun in the Belgian Dutch corpus. In addition, in the Belgian French and Dutch corpora, *montée* and *opkomst* also appear to be among the five strongest collocates of the person-referring noun in plural form.

Thirdly, among the shared collocates of *populis** in the four corpora, there are the collocates which refer to the political leanings, labels. Specifically, such collocates as “left” and “right” appear among the five strongest collocates of all word forms of *populis**. However, we can observe several differences in the use of these lexical items labelling the divisions on the political spectrum. The collocate ‘left’ appears among the strongest collocates of *populis** only in the Spanish and French corpora. Specifically, the lexemes *izquierda* “left” and *(de) izquierdas* “(of)the left” co-occurs with the abstract nouns in singular and plural forms in Spanish. These collocates appear in such phrases as *populismo de derechas y de izquierdas* (“right- and left-wing populism”) which occasionally refer to concrete national and international actors, as well as without any explicit labelling.

Finally, among the shared collocates of all word forms of *populis**, there are lexical items referring to the European context. For example, the collocates *Europe* ‘Europe’ and *européens* “European” in the French corpus; the collocates *eurospépticos* “Euroscpetics” in the Spanish corpus and *europhobe* “anti-European” in the Belgian French corpus. Moreover, specific (mainly) European political actors and adjectives referring to European countries appear among the strongest collocates of *populis**.

Among the five strongest collocates of *populis** across Spanish media sources the stable association of *populis** with *nacionalis** is apparent. *Nacionalis** occurs in the coordination constructions of two or more lexical items, such as *el nacionalismo y el populismo* “nationalism and populism”, *nacionalismo, populismo y Sanchismo* “nationalism, populism and Sanchism”; *el conspiracionismo, el populismo y el nacionalismo* “conspiracy theories, populism, and nationalism”.

In the concordance lines containing the coordination of *populismo* and *nacionalismo*, the occurrences of *populis** mainly appear in the articles about the national and regional political contexts, and European contexts, in the topics related to elections, the European Union, France, the UK and Brexit, as well as the occurrences labelling a variety of actors around the globe. The referent of the abstract noun *populismo* can be specified, such as *populismo izquierdista* “left-wing populism” and *populismo de* (Podemos) “populism of Podemos”.

The co-occurrence of *populismo(s)* and *nacionalismo(s)* is presented as two phenomena that go together, which are expanding and growing (*el auge del nacionalismo y populismo* “the rise of nationalism and populism”; a*vances de nacionalismo y el populismo en la Unión Europea* “advances of nationalism and populism in the European Union”), which are dangerous and a cause of concern, specifically in the European context (*me preocupa el aumento del populismo y el nacionalismo en Europa* “I am concerned about the rise of populism and nationalism in Europe”), and which need to be stopped (*una batalla contra el populismo y el nacionalismo* “a battle against populism and nationalism”; *por salvar a Europa del peligro del populismo y el nacionalismo* “to save Europe from the dangers of populism and nationalism”; *luchar contra el populismo y el nacionalismo en Europa* “to fight populism and nationalism in Europe”; *expulsar al nacionalismo y el populismo* “to expel nationalism and populism”).

Moreover, the collocates pointing to the discussion of nationalism and populism target national and regional contexts. The collocates referring to these contexts are person-referring nouns (*nacionalistas*, *independentistas*, *separatistas*) and are shared across the media sources. The concordance lines confirm that these terms point to the political context of 2019, in which left-wing political parties are attacked for their stance regarding regional politics by using these negatively loaded terms. The use of populists in this case always refers to the left-wing Podemos. The most recurrent pattern identified in the concordance lines is the use of populists in a list with other terms *nacionalistas, populistas y separatistas/independentistas* (“nationalists, populists and separatists/independentists”).

There are occasional uses of *populis** in analytical discourse by experts in the established media in which the rise of *populis** is commented upon. In addition, there

are terms referring to political ideologies and leanings in the articles containing experts' discourse appear in the established source. In contrast, in the free newspapers and in the public broadcaster, there are references to concrete political leaders and parties and geographical locations, pointing to the use of *populis** to describe and refer to but not reflect and analyse the phenomenon.

Tables 21–23 report the five strongest collocates of *populis** in the French media. Tables 24–26 show the five strongest collocates of *populis** in the French-speaking Belgian media. Tables 27–29 present the five strongest collocates of *populis** in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media.

Le Monde	*Le Parisien*	*20 Minutes*	*Franceinfo*
montée "rise" (34; 11,21)	*montée* "rise" (24; 12,35)	*montée* "rise" (5; 12,11)	*montée* "rise" (43; 12,54)
gauche "left" (24; 9,72)	*(faire) barrage* "to block" (4; 10,17)	-	*Europe* "Europe" (35; 11,02)
contre "against" (21; 9,50)	faire "to do" (3; 9,79)	-	*comprendre* "to understand" (10; 10,62)
nourrit "feeds" (7; 9,33)	*face* "against" (4; 9,41)	-	*démocratie* "democracy" (6; 9,57)
économique "economic" (10; 9,08)	*Europe* "Europe" (5; 8,08)	-	*vagues* "waves" (4; 9,52)

Table 21. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populisme* in the French media.

Le Monde	*Le Parisien*	*20 Minutes*	*Franceinfo*
mouvements "movements" (16; 11,16)	*leader* "leader" (11; 10,75)	*gouvernement* "government" (14; 11,44)	*partis* "parties" (23; 11,76)
discours "discourse" (16; 10,16)	*gouvernement* "government" (17; 10,23)	*Europe* "Europe" (5; 11,17)	*nationalistes* "nationalist" (10; 11,26)
stratégie "strategy" (11; 9,96)	*partis* "parties" (10; 10,04)	*coalition* "coalition" (7; 11,13)	*gouvernement* "government" (16; 10,49)

partis "parties" (14; 9,72)	*coalition "coalition" (7; 9,82)*	*partis* "parties" (8; 11,12)	*italien* "Italian" (11; 10,02)
gauche "left" (20; 9,62)	*Salvini* (10; 9,71)	*italien* "Italian" (6; 10,12)	*parti* "party" (16; 9,73)

Table 22. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populiste* (Adj.) in the French media.

Le Monde	*Le Parisien*	*20 Minutes*	*Franceinfo*
dirigeants "leaders" (3; 9,01)	*nationalistes* "nationalists" (7; 10,67)	*électeurs* "voters" (3; 11,42)	*nationalistes* "nationalists" (15; 11,55)
peuple "people" (4; 8,69)	*européens* "European (7; 10,23)	*parlent* "to speak" (3; 11,42)	*Autriche* "Austria" (9; 11,05)
gauche "left" (7; 8,50)	*progressistes* "progressive" (4; 10,12)	*théorie* "theory" (3; 11,38)	*Europe* "Europe" (14; 9,77)
contre "against" (7; 8,45)	*alliance* "alliance" (4; 9,50)	*croire* "to believe" (3; 11,13)	*Nigel* (4; 9,55)
droite "right" (6; 8,37)	*gauche* "left" (8; 9,34)	*électeurs* "voters" (3; 10,61)	*Farage* (4; 9,52)

Table 23. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populiste* (Noun) in the French media.

The examination of the concordance lines indicates that the phenomenon of populism is discussed as being on the rise and expanding, mainly in Europe. In the French data, the rise of *populism* is discussed more in different European countries, rather than in the national context. We can also observe the preposition *contre* ('against'), which is used in phrases such as *lutter contre la montée du populisme en Europe* ('to fight against the rise of populism in Europe'). In the French data, we find *nationalismes* "nationalisms" and *nationalistes* "nationalists" suggesting a pronounced tendency to conflate the concepts of *populism* and *nationalism*, as in the Spanish media. Furthermore, the concordance lines show that in the French data, the articles using populism and nationalism mainly discuss the international context and the rise of the far right. However, the label gauche "left" is present among the strongest collocates. The concordance lines show that in these cases, the phenomenon of populism is mainly commented upon and discussed in interviews with experts in the field of

populist studies or in articles about books on populism (for example, the collocate 'left' appears in the articles that touch upon the works by the political theorist Chantal Mouffe). However, there are occasional uses of *populisme de gauche* ("left-wing populism") which point to specific political actors, mainly, the left-wing French politicians François Ruffin and Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Spanish left-wing Podemos. Furthermore, 'Europe' and 'European' also appear among the five strongest collocates of the three word forms. Thus, this tendency might suggest that the French media is concerned mainly with the phenomenon of populism, populist movements, and parties on the European level.

Le Soir	*La DH*	*Metro*	*RTBF*
montée "rise" (68; 12,02)	*montée* "rise" (18; 12,19)	*montée* "rise" (5; 12,00)	*montée* "rise" (14; 12,27)
extrémisme "extremism" (11; 10,02)	*conférence* "conference" (6; 11,32)	*droite* "right" (3; 9,63)	*forme* "form" (4; 10,83)
droite "right" (31; 9,58)	*jour* "day" (5; 10,98)	-	*national* "national" (4; 10,79)
Brexit (18; 9,52)	*partout* "everywhere" (4; 10,59)	-	*partout* "everywhere" (3; 10,44)
contre "against" (17; 8,97)	*forme* "form" (4; 10,81)	-	*racisme* "racism" (3; 10,30)

Table 24. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populisme* in the French-speaking Belgian media.

Le Soir	*La DH*	*Metro*	*RTBF*
leaders "leaders" (33; 11,74)	*face* "against" (6; 10,70)	gouvernement "government" (23; 11,73)	italien "Italian" (11; 10,82)
nationalistes "nationalist" (25; 11,31)	*partis* "parties" (7; 11,12)	*italien* "Italian" (13; 11,73)	*gouvernement* "government" (21; 10,76)
partis "parties" (46; 10,36)	*propos* "remarks" (4; 11,19)	*coalition* "coalition" (9; 11,01)	*formation* "formation" (9; 10,68)
droite "right" (55; 10,33)	*hongrois* "Hungarian" (3; 10,14)	*pouvoir* "power" (10; 11,01)	*mouvements* "movements" (7; 10,49)

formations "formations" (13; 9,65)	*nationalistes* "nationalist" (3; 10,09)	*droite* "right" (11; 10,76)	ANO (6; 10,36)

Table 25. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populiste* (Adj.) in the French-speaking Belgian media.

Le Soir	*La DH*	*Metro*	*RTBF*
radicale “radical” (27; 11,17)	*comparé* “compared” (4; 11,54)	Nigel (5; 11,21)	FvD (3; 10,23)
droite "right" (65; 10,80)	référence “reference” (4; 11,51)	Farage (5; 11,21)	*gauche* "left" (4; 9,71)
extrémistes "extremists" (12; 10,70)	*extrémistes* "extremists" (3; 11,23)	*poussée* "surge" (4; 11,07)	*droite* "right" (6; 9,33)
nationalistes "nationalists" (9; 9,95)	Nigel (3; 11,00)	*puissance* "power" (3; 10,83)	*politiques* “political” (3; 8,18)
face "against" (5; 9,39)	Farage (3; 11,00)	*chacun* "every" (3; 10,81)	*parti* “party” (3; 8,08)

Table 26. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populiste* (Noun) in the French-speaking Belgian media.

De Standaard	*HLN*	*Metro*	*VRT*
rechts "right" (16; 10,63)	-	*racisme* "racism" (5; 12)	*jeugdwerkloosheid* "youth unemployment" (14; 10,98)
nationalisme "nationalism" (9; 10,19)	-	*leugenachtig* "lying" (3; 11,68)	*meningsuiting* "expression of opinion" (14; 10,92)
opkomst "rise" (6; 9,71)	-	*nationalisme* "nationalism" (3; 11,68)	*klimaat* "climate" (15; 10,71)
vorm "form" (6; 9,65)	-	*uitgangspunten* "principles" (3; 11,68)	*vrije* "free" (14; 10,69)

racisme "racism" (5; 9,46)	-	*uitsluiting* "exclusion" (3; 11,63)	*nationalisme* "nationalism" (10; 10,37)

Table 27. Five strongest collocates of lemma *populisme* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media.

De Standaard	HLN	Metro	VRT
radical-rechts "radical right" (7; 10,92)	*Vijfsterrenbeweging* "Five Star movement" (19; 11,52)	*Vijfsterrenbeweging* "Five Star movement" (35; 12,77)	*Vijfsterrenbeweging* "Five Star movement" (29; 11,19)
partijen "parties" (19; 10,82)	*Lega* "Lega" (8; 10,24)	*Lega* "Lega" (18; 11,91)	partijen "parties" (42; 10,56)
zondagavond "Sunday evening" (4; 10,33)	*nationalistische* "nationalist" (5; 10,17)	*regering* "government" (19; 10,88)	*radicaal-rechtse* "radical right" (16; 10,53)
opmars "rise" (4; 10,14)	*coalitie* "coalition" (6; 9,96)	*sociaaldemocratische* "social democratic" (5; 10,51)	*Lega* "Lega" (19; 10,49)
balans "balance" (3; 9,94)	*anti-immigrantenpartijen* "antiimmigration parties" (4; 9,88)	*Italië* "Italy" (8; 10,45)	*macht* "power" (18; 10,09)

Table 28. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populistisch* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media.

De Standaard	HLN	Metro	VRT
nationalistes "nationalists" (11; 10,79)	*nationalisten* "nationalists" (9; 11,76)	*nationalisten* "nationalists" (5; 12,19)	*sterker* "stronger" (16; 11,15)
rechtse "right" (13; 10,63)	pro-Europeanen "pro-Europeans" (3; 10,48)	*autocraten* "autocrats" (4; 12,05)	*opkomst* "rise" (12; 10,49)
macht "power" (9; 9,98)	*propageren* "to propagate" (3; 10,48)	*manipulatoren* "manipulators" (4; 12,05)	*oplossingen* "solutions" (8; 10,09)
demagogen "demagogues" (4; 9,55)	*zogenaamd* "so-called" (3; 10,48)	*lieten* (*weten)* "announced" (3; 11,42)	*gekomen* "came" (9; 10,09)

geven "to give" (7; 9,48)	*nachtmerrie* "nightmare" (3; 10,36)	*politieke* "political" (4; 10,70)	*wereldwijd* "worldwide" (8; 10,08)

Table 29. Five strongest collocates of the lemma *populist* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media.

The findings regarding the strongest collocates of each word form of *populis** across public spheres and types of media point to several common trends. Firstly, the five strongest collocates of the abstract nouns in the three languages show several tendencies. The collocate “rise” appears among the five strongest collocates in the subcorpora of each public sphere. However, it is distributed slightly differently in the different types of media. In the data containing media sources from Spain, France and French-speaking Belgian media, the collocates *auge* and *montée,* and also *pousée “surge”* (only in the free newspaper in French-speaking Belgian data) are among the strongest collocates of the abstract nouns in the four types of media: in the established media, the serious-popular, free daily newspaper, and in the public broadcaster. In the Dutch-speaking Belgian media, there are two collocates which can be translated as “rise”, that is, *opkomst* and *opmars*. The latter also implied the idea of newness referring to *populisme* as something relatively new seemingly coming out of nowhere. The noun *opkomst* collocates with the abstract noun *populisme* in the established media, and *opmars* also appears among the five strongest collocates of the adjective *populistische* in the established media, and of the person-referring noun *populist(en).*

The five strongest collocates of the adjectives also point to a tendency to qualify such words as movement(s), leader(s), parties, government(s), formation, coalition across the languages and types of media. There are also some context-specific collocates in the Spanish data, such as *independentistas* "pro-independence/autonomists", and such terms as *discurso / discours* “discourse” and *propos* “remarks” in Spanish, French and French-speaking Belgian media suggesting the tendency to present populism as a communication style and type of discourse, as pointed out in previous research on the use of *populis** in media discourse (e.g. Göhring, 2022).

The five strongest collocates of the person-referring nouns point to the tendency of using other person-referring nouns in the coordination constructions (e.g. populists and nationalists) or in a list of several lexical elements (e.g. populists, nationalists, separatists, and terrorists). The collocates of the person-referring nouns suggest that

specific meaning elements are attached to *populis**. Across the four public spheres, the collocates point to the association with radical right-wing ideologies (nationalism, Euroscepticism). In the Spanish data, specific meaning elements are apparent: such terms as independentists, separatists (referring to the national context), and Eurosceptics referring to the radical right-wing populists in the European context.

Moreover, concrete actors and geographical locations (only European context) appear among the collocates across public spheres, but their distribution across types of media presents some divergencies. In the Spanish media, concrete political actors (Podemos and M5S) are referred to as populists in the free daily medium in such construction as *populistas de Podemos* “populists from Podemos”. In the French media data, collocates referring to concrete actors and places are among the strongest collocates in the public broadcaster. In the French-speaking Belgian media, the collocates pointing to concrete political actors from the European countries are among the strongest collocates in the serious-popular newspaper, the free daily newspaper, and in the public broadcaster. In the Dutch-speaking Belgian media, those collocates pointing to actors appear as collocates of the adjectives *populistisch(e)* and qualify nouns referring to parties and movements (Lega, M5S) in the three types of media excluding the established source.

Across the corpora, the collocates of both person-referring nouns and adjectives point to the European context and to the attribution of the populist label to parties and leaders that are commonly considered populists, specifically radical right-wing parties which are commonly referred to as populists in the media. The left-wing populists (concretely Podemos) are also discussed across the public spheres. In the Spanish media, however, Podemos appears among the five strongest collocates in the free daily newspaper. In other types of media, the collocate left co-occurs with *populis** and refers to Podemos. However, in the journalists’ discourse it is rather a fixed label. The explicitly negative stance towards Podemos and the delegitimising purpose of categorising Podemos as populists is rather apparent in the reported speech of the political actors.

The analysis of the five strongest collocates of *populis** in the French media data reveals the collocates that stand out across the public spheres. The collocate *peuple* “people” (in the established media), and *électeurs* “voters” (in the free daily media)

point to the discussion of the phenomenon of populism in relation to the theoretical concepts of populism, people, anti-elite which appear mainly in analytical articles in which the concept of populism is defined according to the consensual definition by the researchers working with the ideational approach to populism (e.g. Cas Mudde) in the expert discourse. In addition, the collocate *peuple* also appears in expert discourse (e.g. Chantal Mouffe) where the left-wing populism and the opposition between the people and the corrupt elite is presented. The collocate *électeurs* appear in the free daily newspaper in the context of the European elections. The role of the people and specifically of those who vote is not discussed in the opinion articles.

Overall, specific semantic elements are attached to *populis**. *Populis** is associated with extremism, radicalism, racism, Euroscepticism, and nationalism cross-linguistically. Moreover, there are collocates among the five strongest collocates which appear only in one public sphere, such as *démocratie "*democracy" in the French media and *libertad* "freedom" in the Spanish media. Moreover, such collocates as *jeugdwerkloosheid* "youth unemployment"*, meningsuiting* "expression of opinion", *klimaat* "climate" specific to the public broadcaster in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media point to the discussion of the phenomenon of populism in terms of its causes and consequences. Thus, these collocates point to the way populism is presented as a threat to democracy and opposed to democratic values.

4.4 Conclusion

A corpus-assisted analysis of the use of *populis** in mass media discourse presented in this chapter has focused on the semantic profile of *populis** and has presented a collocational analysis involving a comparison of the strongest collocates and of the connotations of *populis** across different linguistic and sociopolitical contexts. Several observations can be drawn from analysing the semantic profile of *populis**.

The analysis of the collocates of each word form of *populis** allows us to see the specificities related to different grammatical forms. Firstly, in the four corpora, among the collocates of the abstract noun *populismo(s) / populisme(s) / populisme*, there are lexemes referring to ideologies, leanings, and orientations (nationalism, extremism, liberal, economic, right, left). In addition, those words which refer to the discussion of the current sociopolitical situation in relation to the phenomenon of populism: that is,

the lexemes referring to where populism happens (Europe), what is it happening (rise, tensions, youth unemployment). Furthermore, the singular form of the abstract noun is used proportionally more than the plural form, which suggests the tendency to frame populism as a unique phenomenon rather than in its different guises. Moreover, Dutch is the only language in which no plural form of the abstract noun is attested in the data. However, other word forms of *populis**, such as adjective *populistische* points to other linguistic strategies to refer to populism in its many forms, such as *populistische stromingen* "populist currents".

Secondly, among the collocates of the person-referring nouns *populista(s) / populiste(s) / populist(en)*, there are more divergences among the four public spheres. For example, there are context-specific lexical items, such as *Ministros* "Ministers", *separatistas* "separatists", and such verbs as *acusan* "accuse" in the Spanish data, and *gendarmerie* "police", *super-groupe* "super group", *progressistes* "progressives" in the French data; and concrete individual political actors in the two Belgian corpora. In addition, in the Belgian Dutch, there are such lexemes as *alfamannen* "alpha males", *macht* "power", and *sterker* "stronger".

Thirdly, among the collocates of the adjectives *populista(s) / populiste(s) / populistisch(e)*, we can observe the lexemes referring to collective nouns ("leaders", "parties", "movements", "formations", "coalition", "government") and to concrete political actors referred to as a collective or a group.

Across all word forms of *populis**, there are several shared collocates across the four public spheres. Four groups can be distinguished: (i) the lexemes referring to nationalism and nationalist(s); (ii) the lexemes referring to the idea of populism and populist(s) being on the rise; (iii) lexemes referring to political leanings and used to divide a political spectrum; (iv) lexical items pointing to the European context.

Finally, there are several collocates which can be grouped under the umbrella term *nationalis**. Namely, such collocates as *nacionalismo(s)*, *nacionalistas* (as noun and as adjective) in Spanish, nationalisme*(s)*, *nationalistes* (as noun and as adjective) in French, and *nationalisme*, *nationalisten* in Dutch.

These observations point to the trends in the meanings of *populis**. The results of the collocation analysis suggest that *populis** has consistent negative semantic prosody across different linguistic, sociopolitical, and discursive contexts analysed.

Moreover, the comparison of the collocates grouped into semantic categories point to the association of *populis** with other political labels, such as ideologies and leanings, with geographical locations, specific political actors, and with negative evaluative lexis, including figurative language. In mass media discourse, *populis** is discussed as predominantly extreme right-wing ideology associated with nationalism, extremism, and euroscepticism and is used to refer to particular international political actors commonly referred to as populists (e.g. Trump, Salvini). In French and Belgian corpora, *populis** is consistently presented as a worldwide and a European trend, rather than national phenomena. In contrast, the association with national political actors is highlighted in the Spanish media.

Namely, there is a consistency in terms of what is associated with *populis**, that is, the semantic groups of collocates are consistent across the contexts. Collocates of *populis** have been grouped into such categories as political labels (ideologies, leanings, and abstract terms, including many -isms), geographical locations, specific political actors, and negative evaluative lexis, including figurative language.

The association with different ideologies is sensitive to the ideological leaning of the discussed entity. Overall, the left-wing populism is associated with such ideologies as socialism, communism and the right-wing populism is associated with anti-immigration attitudes, racism, and euroscepticism.

The findings show the meaning of *populism* and *populist* is not contested across the four public spheres. The terms are not subject to contestation by journalists and are used to label actors and actions widely classified as populists in both national and international contexts. In French and Belgian corpora, populism and populists are consistently depicted as a worldwide and a European trend, rather than national phenomena. Moreover, such portrayal is done through various metaphorical descriptions, such as “populist wave” or “tsunami”, as a threat through the metaphors of war and disease.

*Populis** used to describe the election results of mainly radical right parties appears in the free daily outlets across the four public spheres. When the rise of populists is discussed in the established media, it is portrayed alongside other threats to democracy. For example, the reference to the Italian government (*Lega* and *M5S*) as "populist government" contains analytical discourse in which journalists reflect on the coalition's programme which combines anti-immigration and anti-austerity ideas. In the Belgian Dutch media, the Italian government is depicted as a "nightmare". Overall, across the French and Belgian corpora, *populis** is used to signal a threat mainly to Europe. In contrast, the "populist wave" in the Spanish data is located in Spain, which points to the persistent discussion of the local context and the attribution of the populist label to the left-wing coalition UP. This difference can be explained by the fact that the national political context of Spain in 2019 was characterised by several elections being held throughout the year and more particularly by the creation of a coalition government with political parties classified as left-wing populists at the beginning of 2020. In the data, the occurrences of *populis** in the reported speech of political actors show how the opposition used *populis** as a tool to discredit the Prime Minister by accusing him of forming a coalition with populists.

The evaluation of the phenomenon and of the actors/actions labelled populist, as suggested by the collocational profiles of the terms, is negative in the media sources of the three countries. In addition, in the three languages, there are two main shared top collocates, namely *nacionalis** and "rise". These tendencies are also identified in previous research on the use of *populis** in the press (Demata et al., 2020; Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020). This tendency, thus, points to a certain level of conflation of the concept of *populism* and (radical right-wing) *nationalism*. However, the concordance lines suggest that *nationalism* is not used as a synonym of *populism* but rather intensifies the effect of its negative connotations and also adds to *populism* meaning elements of *nationalism*. Regarding another top collocate "rise", we observe that the media across different sociopolitical contexts resort to the use of this fixed construction, however, instances of analytical discourse containing reflections of the possible reasons for this rise are almost absent.

These findings point to the role of the connotations of *populis** and to its social meanings in discourse, rather than its lexical meaning. *Populis** as a sociopolitical

keyword points not only to its denotational meaning but also to connotational meanings and has the ability to evoke the (discursive) contexts in which it commonly occurs. Specific contexts can be reinforced through a consistent and repetitive use of concrete patterns (e.g. a categorisation of political actors through the noun phrase *una banda de populistas y nacionalistas* “a gang of populists and nationalists”). Others, in contrast, can be overshadowed. The use of the corpus linguistics tools contributes to determining these tendencies. Indeed, intuitively because of having some knowledge of the extralinguistic context of the data analysed, we might expect to find *populis** attributed, for example, to Podemos in the Spanish context. But only with the help of the corpus linguistics analysis can we assert that this is a real tendency in the actual media discourse.

Finally, the dominant discourse across the four public spheres is anti-populist discourse. *Populis** serves as a boundary which marks which discourse is legitimate and which is not, even when it is used as a fixed descriptor of concrete widely known populists. Thus, *populis** functions as a *formule métadiscursive* (“meta-discursive formula”) (Schürgers, 2025) which produces discourse connected to different conceptions of democracy, such as liberal democracy.

Chapter 5. The use of *populis** in social media discourse: a cross-actor perspective

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the use of *populis** by political actors and laypeople on Spanish-speaking Twitter. The main goal of this chapter is to observe how *populis** is used in Twitter discourse, focusing on the similarities and differences in the use of the term between political actors and laypeople and on the possible specificities in the use of *populis** related to the type of discourse and medium (social media and specifically Twitter).

In this chapter, I analyse a random sample of 400 tweets containing *populis** published in 2019, making it possible to provide a more qualitative account of the linguistic aspects of the online discourse of different actors - politicians and laypeople - to reveal who and what is deemed populist, with what characteristics populism is associated, and with what function the terms are used by different actors. Thus, it will help to determine to what extent sociopolitical keywords are specific to social media and type of actor.

In this chapter, the tweets analysed pertain to the Spanish-speaking Twitter space deemed as a shared linguistic space which serves to explore and compare the use of *populis** by different categories of Twitter users. All tweets by political users have been published on the accounts of political actors who hold a mandate in Spain. The selection of tweets by lay users is not limited to Spain but includes different geographic locations. Indeed, the accounts of lay users may be located in Spain but discuss topics related to other Spanish-speaking countries, and vice versa (see Chapter 3 for details). When providing the examples of tweets analysed, I provide the date and the Twitter account name only for political actors as all these tweets were produced by public figures; all tweets by lay users were anonymised.

This chapter analyses *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword using manual annotation applied to the Twitter dataset presented in Chapter 3. Methodologically, the analysis expands on previous studies that investigate the pragmatic potential of *populis**

(Kranert, 2020; Shchinova, 2023; Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025; Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Hambye et al., 2026).

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 General observations regarding the use of *populis** on Twitter

In the next subsections, I present the findings as follows: first, I discuss the findings suggested by the analysis of the tweets by political actors (5.2.1.1). Second, I discuss the findings suggested by the analysis of the tweets by lay users (5.2.1.2). Each of these subsections contains the discussion of A) semantic and pragmatic features of *populis**, B) Twitter-specific features, and C) Summary of the general trends.

5.2.1.1 General observations regarding the tweets with *populis** by political actors

A Semantic and pragmatic features of *populis** in the tweets by political actors

The findings suggest that *populis** is used with negative prosodies in the tweets by the two types of actors - politicians and lay users. However, in the dataset containing the tweets by political actors, the annotation of one tweet suggests that *populis** was used with neutral value where the adjective *populista* is attached to the nouns *el votante* “the populist voter” and *la fuerza* “the populist force” without any negatively connoted co-occurring lexical items and without any contextual cues which might imply negative meaning. Moreover, it is used to describe and to refer to a type of voter and a type of politician, rather than to criticise or to discredit the (populist) opponents.

In the tweets posted on the accounts of political actors, I observe specific semantic elements attached to *populis**. Some of these semantic elements are shared across some of the politicians on the political spectrum, while others are specific to a political party and highlight their ideology and their political and communicative strategies. An example of this is the association of populism with nationalism and extremism and the negative portrayal of the political situation affected by populism which needs immediate action (*hacer frente a la oleada nacional-populista* “stop the national-populist wave”; *combatir a los extremismos y los populismos* “to fight extremisms and

populisms"). This association is present in the tweets by Garzón (UP-IU), PSOE, PP, Cs, and their leaders.

However, such negative portrayal is achieved through different linguistic means. Different grammatical forms imply different targets of the use of *populis**. For example, there is a tendency to use the abstract nouns *populismo(s)*and the adjectives *populista(s)* in PSOE's tweets. Such choice of the grammatical form in these tweets suggests that the negative portrayal refers more likely to an abstract phenomenon not only in Spain but mainly in Europe (through self-referential use of *populis** or by using a qualifying adjective to categorise unspecified entities, such as *partidos nacional populistas* "national-populist parties"). Moreover, it suggests that *populis** is used vaguely for example to avoid direct confrontation. However, it is not imbued in the grammatical form itself but in the way how a specific word form is combined with other lexical items. In addition, specifically in the case of PSOE, they cannot target Unidas Podemos, a party frequently referred to as *populista,* because of the need for support from the left-wing to form the government. By contrast, in the tweets by Cs there is a tendency to use the abstract noun *populismo* together with its referent (*populismo de Podemos*; *populismo de Sánchez*) and the person-referring nouns *populistas*. The latter can be specified or not, but it is implied that Podemos is the referent.

Other semantic elements attached to *populis** are negatively charged nouns, such as *mentira(s)* "lie(s)", *estupidez* "stupidity", *peligro* "danger", *corrupción* "corruption", *miedo* "fear", *agresores* "aggressors" (Cs), *enemigo* "enemy", *virus* "virus", *vacuna* "vaccine", *antipolítica* "antipolitics", *antídoto* "antidote", *agresiones* "aggressions", *ruina* "ruin" (PP); *amenaza* "threat" (PSOE, PP, Cs), *deriva* "drift" (Vox); and words referring to ideologies and political leanings, such as *marxismo* "Marxism" (Vox); *soberanismo* (PSOE, PP, Cs), *independentismo* "pro-independence", *independentistas* "independentists", *separatistas* "separatists" (Cs and PP); banda fascista "fascist gang", *totalitarismos* "totalitarisms" (PP), *batasunos* "pejoratively refer to politicians of the far-left and nationalist parties in the Basque Country); *antieuropeístas* "anti-European", and *eurofóbos* "Europhobes" (PSOE, PP, Cs). These findings suggest very similar tendencies between the way political actors refer to *populis** and in the Spanish mass media discourse (see Chapter 4), thus pointing to the shared dominant discourse about populism in Spain. However, the observations

regarding the use of different grammatical forms shed light on the nuances of the use of *populis** related not only to the semantic level of discourse but also suggest the need to analyse the use of *populis** on the pragmatic level. In what follows I connect the use of different grammatical forms with particular meanings and with such variables as the author and the target of *populis**. I comment on the examples grouped by each political party in order to highlight the variety of patterns in the tweets of politicians and the specificity related to the party's ideological and communicative strategies.

Through these semantic elements, *populis** in the tweets by political actors is used to refer to a phenomenon/ideology/form of politics through abstract nouns (e.g. *el populismo y el nacionalismo*), to a type of actors without explicitly naming the actor, for example through the use of bare plurals (e.g. *independentistas y populistas*), and to talk about abstract entities and realities through the use of the adjective (e.g. *una nueva época populista*). These abstract entities are presented as illegitimate and associated with negatively connoted terms.

This type of use is characterised by such phenomena as ambiguity and conceptual vagueness. The ambiguity and vagueness are exploited as a strategy in political discourse (De Cock, 2014, p. 88). In the tweets by political actors, the conceptual vagueness of *populis** is exploited through the co-textual lack of the attribution of the relationship, thus leaving it unclear who or what are referred to as populist or populism. Such use makes the content of the tweet appealing to everybody. I have observed such use in the tweets by PSOE, PP, and specifically its leader Pablo Casado (Example 1).

(1) ***El populismo*** *es el nuevo enemigo del siglo XXI que campa tanto en el lado de la izquierda como de la derecha y pretende poner en riesgo los fundamentos de la Unión Europea* (@pablocasado_, 21/11/2019)

("**Populism** is the new enemy of the 21st century, prevalent on both the left and the right, and it seeks to jeopardise the foundations of the European Union.")

Furthermore, in the tweets by political actors, these viewpoints, attitudes, and ideologies vary depending on the political party. Namely, in the tweets by UP and PSOE, *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* are mainly associated with the far-right and right-wing ideologies.

In the tweets by Vox, it is mainly the left-wing and the far-left wing ideologies through the association with *comunismo* "communism". In the tweets by PP and Cs, *populismo* mainly co-occurs with such terms as *nacionalismo* "nationalism", *separatismo* "separatism", *independentismo* "pro-independence". There is one tweet by PP targeting the centre. In the tweets containing *populis** by Sánchez or Garzón, *populis** is not used to self-legitimise, but rather to evoke the existing threat of abstract populism and specifically link it to the far-right ideologies. Their tweets may also contain explicit criticism of the concrete political actors through the use of *populis** as a tool for categorisation, that is, the politicians' actions, propositions or discourse are categorised as having populist features and thus as illegitimate.

Thus, the analysis points out that *populis** strengthens the effect of the legitimising and delegitimising functions of political discourse.

The analysis of the tweets by political actors has allowed me to observe several features of the use of *populis** on Twitter. Firstly, the findings suggest that the use of a variety of grammatical forms of *populis** is not random. For example, the use of the singular noun *populismo* without a specific target and in association with specific words has a different meaning and purpose in the tweet than the use of the plural noun *populistas* associated with a particular target and a specific conceptual field.

Secondly, the connotations are indeed negative in the overwhelming majority of tweets, but the referent may differ. Indeed, *populis** is a convenient term as it can target both the left and the right and political actors make use of this feature. Taking into account the Spanish political context with two political parties classified as populists (UP on the left) and Vox (on the right) it is somewhat expected to find the populist label attributed to those parties.

In the tweets by the parties more to the left (UP, PSOE), the attribution of the populist characteristics to the (far) right is recurrent, however the act of labelling a concrete party (e.g. Vox) is almost absent. Thus, the categorisation can be done through explicit

naming and by leaving the referent unspecified. Moreover, there are also occurrences containing the categorisation as populists of those actors who are not conventionally known as populists but have said or done something perceived as populism. These uses mainly concern the main political rivals in the upcoming elections (UP targeting Cs and PSOE targeting PP and Cs).

Among the tweets by Alberto Garzón, the leader of Izquierda Unida (the left-wing coalition UP), there is only one in which Garzón explicitly refers to the far-right Vox. However, the purpose of the tweet is not to merely name the political actor, but to criticise them and to attribute populist characteristics to their statements and actions. Moreover, this tweet presented in Example (2) illustrates how the populist label is attributed not only to those classified as populists (Vox), but also to those who have said or done something perceived as having populist features by the author of the tweet.

(2) *Vox, PP y Cs han "anunciado" que encerrarán a los líderes independentistas. El PSOE "anuncia" que traeré a Puigdemont a España. Luego se dicen constitucionalistas y liberales.* ***Este populismo incendiario y ultranacionalista*** *es el nutritivo alimento de la extrema derecha.* (@agarzon, 6/11/2019)

("Vox, PP and Cs have 'announced' that they will lock up the pro-independence leaders. PSOE 'announces' that they will bring Puigdemont to Spain. Then they call themselves constitutionalists and liberals. **This incendiary and ultra-nationalist populism** is the nutritious food of the far right.")

Alberto Garzón posts this tweet several days before the second general election in November 2019 and evokes the context of the Catalan crisis, which might suggest the purposes of self-promotion and delegitimising the opponents by highlighting those actions deemed illegitimate. Specifically, Garzón communicates a clear opposition to the imprisonment of the Catalan politicians and denounces the support of the right-wing parties and the centre-left PSOE for this action. The negative connotation is apparent in the utterance containing the co-occurrence of *populismo* with the adjectives *incendiario* "incendiary" and *ultranacionalista* "ultra-nationalist". The implied

negative meaning is reinforced through the metaphorical description presenting the actions of the parties mentioned as the "nutritious food for" the far right. In addition, the author of the tweet intensifies the delegitimising effect of the categorisation of the actors and their actions as populism by questioning their self-labelling as "constitutionalists and liberals" which also strengthens the argument presented in the tweet.

In the tweets by PSOE, the attribution of the populist label to the (far) right is exclusively done through generalisation and indeterminacy. All populists are targeted and they are referred to as plural *populists* (with or without the definite article) and not by the name of the political party. This use is presented in Example (3).

(3) 📻@*IratxeGarper en @24horas_rne Ahora mismo hay dos caminos: 1️⃣Una Europa que afronte los desafíos 2️⃣Un proyecto europeo bloqueado por* ***los partidos populistas de extrema derecha*** *El #26M nos jugamos el mayor proyecto de paz y desarrollo que ha tenido el mundo. #VotaPSOE* 🇪🇺❤️ (@PSOE, 21/05/2019)

("📻 @IratxeGarper in @24horas_rne Right now there are two paths: 1️⃣A Europe that faces the challenges2️⃣A European project blocked by **far-right populist parties** The #26M the greatest peace and development project the world has ever had is at stake. #VotePSOE 🇪🇺❤️")

Out of five tweets by Vox, only one attributes populist characteristics to the PSOE's politics and names explicitly a political actor (Carmen Calvo) (Example 4). The noun phrase *la deriva populista* "populist drift" appeared in a tweet targeting PSOE's politician and the former First Vice President of the Government of Spain, Carmen Calvo, in reaction to the proposition by the PSOE government of strengthening rape laws and making changes in the Spanish criminal code regarding sexual consent.

This use of *populis** points to the delegitimising function of *populis** through attributing populist characteristics to the opponents' actions. The negative connotation is apparent through portraying the decisions of the current government as something

that raises concern and that can potentially have a negative effect on part of the population, i.e. *los varones* “the men”. Moreover, the negative categorisation is achieved through attributing the actions directly to persons by using a collective noun *responsables políticos* “politicians in charge” and also by explicitly naming concrete persons. The argumentative purpose of the tweet which consists in the opposition to a concrete government’s action is reinforced through the negative categorisation as populist (Example 4).

(4) *Asistimos con preocupación a **la deriva populista de responsables políticos como la vicepresidenta Carmen Calvo** que dice que la Justicia debe creer a las mujeres sí o sí. Esto supone el fin de la presunción de inocencia de los varones por el simple hecho de serlo.* (@vox_es, 21/12/2019)

(“We are concerned about **the populist drift of politicians such as Vice President Carmen Calvo**, who says that the courts must believe women no matter what. This means the end of the presumption of innocence of men, simply because they are men.”)

B Twitter-specific features in the tweets by political actors

Twitter facilitates dialogue and direct contact of political actors and citizens, however, it is not exploited by political actors, as has been argued in previous research (López-Meri et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Andrés & Ureña-Uceda, 2011; Roginsky & De Cock, 2022; Roginsky & Huys, 2015). Moreover, the use of the dialogic potential of Twitter by political actors mainly addressed to the content published in mass media is apparent through the use of mentions, hashtags, and retweets which also amplify the interest in the tweet and facilitate the interaction. In the tweets analysed, Spanish politicians include quotes of the leaders from their official Twitter account or their quotes in mass media and links to the official website of the party. The links related to mass media contain interviews with a politician from the party, participation in discussions on radio and television with the party’s representatives, and in television debates before the upcoming elections which suggests the use of Twitter as a self-

referential platform. In addition, a certain level of interaction with mass media is achieved through sharing the links to the mass media content in the tweets where the politicians' point of view on the subject and either support or rejection of the mass media content is provided.

Politicians also use hashtags which help circulate the information regarding events they participate in and locations they travel to as well as hashtags with the party's slogans e.g. *#Ahora sí Vota PSOE* "#NowYesVotePSOE". Moreover, the hashtags used serve to refer to a television debate or the news articles and radio programme (#EnLaSER), to refer to concrete days, such as the election day (#10N) and *#DíaDeLaConstitución* "#ConstitutionDay" (Example 5). The latter appear in the tweets by Cs and PP to highlight the values and the political project of the party, that is, the unity of Spain, also by self-positioning as *los constitucionalistas* in opposition to *los populistas*.

(5) *41 años después la Constitución sigue siendo el mejor muro de contención contra los enemigos de la libertad* ***el populismo*** *y el nacionalismo excluyente.Nunca será el problema sino la solución para seguir conquistando el futuro de España.Feliz #DíaDeLaConstitución* (@ppopular, 6/12/2019)

("41 years later, the Constitution continues to be the best retaining wall against the enemies of freedom: **populism** and exclusionary nationalism. It will never be the problem but the solution to continue conquering the future of Spain. Happy #DíaDeLaConstitución ES")

In addition, *populis** appears as a hashtag within the body of the tweet and serves to present it as a central issue on the political agenda, as illustrated in Example (6) containing a tweet by PP.

(6) *Sánchez dijo #YoNoVoy a pactar con el* ***# populismo*** *y pactó. Por eso #YoVoy* (@ (("Sánchez said #IWillNotMakeAPact with **#populism**, and then he made an agreement. That's why #IwillGo") (@ppopular, 7/02/2019)

Furthermore, in my data, in the tweets where the politicians do directly interact, they address the media professionals or other political actors, but not the citizens. For example, Alberto Garzón replies to a journalist in order to react to a categorisation as populist that was made against him (Example 7).

(7) *Si lo que quieres es decir que ambos espacios somos* ***populistas desde tu punto de vista*** *me parece legítimo. Erróneo sin fundamento y demagogo pero legítimo. Y sin embargo para eso no necesitabas "sesgar" el tuit original.* (@agarzon, 4/02/2019)

("If what you want to say is that both cases **we are populists from your point of view**, that seems legitimate to me. Erroneous, baseless, and demagogic, but legitimate nonetheless. And yet, to achieve that, you didn't need to 'skew' the original tweet.")

C Summary of the trends observed in the tweets by political actors

All Spanish parties studied may be called populist by other political actors. This confirms the idea that the term can be perceived as vague and as a "meaningless buzzword" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) as it is indeed used to label very different objects. However, this act of labelling depends less on the actual ideology or style of the parties involved than on who one's political adversary is. This is reflected by the fact that PSOE did not target UP as populist during the period studied, as it was considered an ally.

Findings from the previous research (Kranert, 2020) suggest that the use of *populis** is characterised by two pragmatic functions, to discredit actions or political actors and

to name political ideologies and groups. My findings add some nuances. Indeed, my analysis of the use of *populis** in the tweets by political actors, and not only the reported speech of politicians in the press (Kranert, 2020), suggests that the use of *populis** to refer to an action or an actor contains negative connotations and thus contributes to some extent to the delegitimisation of the object referred to as populist. However, the use of the populist label by political actors analysed suggests that such labelling contributes to delegitimising another actor, because of their link to what is referred to as populism. Thus, in the specific context of Spanish politics, the populist label functions much more as a fixed epithet, rather than as a stigma term. However, such use as a fixed epithet is not a mere buzzword, but rather a strategic discursive device and a tool for political campaigning in the context analysed. For example, in the tweets by Cs, using *populistas* to implicitly or explicitly refer to UP does not seem to aim primarily at discrediting UP, but rather at attacking PSOE via its potential ally. Similarly, this strategy of delegitimising PSOE and the left-wing coalition by the use of *populis** attached to UP and employed by actors that position themselves in the political centre has been pointed out in the analysis of the parliamentary discourse of Spanish politicians (Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Shchinova, 2024). The recurrence of this pattern indicates that *populis** can call up multiple functions and can be used to do more than one thing at a time.

We have seen how *populis** discourse is used to communicate, reproduce and spread certain viewpoints and sociopolitical oppositions that characterise a given society, for example what is legitimate or not in a democracy. *Populis** in political discourse is indeed a powerful keyword which plays a prominent role in this process. These examples also show how (de)legitimisation can be achieved through different uses of *populis** through linking it to different sociopolitical aspects, varied parties' ideologies and political strategies. However, these observations require additional explanation in order to better understand the function of *populis** in specific contexts in relation to such variables as the author and the target of *populis** (and their political affiliation) and the pragmatic function performed by the use of *populis**. I address this task in Section 5.3.

5.2.1.2 General observations regarding the tweets with *populis** by lay users

A Semantic and pragmatic features of *populis in the tweets by lay users**

The analysis of the dataset containing tweets by lay users points to predominantly negative connotations of *populis**. In addition, several instances were coded as having positive (n=1), neutral (n=4) and indeterminate values (n=6).

Example (8) illustrates the use of *populis** with positive value in the dataset with tweets by lay users.

(8) ***El endemoniado populismo*** *... gracias al* ***" populismo"*** *que tanto los aterra, millones de argentinos mejoraron su vida y la argentina fue uno de los países que mas creciò con igualdad*

("**The damned populism**... thanks to the **'populism'** that terrifies them so much, millions of Argentines improved their lives and Argentina was one of the countries that grew the most with equality")

The first occurrence of *populis** in the nominal phrase *el endemoniado populismo* "the damned populism" is used to refer to a political phenomenon which is widely presented as negative and which is specifically used with negative connotation apparent through the verb *aterrar* "to terrify". The second occurrence of *populis** appears between quotation marks suggesting the metalinguistic use of *populis** and refers to the way a concrete political context (Argentina) was categorised as populism in the previous tweet. Such reuse of *populis** results in attributing to it positive connotations apparent through the clarification provided by the speaker. Thus, the speaker does not overtly reject the categorisation as populism but rather reframes the discussion on populism according to their understanding of the term and of the context targeted by the original use of *populis**.

Example (9) illustrates the use of *populis** with undetermined value. The lack of any linguistic or extralinguistic context makes it impossible to annotate the value of *populis**.

(9) ***Populismo*** *puro !!!!* (“Pure populism!!!!”)

Example (10) illustrates the use of *populis** with neutral value. This tweet exemplifies what Schröter (2008) refers to as metalinguistic comments, that is, the speaker reflects on the term *populism* itself. This tweet is an instance of metadiscourse in which the speaker uses *populis** to give an opinion which may be interpreted as pointing to the perceived misuse and/or a pervasive use of the term. The lack of the broader online context does not allow to identify the content to which the speaker reacts through this utterance.

(10) *Cada vez que alguien utiliza* ***el término "populista"*** *un politólogo muere.* (“Every time someone uses **the term ‘populist’** a political scientist dies.”)

B Twitter-specific features in the tweets by lay users

The lay users’ tweets analysed contain hashtags, mentions, quotes of the media content, and embedded images and videos. The use of *populis** in a hashtag within the body of the tweet is illustrated in Example (11). In this tweet, *populis** in a hashtag may help amplify the circulation of the tweet. The use of *populis** itself is characterised by the opposition to the previously posted content and its characterisation as something incoherent and reckless. It does not serve to attack or discredit a person but rather helps the speaker to position themselves in relation to the topic of discussion.

(11) *Pregunta: Si su hijo amenaza al policía canadiense qué cree que hubiese pasado ? Coherencia no* ***#populismo*** *por favor !!*

(“Question: If your son threatened the Canadian policeman, what do you think would have happened? Consistency, not **#populism**, please!”)

The analysis of the dataset containing tweets by lay users points to a clear tendency to exploit the dialogic potential of Twitter. In contrast to the tweets with *populis** by political actors where almost all tweets are original posts, the tweets by lay users with *populis** are mostly comments and replies. Lay users interact with mass media by commenting on media content and also by directly interacting with journalists to either support or reject the content on the topic of populism. They also interact with political actors as well as with other lay users. In the cases of the interaction with political actors, *populis** can be used to attack and to stigmatise (Example 12), but also in an argumentative act in which a categorisation through the use of *populis** serves to strengthen the argument (Example 13).

(12) *A mi me da verguenza tener a un diputado de tu calaña , mentiroso,* ***populista*** *, flojo, que no aporta nada , solo hablas estupideces , 0 solucion a nada y te pagamos ....que verguenza mas grande …*

("I am ashamed to have a deputy of your calibr, a liar, a **populist**, a weakling, who contributes nothing, only talks nonsense, offers no solutions to anything and we pay you... what a shame…")

(13) *Ximena los derechos humanos tienen que ver con la fuerza utilizada además es ejercida por el estado ..nada que ver con empates NO DESINFORMES NO SEAS* ***POPULISTA***

("Ximena, human rights have to do with the force used, in addition, it is exercised by the state... nothing to do with ties. DO NOT MISINFORM, DO NOT BE **POPULIST**")

In the cases of the interaction with other lay users there are tweets where *populis** appears in the title of news articles or in a book by experts on the topic of populism

(Example 14), or *populis** is used to refer to a fictional character. Moreover, lay users discuss with other Twitter users and reflect about populism and about the term itself (Example 15). Through posting such content, the speaker uses Twitter as a channel to share knowledge. Thus, the tweets by lay users analysed suggest that Twitter is seen as a space for interaction with others.

(14) *Sí, algo de esto es lo que da miedo. En el libro de Tymothy Snyder, On Tyranny, también vienen ejemplos de cómo se repite la historia de* ***populistas*** *engañando al pueblo, y de pueblos ignorando señales que apuntan a una dicadura.*

("Yes, some of this is scary. Tymothy Snyder's book On Tyranny also contains examples of how history repeats itself, with **populists** deceiving the people and people ignoring signs that point to a dictatorship.")

(15) ***Absolutamente sí****, pero en España se juntan otros ingredientes además del* ***populismo de derecha****: franquismo no limpiado, centralismo, autodeterminación de naciones, monarquía,...*

("**Absolutely yes**, but in Spain there are other ingredients besides **right-wing populism**: uncleansed Francoism, centralism, self-determination of nations, monarchy,..")

C Summary of the trends observed in the tweets by lay users

The way *populis** is discussed on the metalinguistic level suggests that lay users are involved in the discussion of populism on Twitter and are active commentators on the current-day sociopolitical issues. This is reflected in a direct reply to a politician or a media professional in order to clarify the meaning and the attribution of the populist label. It is also illustrated in the original tweets which do not serve to react but to share a viewpoint on the subject. Moreover, tweets grouped under this pattern suggest that

lay persons make use of the dialogic potential of Twitter and use the platform to exchange opinions and comment on the mass media and political content.

5.3 Pragmatic functions performed through the use of *populis** on Twitter

The observations drawn from the qualitative analysis of the two datasets containing 200 tweets by political actors and 200 tweets by laypeople have allowed me to identify three patterns of use of *populis** present in both datasets but articulated differently: *populis** as a referring device, as a categorising device, and as a meta-discursive device. By proposing this typology of the patterns of use of *populis**, the aim is not to associate each occurrence of *populis** in the datasets with a given type of use. To some extent, all these patterns can be observed in both datasets. My main aim is to highlight a variety of pragmatic functions that *populis** can have and to highlight the specificities of its use depending on the speaker and their communicative goals.

5.3.1 Patterns of use of *populis** in the tweets by political actors

A *Populis** as a referring device

In the dataset containing tweets by political actors all three patterns broadly serve as a tool for political campaigning as a self-legitimising and other-delegitimising device. In the tweets by political actors, *populis** as a referring device performs the pragmatic function of self-positioning in opposition to populism. Political actors refer to (i) populism as a phenomenon, ideology, form of politics (which can be done through a definite or indefinite noun, an adjective referring to the place on the political spectrum, or by specifying the attributive relationship, e.g. *populismo de Podemos*); (ii) to a type of (political) actor which can be specified or not (definite or indefinite person-referring nouns), or a noun phrase indicating the attributive relationship (e.g. *populistas de Podemos*); (iii) to a type of discourse; (iv) to a type of action. Such use appears in the tweets intended to provide information and share the party's agenda, call for action (e.g. to vote), and broadly serve to self-position as anti-populists.

This pattern is present in the tweets by political actors in a variety of forms. Namely, *populis** can refer to abstract entities, make reference to the phenomenon in the past or in current-day sociopolitical contexts; it can also refer to abstract entities through the use of the generic nouns referring to persons, members of political parties or persons adherent to specific ideologies, or through the use of the adjective to describe abstract realities (actions, discourse). Such use is present in the tweets by PSOE, PP, and Cs. The meaning of *populis** to a large extent, is not The meaning of *populis** is, to a large extent, not clarified; rather, *populis** is evoked as a spectre to self-legitimise.

Such use of *populis** exemplifies what in previous research is referred to as anti-populist discourse (Demata et al., 2020; Nikisianis et al., 2019). In addition, it shows how *populis** is used as a means of self-legitimisation and self-positioning as somebody who could stop this abstract negative phenomenon. PP and Cs tweet about their activities and use Twitter as a self-referential platform to inform about the activities involving the meetings with political figures with whom they align ideologically (Cs tweeting about their meetings with the centre-right and right-wing political actors). Both Cs and PP evoke the context of Spain, the European Union, and the Latin American countries when they refer to or categorise type of politics or type of actors or actions as populist. For both Cs and PP, evoking the danger of populism seems to be an important part of self-positioning.

Example (16) presents a tweet by the leader of Cs informing about the party's activities highlighted by the hashtag *#ActualidadCs*.

(16) *@Albert_Rivera "El próximo 8 de febrero se ha propuesto como fecha para las primarias en las que se elegirán a los candidatos de Cs para las elecciones europeas. En mayo nos jugamos todo frente* ***al populismo*** *y por eso salimos a ganar #ActualidadCs* (@CiudadanosCs, 16/01/2019)

("@Albert_Rivera "February 8th has been proposed as the date for the primaries in which Cs' candidates for the European elections will be chosen. In May, we're putting everything on the line against populism, and that's why we're going out to win. #CsNews")

The tweet contains a quote from a speech of the party's leader in which Rivera evokes the upcoming European elections. Rivera uses *populis** to highlight the importance of participating in the elections (and also calling on to vote for Cs), and to self-promote as a candidate. The self-positioning as an antipopulist party is highlighted through the phrase *nos jugamos todo frente al populismo* "everything is at stake in the face of populism". The reuse of this construction consisting of the opposition of the party's ideology with populism seems to have some strategic importance in the campaigning of Cs.

Another example of a tweet informing about the party's activities (PP) with the main purpose of self-promoting is (17).

(17) ***El populismo*** *de izquierda y derecha pone en riesgo la UE. Frente a sus soluciones simples a problemas complejos no podemos doblar la apuesta sino combatirlo con principios. El PPE* es ***vacuna ante el populismo*** *que asola la economía, bienestar y concordia civil en nuestras naciones.* (@pablocasado_, 21/11/2019)

("Left and right populism puts the EU at risk. Faced with its simple solutions to complex problems, we cannot double down but must fight it with principles. The EPP is **a vaccine against the populism** that devastates the economy, welfare and civil harmony in our nations.")

In this tweet, the leader of PP first warns about the danger of populism as an abstract phenomenon present on both sides of the political spectrum. This example also shows how *populis** contributes to the strategic positioning of PP in the political centre through targeting both left- and right-wing populism. The meaning of populism is specified in this tweet, that is, proposing simple solutions to complex problems. Then, Casado provides a clarification regarding the danger of these phenomena present in the current-day society (*que asola la economía, bienestar y concordia civil* "that plagues

the economy, well-being and civil harmony"), suggesting the need to stop it. Finally, he uses *populis** in order to self-promote and self-legitimise as the alternative and as a solution metaphorically presenting their political party as a vaccine against populism. This legitimisation by opposition to populism is achieved by presenting it as a dangerous phenomenon and as a disease, through the co-occurrence with the noun *vacuna* "vaccine" and the verb *asolar* "to plague". In addition, this tweet contains the indirect quote of the leader's speech at the World Economic Forum in which Casado presents the European People's Party (EPP) and talks about the context of the EU underlining that populism represents a threat for "our nations".

The first pattern of use of *populis** is present in the tweets by PSOE. Example (18) illustrates a tweet posted during the election campaign with the abstract use of *populis** by PSOE in tweets containing political hashtags that call upon citizens to vote for PSOE. It contains a direct quotation from PSOE's regional candidate, with two occurrences of *populis**. In the first, the meaning of populism is suggested by the metaphorical description in which populism is presented as something extremely negative. The tweet juxtaposes populism and democracy, and populism is described using a noun phrase with a superlative, *peor enemigo* "worst enemy". In the second occurrence, the use of the plural noun *populismos* suggests that there is more than one populism. It is not clear what ideology or political party is the target of the use of the term, but the negative connotation is clear since populisms are presented as something that must be eradicated.

(18) *@JLambanM: "La crisis ha hecho salir del baúl de los recuerdos* ***al populismo*** *que es el peor enemigo que tiene la democracia. Nosotros que creemos en la democracia, hemos de erradicar a* ***los populismos****". #votaPSOE #AhoraSi*

("@JLambanM: 'The crisis has brought populism, which is democracy's worst enemy, out of the trunk of memories. We who believe in democracy must **eradicate the populisms'**. #votePSOE #NowYes") (@PSOE, 5/11/2019)

This pattern used in the tweets by Cs is exemplified in (19) in which Inés Arrimadas (Cs) informs about her activity as a leader who replaced Rivera.

(19) *Mi carta a Sánchez para un acuerdo moderado y constitucionalista que suma 221 escaños en el Congreso. Para eso, debe rectificar y romper su acuerdo con* ***populistas*** *y nacionalistas.* (@CiudadanosCs, 2/12/2019)

("My letter to Sánchez calls for a moderate, constitutionalist agreement that would secure 221 seats in Congress. To achieve this, he must change course and break his agreement with **populists** and nationalists.")

This tweet points to the use of Twitter to self-refer and to inform about concrete actions that the political actors do. Arrimadas opts for a coordination construction with common nouns *populistas y nacionalistas* "populists and nationalists" and targets the agreement between PSOE and UP and with the regional political parties. She opposes this agreement and explicitly addresses Sánchez by telling him what he has to do through the use of the deontic verb *deber* "to have to", i.e. *debe rectificar y romper su acuerdo con populistas y nacionalistas* "[he] must rectify this and break his agreement with populists and nationalists".

B *Populis** as a categorising device

*Populis** as a categorising device is used to attribute populist characteristics to (i) a phenomenon, type of politics, ideology; (ii) a type of actor; (iii) a type of discourse; (iv) a type of action, policy, bill, proposition. Such use serves argumentative purposes. Some sort of specification is provided either through explicit naming, through association, through enumeration of several lexical items with a shared conceptual field, and through inference.

The contextual cues allow for understanding to whom *populis** is attached. Such use is illustrated in (20), where the leader of Cs targets the leader of PSOE and the government and (21), where PSOE targets the leader of PP. Thus, the findings suggest that *populis** is a "political *Kampfbegriff* (battle concept/term)" (Mudde &

Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 1) in the online political context. These examples also suggest that communicating the lexical meaning of *populis** is not the main purpose. It is rather the social meaning of *populis** which is significant, suggesting that *populis** in Spanish politics evokes specific negative contexts due to the conventionalised associations.

(20) *Frente a la 'vía Sánchez'* ***del populismo y del nacionalismo*** *está la 'vía Arrimadas' moderada y constitucionalista.* (@CiudadanosCs, 12/21/2019)

("In contrast to the 'Sánchez's path' of **populism and nationalism**, there is the moderate and constitutionalist 'Arrimadas's path'.")

(21) *@pedrosaurag en el debate de la asociación universitaria @Economia_EA: El populismo fiscal del #PP de #Casado es un riesgo para la economía y la cohesión social.El objetivo de los regalos fiscales del líder del #PP es eliminar el Estado de Bienestar.#28A* (@PSOE, 10/04/2019)

("@pedrosaurag in the debate of the university association @Economia_EA: The fiscal populism of the #PP under #Casado is a risk to the economy and social cohesion.The objective of the tax breaks by the leader of the #PP is to eliminate the Welfare State.#28A")

*Populis** as a tool for negative categorisation of the concrete actor is used in the constructions containing explicit naming (e.g. Podemos, Iglesias) or implicit contextual cues. Through the use of *populis**, the speaker justifies the opposition to the PSOE-UP agreement, as well as delegitimises Sánchez as the leader who is responsible for this agreement. Moreover, it also functions to self-legitimise and self-promote as a party or leader who is anti-populist and thus is legitimate and can be trusted.

Previous research suggests that 'populism' is rarely used as a self-descriptor by political actors and is in contrast often used in contemporary politics as a way to undermine the credibility of a rival politician (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). This observation is confirmed in my analysis, yet with some nuances. Indeed, *populis** is used to qualify those actors classified as populists. However, in the Spanish context, it is mainly UP that is mentioned as populists as a form of a widely accepted convenient

term. In my data, *populis** as a qualification is moreover used mainly to delegitimise Pedro Sánchez because of the coalition agreement with Unidas Podemos.

The examples presented in this chapter show how political actors use *populis** to do a variety of things to present *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* as an issue for concern, to warn about possible dangers or a threat, invite a confrontation with this phenomenon, as well as to self-legitimise and self-promote in the context of the upcoming elections. The examples presented in this chapter show that self-legitimisation and other delegitimisation can be achieved through different uses of *populis** which depend on the communicative goals of the speaker linked to different parties' ideologies. The leaders of the parties opposing the government (Rivera, Casado, Arrimadas) try to justify their role as a leader who can be trusted (as opposed to Sánchez). In the tweets on their parties' official accounts, the delegitimisation of the PSOE-UP agreement is one of the goals in the tweets of these three political figures. The left-wing agreement is presented as an extremely negative result because of populists (sometimes referring to Sánchez, but mostly to UP). Tweets covering this context express the urgent need to stop it (e.g. *frenar el populismo de Sánchez y sus socios* "to curb the populism of Sánchez and his allies"). Specifically Inés Arrimadas opts for the repetitive use of the coordination construction *los populistas y los nacionalistas* and *los populismos y los nacionalismos*.

C *Populis** as a meta-discursive device

Political actors mainly reuse *populis** which was previously used by a politician of their party, a political ally, or a media source to quote something which serves to reinforce their argument and also to circulate the information regarding the party's activities with the purpose of self-promotion (Example 22). Example (22) illustrates how a quote of a PP's political actor is used as a vague term. The tweet serves to self-reference and self-promote through informing the audience about the party's activity.

(22) *@ALevySoler: "No hay mejor herramienta para combatir y luchar contra el nacionalismo y el populismo que la libertad. Por eso, la libertad es el fundamento de nuestro proyecto político". #EspañaEnLibertad* (@ppopular, 19/01/2019)

("@ALevySoler: "There is no better tool to combat and fight against nationalism and populism than freedom. That is, why freedom is the foundation of our political project." #SpainInFreedom")

In the Example, the attention is given to a campaign event, *La Convención "España en Libertad"*, which was organised by the People's Party (PP) in January 2019 as a means of self-promoting before the upcoming elections and presenting the party's project focused on the unity of Spain and on freedom. In the quote presented in the tweet, the PP politician resorts to the use of the abstract nouns *el nacionalismo y el populismo* "nationalism and populism" negatively connoted by using verbs such as *combatir y luchar* "to fight" and contrasted with a vague term *libertad* "freedom". This opposition is presented as an important part of the party's project and serves to highlight the party's values and to self-position itself as political actors who will fight against populism.

In addition, political actors reuse *populis** which was previously used by the opponent to explicitly reject the attribution of the populist label in order to distance from this categorisation and provide a clarification regarding their ideology (Example 23) or to explicitly discredit the stance and the political actor who used *populis** against them (Example 24).

(23) *Ahora algunos nos quieren definir. No somos de izquierdas y nos alejamos de los populismos de izquierdas de derechas y de centro que son los peores.Nosotros aglutinamos a aquellos que creen en España en la libertad y en el individuo.#CentradosEnTuFuturo* (@TeoGarciaEgea, 13/05/2019)

("Now some people want to define us. We are not left-wing and we distance ourselves from left-wing, right-wing and centrist populisms, which are the worst. We bring together those who believe in Spain in freedom and in the individual. #FocusedOnYourFuture")

(24) *Resumen del cansino discurso de Rivera: vuestra banda fascista quiere destruir España junto con los separatistas y populistas que hacen homenaje a dictadores y terroristas que suben impuestos y todo forma parte de un plan para que yo no sea presidente y todos estáis en el ajo* (@agarzon, 22/07/2019)

("Summary of Rivera's tiresome speech: your fascist gang wants to destroy Spain together with the separatists and populists who pay homage to dictators and terrorists who raise taxes, and everything is part of a plan so that I am not president and you are all in on it")

Reuse of *populis** can also serve to reframe the discussion according to the interests of the author of the tweet (Example 25).

(25) *Sánchez va a #Estrasburgo a criticar al populismo y al nacionalismo mientras permite que el mayor populista de España le diseñe los #PGE2019 y da trato de jefe de Estado a quien quiere destruir nuestra nación y la Unión Europea. @CiudadanoVille* (@CiudadanosCs, 17/01/2019)

("Sánchez is going to Strasbourg to criticise populism and nationalism while allowing Spain's biggest populist to design the 2019 General State Budget and treating as head of state someone who wants to destroy our nation and the European Union. @CiudadanoVille")

In this tweet, Rivera justifies his opposition to the budget proposal (hashtag PGE2019) through reusing what Sánchez said about *populismo*. Rivera denounces the fact that Sánchez has criticised populism and nationalism in Strasbourg (referring to the EU Parliament) and then made an agreement with Unidas Podemos. Moreover, Rivera presents an argument against the government's budget proposal (PGE 2019) by the negative portrayal of Sánchez and his agreement with Iglesias. Furthermore, the delegitimisation of the government's budget proposal (PGE 2019) is intensified by

categorising Sánchez's ally through a construction containing the superlative *el mayor populista de España*. Moreover, Rivera justifies his opposition to the government and to the budget proposal because it is illegitimate (as done by a populist) and as dangerous, as this populist wants to destroy Spain and the EU.

Several elements are present in this tweet: two hashtags to locate where the event took place and to refer to the actions of the Spanish government. The use of the hashtag contributes to the circulation and the visibility of the tweet. Moreover, Rivera makes use of the mention feature of Twitter to refer to a speech of a Cs politician in the Congress of Deputies, which suggests that Rivera might indirectly quote this politician.

Furthermore, in Example 26, the reuse of *populis** serves to explicitly criticise the opponent (Cs) because of their reconciliation with the parties classified as right-wing populists. PSOE targets Cs by linking Rivera's quote containing *populis** which serves to support the claim and strengthen the delegitimising effect of this tweet.

(26) *@Albert_Rivera: "No a los populismos y la #ultraderecha". Pero el populismo y la #ultraderecha" de @vox_es tenía los escaños que @Cs_Andalucia y @JuanMarin_Cs necesitaban para sus sillones. La #coherencia se tiene o no se tiene, no se puede comprar* (deleted tweet)

("@Albert_Rivera: "No to populism and the #farright." But populism and #farright of @vox_es had the seats that @Cs_Andalucia and @JuanMarin_Cs needed for their positions. #Consistency is something you either have or you don't; it can't be bought.")

Examples (25) and (26) are representative examples of how intertextuality and interdiscursivity are exploited in online contexts. These tweets also show how *populis** serves to recontextualise the discussion of populism initiated by one political actor and to reframe the debate according to the interests of the politician who reuses *populis**. Thus, the reuse of *populis** allows for the change of the focus or the change of the

initial topic evoked by the author of the tweet. In addition, it serves to strengthen the delegitimising effect of the tweet targeted against the opponent.

Finally, such reuse of *populis** may be exploited to delegitimise the government and explicitly call for participation in the elections, as presented in the Example (27) containing the tweet by PP. The hashtag serves for highlighting populism as a keyword which indicates the main topic in this tweet. Another hashtag in the tweet appears at the end and refers to the upcoming elections.

(27) *Sánchez dijo #YoNoVoy a pactar con el* ***# populismo*** *y pactó. Por eso # YoVoy* (@ppopular, 7/02/2019)

("Sánchez said #IWillNotMakeAPact with #populism, and then he made an agreement. That's why #IwillGo")

5.3.2 Patterns of use of *populis** in the tweets by lay users

The three patterns determined are articulated differently in the dataset of tweets posted on the accounts of lay users.

A ***Populis** as a referring device

Through the discursive action of referring to an entity as *populis** lay users resort to what Schröter (2008) calls *metalinguistic comments*. The purpose of using *populis** is to reflect on the phenomenon of populism and on the use of the term itself. Thus, *populis** occurs as the main subject of discussion. This ties in with the fact that lay users' tweets are mostly comments and replies to other tweets (with or without *populis**) in which the speakers ask for or provide a clarification regarding the meaning or (mis)use of *populis**. Example (28) is a representative example of such use.

(28) *Dejen de usar* ***populismo*** *para hablar de* ***demagogia****.* ***Populismo*** *es un proceso político enormemente mas complejo que una retórica facilista.*

("Stop using **populism** to talk about **demagogy**. **Populism** is a political process that is, enormously more complex than simplistic rhetoric.")

The act of referring to *populis** in the tweets by lay users can also be achieved through the use of the person-referring nouns (Example 29) or by naming concrete actors (Example 30). The purpose of this use is also to contribute to the discussion on the topic of populism.

(29) ***Los populistas**, socialistas y estafadores son expertos en cantos de sirena y estos pueblos latinoamericanos caen redonditos…*

(“**Populists**, socialists and swindlers are experts in siren songs and these Latin American people fall for them…”)

(30) ***El populista**, Hitler lo fue, Franco lo fue, Castro lo fue, Lenin lo fue, Stalin lo fue, ... Estafadores. Nacionalistas. Caraduras. Fascistas.*

(“**The populist**, Hitler was, Franco was, Castro was, Lenin was, Stalin was, ... Swindlers. Nationalists. Shameless. Fascists.”)

Such metalinguistic comments (Schröter, 2008) about populism are present (almost) exclusively in the dataset containing the lay users’ tweets. In the dataset containing tweets by political actors, only one tweet can be seen as a clear example of this use. In Example (31), there is a quote of a political actor who analytically addresses the topic of populism and reflects on the meaning of the term.

(31) 😉¡No te pierdas la entrevista de @begonavillacis en @libertaddigital!🖋 \"**El populismo** más que una política en sí misma es una manera de hacer política. Creo que populismo es plantear recetas sencillas para problemas complejos\"📎Léela al completo aquí

(“😉 Don't miss the interview with @begonavillacis on @libertaddigital!🖋 \’Populism is more than a policy in itself, it is a way of doing politics. I think that

populism is about proposing simple recipes for complex problems\'📎Read it in full here")

To some extent, in this dataset the use of *populis** can indeed be accompanied by a clarification of what populism is (e.g. *El populismo de izquierda y derecha pone en riesgo la UE. Frente a sus soluciones simples a problemas complejos (...)* "Populism from the left and the right is putting the EU at risk. In the face of its simple solutions to complex problems (...)". However, I have not considered such cases as examples of metalinguistic comments, as the use of *populis** serves for other purposes, such as negatively categorising the opponent, and not as a reflection on the phenomenon or the meaning and attribution of the term.

The absence of this use in the tweets by political actors might suggest that the meaning of *populis** is shared and evident to the speakers with the shared common ground and assumed shared knowledge. The tweets analysed pertain only to political figures who hold a mandate in Spain, and it is more likely that their tweets, especially during the electoral year, are intended for the local audience, that is, other Spanish political actors and voters in Spain.

The dataset containing the tweets by lay users is characterised by the presence of *populis** in metalinguistic comments (14% of lay users' tweets). These metalinguistic uses of *populis** appear in the tweets replying to previous messages that may or may not contain *populis**. For example, a metalinguistic use of *populis** can appear in a reply to a politician's tweet (Example 32).

(32) *@InesArrimadas te escucho hablar de tripartito PSOE+INDEPENDENTISTAS+POPULISTAS. Mi humilde consejos es que llames* ***a las populistas*** *por lo que son, COMUNISTAS, la connotación es muchísimo más potente, y hablar en público de unión PSOE+COMUNISTA+INDEPENDENDISTAS impactara más*

("@InesArrimadas I hear you talking about a tripartite PSOE+INDEPENDENTISTS+POPULISTS. My humble advice is that you call the populists by what they are, COMMUNISTS, the connotation is much more

powerful, and speaking in public about a union PSOE+COMMUNIST+INDEPENDENTISTS will have more impact.")

In this tweet, the speaker directly addresses the Cs politician Inés Arrimadas to react to her use of *populis** targeting Podemos. This tweet contains advice, that is, a weak directive speech act in which the speaker expresses that the suggested action (to call Podemos communists instead of populists) would benefit the addressee.

There are several tweets in which *populis** appears in between quotation marks suggesting the metalinguistic reference to the definition of the term or the discussion of the use of this term. For instance, in Example (33) the speaker asks a question about the content of the previous tweet, which is deleted, and it is not possible to determine the broader online context, while in Example (34) the reference of the metalinguistic use of *populis** is understood through the nominalisation of concrete political actors (Carmena and the PP).

(33) *"Centro izquierda" es un eufemismo por* ***"populismo autoritario"****??*

("'Centre left' is a euphemism for **'authoritarian populism'**??")

(34) *Lo de 4 años más de* ***"populismo"*** *no se si va por Carmena o por el partido popular en la Comunidad, o por ambos. . .*

("I don't know if the 4 more years of **'populism'** is because of Carmena or the Popular Party in the Community, or both. . .")

B *Populis** as a categorising device

*Populis** as a categorising device in the tweets by lay users targets different actors. Namely, lay users attribute populist qualification to political actors, as in (35).

(35) ***Vox=el podemos de la derecha. Partidos populistas*** *que dicen lo q todos queremos escuchar pero q a la hora d la verdad ni la mitad d lo q dicen se puede hacer o es inviable. Política constructiva y visión real d futuro es lo q necesitamos, los extremos son malos, siempre. A votar!*

("**Vox = the Podemos of the right. Populist parties** that say what we all want to hear, but when push comes to shove, not even half of what they say can be done or is unfeasible. Constructive politics and a real vision of the future is what we need, extremes are always bad. Let's vote!")

In addition, lay users attribute populist qualification to non-political actors. For example, there are instances of the categorisation as populist attributed to the head of the Catholic Church (Pope Francis), as in (36).

(36) *A mí me luce **un Papa bastante populista**, tan ciego con los suyos como severo y crítico con los q no lo son. Pensé, al principio, que sería otra cosa…*

("To me, he seems to be **a rather populist Pope**, as blind to his own people as he is severe and critical of those who are not. I thought, at first, that it would be something else…")

Moreover, another target of the populist categorisation is the media. It is important to note that in my data negative categorising can be addressed to one individual journalist and their stance, but broadly targets the mass media as an entity, as in (37). It can also target explicitly specific types of journalism (sports journalism on television), as in (38, 39).

(37) *Lo que si da pena es la periodista, preguntando, cómo van a combatir un mensaje como el tuyo y los otros muchos youtubers que están triunfando en España. Aquí los únicos sectarios son los periodistas de todo el mapa de España. **El periodismo en España es populismo y FAKE news.***

("What is really sad is the journalist asking how they are going to fight a message like yours and the many other YouTubers who are succeeding in Spain. The only sectarians here are journalists from all over Spain. Journalism in Spain is **populism and FAKE news**.")

The categorisation of the media as *populis** is achieved through the association with the negative term fake news (37), and through the negatively charged adjectives which modify populism, as *bufandero* (derogatory term referring to a journalist who is biased

towards a sports player or team) and *barato* “cheap” in (38), and *rancio* “stale” and *obsoleto* “outdated” in (39).

(38) *@albertoowono me parece el mejor analista actual, un tio que conoce todos los equipos y destaca virtudes y defectos mucho más allá* ***del populismo bufandero barato que reina en televisión****.*

(“ @albertoowono I think he is the best analyst at the moment, a guy who knows all the teams and highlights their virtues and defects far beyond **the cheap populist fanfare** that reigns on television.”)

(39) *Cada vez me repugna más* ***el populismo del periodismo deportivo rancio****, obsoleto, servil he interesado, ese mundo del periodista deportivo que trata al seguidor como si fuese imbécil, que se otorga el derecho de opinar por ti y pensar por ti, Meriton debe mover el culo y ya está.*

(“I am increasingly disgusted by the **populism of stale, obsolete, servile and self-serving sports journalism**, that world of sports journalists who treat followers as if they were imbeciles, who grant themselves the right to give their opinion and think for you. Meriton should move his ass and that's it.”)

Furthermore, in the lay users’ tweets the discursive action of categorising performs some form of attack achieved through *populis**, as illustrated in Examples (40 and 41). In my data, 9.5% of the lay users’ tweets contain an explicit attack when they use *populis**. Many tweets annotated as those with *populis** as a stigma term with explicit impoliteness markers (negative vocatives and negative assertions) were in the meantime deleted from Twitter and it is therefore at this point often difficult or impossible to understand to whom the tweet is addressed. The lack of both online and offline context has a direct impact on the annotation process.

(40) *Preocúpate TÚ de hacer 40 hrs semanales en el Congreso luego has un Estudio al Respecto, ya q N0 creo q en Tu Vida has trabajado 40 hrs, Nl en el Mes...* ***Payasa Populista****.*

("YOU worry about doing 40 hours a week in Congress and then do a Study on the Matter, since I don't believe that you have ever worked 40 hours in your life, not even in the month... **Populist Clown**.")

(41) *Viejo RUPESTRE, mitómano y **populista**, estamos hasta la madre dé sus comentarios sin sentido.*

("Caveman, mythomaniac and **populist**, we are fed up with your senseless comments.")

In Example (40), the speaker expresses a disagreement with the content of the previous tweet in which a politician is quoted regarding having no interest in reducing working hours. The politician targeted by this categorisation is Chilean politician Karol Cariola of the Communist Party of Chile. The meaning of *populis** is not explicit at the communicative level; it is rather inferred. Thus, this points to the property of *populis** as a categorisation and stigmatising device due its "inference-richness" (Filardo-Llamas et al., 2025, p. 657). Categories are "inference-rich", that is, they contain "a great deal of the knowledge that members of a society have about the society" (Sacks, 1992, p. 40). Filardo-Llamas et al. (2025, p. 657) argue that "the inference-richness of the term *populist* also implies that it can be used without exactly attempting to categorise someone as member of a populist sociopolitical group but rather in a way that we would describe as property-resonant: it is then used to evoke characteristics associated with populist by some (...)". The stigmatisation effect of the categorisation as populist can be also achieved through providing a list of negatively charged lexical items which can suggest the association of populist characteristics.

Namely, in Example (41), *populis** co-occurs in a list of lexical items referring to personal traits as suggested by the terms pointing to the age (*viejo, rupestre*) and psychological condition (pathological lying). The association of populism with lies is also identified in the tweets by political actors and in the mass media discourse presented in the previous analytical chapter.

In Example (42) the negative association is apparent due to the lexical items referring to specific political leanings and ideologies co-occurring with *populis** (*fascista, franquista*) and with the trait of inauthenticity (*falso*). The latter association is also

pointed out in the previous research on the use of *populis** in discourse (Hamo et al., 2019, p. 7).

(42) *Otro golpe?? Estas enfermo,tu no tienes arreglo!! Tu lo que das es ASCO!! Eres mala gente! Mentiroso! Fascista, populista, falso y franquista Estáis acabados!*

("Another coup? You are sick, you cannot be fixed! You are DISGUSTING! You are a bad person! Liar! Fascist, **populist,** false and Francoist. You are finished!")

C *Populis** as a meta-discursive device

In the tweets by lay users, the reuse of *populis** serves mainly to explicitly support or reject the position expressed in the original use. Such tweets also contain metalinguistic comments. In the tweets following this pattern, *populis** is used to reject the previously formulated definition or to show disagreement with the attribution of *populis** to an actor. Such tweets contain a clarification of their point of view and the specification of how they understand *populis** or a denial of what was previously said and a criticism of the author of the tweet or mass media content.

In Example (43), the speaker criticises a journalist's use of the populist label and provides a justification for their point of view. This tweet implies that the speaker supports the political measure discussed in the article and rejects its categorisation as a populist measure.

(43) *El periodista **habla de medida populista** claro el nunca fue víctima de asalto y muerte de un ser querido en manos de un menor que hoy vive tranquilo y suelto en las calles*

("The journalist **speaks of a populist measure**, of course he was never the victim of assault and death of a loved one at the hands of a minor who today lives peacefully and freely on the streets")

Furthermore, the lay users' tweets in which *populis** is the subject of the conversation appear in a thread of tweets in which the users of Twitter engage in a conversation

and a discussion about populism. Such conversation may result in the alignment with the proposed definition and in the self-attribution of the populist label (Example 44). In this tweet, the speaker supports the previous use of *populis** and self-categorises as populist, yet with some nuances followed by a clarification.

(44) *Ok. Pues entonces yo soy **medio populista**. Sí creo que la clase política española, con excepciones, es muy corrupta y sin ideales -baila al son de las encuestas-. No estoy de acuerdo con eso del "pueblo bueno".. ahí hay de todo: buenos y algunos "más cabroncitos que bonitos". ;).*

("Ok. Well then **I am a bit of a populist**. I do believe that the Spanish political class, with some exceptions, is very corrupt and without ideals - it dances to the tune of the polls. I don't agree with the "good people" thing... there are all kinds of people there: good ones and some "more bastards than pretty ones". ;).")

5.4 Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of the two datasets containing 200 tweets by political actors and 200 tweets by lay users has allowed me to identify three patterns of use of *populis** present in both datasets but articulated differently. Namely, *populis** as a referring device, *populis** as a categorising device, and the meta-discursive device.

Pattern 1: *populis as a referring device**

Two different tendencies are highlighted in the datasets analysed:

In the tweets by political actors there is a tendency to refer to an entity through *populis** as a fixed epithet or a shorthand term. Such use of *populis** might be deemed as a "meaningless buzzword" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) and perceived as empty of meaning. However, such use is not at all functionless, as it contributes to structure the political spectrum and to self-positioning in relation to what is referred to as *populis**. Such use also points to the semantic density of *populis** and highlights one of the main features of sociopolitical keywords, that is, their polysemy.

This pattern is present in the tweets by political actors in a variety of forms. Namely, *populis** can refer to abstract entities, make reference to the phenomenon in the past or in current-day sociopolitical contexts; it can also refer to abstract entities through

the use of the generic nouns referring to persons, members of political parties or persons adherent to specific ideologies, or through the use of the adjective to describe abstract realities (actions, discourse).

By making use of its ambiguity and conceptual vagueness, it can serve as a tool for strategic positioning on the political landscape as an anti-populist actor. By emphasising its conceptual vagueness, political actors can use *populis** with the argumentative purposes to show their disagreement with a proposition. Moreover, they can also self-promote and self-position as the solution for the problems related to populism as the one who points to the threat, who discusses the current-day problems and tries to prevent a perceived disaster.

In the tweets by lay users there is a tendency to refer to an entity through *populis** as the main subject of discussion containing an explicit expression of personal viewpoint or attitude. Lay users create a space for discussion shared with other users of Twitter where *populis** plays "a role in some kind of social debate" (Durant, 2008, p. 135). Thus, the "semantic struggle" (Kranert, 2020) over the meaning of *populis** is observed in the tweets by lay users, while being absent in the tweets by politicians.

The way *populis** is discussed on the metalinguistic level suggests that lay users are involved in the discussion of populism on Twitter and are active commentators of the current-day sociopolitical issues. It can be reflected through a direct reply to a politician or a media professional in order to clarify the meaning and the attribution of the populist label. It is also illustrated in the original tweets which do not serve to react but to share a viewpoint on the subject. Moreover, tweets grouped under this pattern suggest that lay persons make use of the dialogic potential of Twitter and use the platform to exchange opinions and comment on the mass media and political content.

Furthermore, this metalinguistic use of *populis** points to the differences in the use of *populis** by two categories of speakers. The absence of the metalinguistic comments in the dataset with the tweets by political actors suggests that the discussion on this matter is not held on Twitter, which can be because there is some consensus on what populism is and who can be labelled as populists in the context of Spanish politics.

In contrast, the dataset of the lay users' tweets points to the existing controversy regarding the meaning and the use of *populism*. Schröter (2008, p. 51) argues that

“the most crucial characteristic of key words is that they refer to issues that are controversially debated in the public arena”. Schröter (2008, p. 51) furthermore adds that "[metalinguistic] comments are indicators for the existence and for the public awareness of semantic conflict”. Thus, my findings point to the existence of the “semantic conflict” (Schröter, 2008) or “semantic struggle” (Kranert, 2020) regarding what populism means and how it should be used only among lay users. In addition, it suggests that populism is the subject of discussion and a key sociopolitical issue for non-professional users of Twitter. In contrast, for political actors, populism is a rather self-evident concept which can be used more to name and discredit an adversary but not to analyse the issue.

Pattern 2: *populis as a categorising device**

Two main tendencies are highlighted in the datasets analysed:

In the tweets by political actors there is a tendency to categorise an entity as *populis** through the negative evaluation and express misalignment with it. In this pattern, *populis** is primarily used as a stigma term (Kranert, 2020) and as a “face-threatening device” (Hamo et al., 2019, p. 3). The specificity of the political use is that *populis** is employed as a tool for political campaigning, as by self-positioning as anti-populists political actors self-legitimise and persuade their audience to support them as well as delegitimise their opponents, who are not necessarily those classified as populists. Self-positioning as anti-populists seems to be a significant political strategy for most Spanish political actors in 2019. Such use targets political actors in a more implicit way (e.g. categorising political actors through the plural form of person-referring nouns instead of directly accusing).

In the tweets by lay users there is a tendency to categorise an entity as *populis** through a more explicit attack on the addressee who can be present in the broader online context or absent (non-present third-party which can be evoked in the conversation). In this pattern, *populis** itself is used as an insult in personalised negative vocatives, it also appears in sarcastic interrogatives which question the content of previous tweets; formal features such as the use of the capital letters is also a recurrent feature. Thus, *populis** performs such pragmatic functions as explicit criticism and explicit attack.

Pattern 3: *populis as a meta-discursive device**

The qualitative analysis has also determined that *populis** might appear in the reported speech. Such reuse can contain a reference or a categorisation as *populis** but it serves different purposes than the original use and the pragmatic effect of such use stands out from other patterns. The reuse of *populis** serves different purposes in the tweets by political actors and laypeople.

Political actors mainly reuse *populis** which was previously used by a politician of their party, a political ally, or a media source to quote something which serves to reinforce their argument and also to circulate the information regarding the party's activities with the purpose of self-promotion. Moreover, political actors reuse the negative categorisation as *populis** which was previously used by the opponent to explicitly reject the attribution of the populist label in order to distance themselves from this categorisation. Such use can be accompanied by a clarification regarding their leanings and ideologies. The explicit disagreement with such negative categorisation is used to discredit both the stance and the political actor who used *populis** against them.

In the tweets by lay users, the reuse of *populis** serves mainly to explicitly support or reject the position expressed in the original use. Such tweets also contain metalinguistic comments. In the tweets following this pattern, *populis** is used to reject the previously formulated definition or to show disagreement with the attribution of *populis** to an actor. Such tweets contain a clarification of their point of view and the specification of how they understand *populis** or a denial of what was previously said and a criticism to the author of the tweet or mass media content.

Thus, the qualitative analysis of the uses of *populis** by different types of Twitter users (political actors and lay users) suggests that *populis** is a flexible keyword and points to the multiplicity of its functions.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the findings

The main goal of this thesis was to understand what *populis** means and what it allows speakers to do in discourse. While there is substantial research on populism and on populist discourse, research on discourses about populism is still developing. Previous research has mainly highlighted the variety of referents denoted by *populis** but has not provided a detailed analysis focusing on the meanings, connotations, and pragmatic functions of *populis** from a comparative perspective. As such, previous research has analysed *populis** mainly from one angle, i.e. as a catch-all term used randomly and with predominantly delegitimising purposes. Moreover, the literature review (Chapter 2) has determined several gaps. The majority of previous studies have analysed the use of *populis** in English and in the context of English-speaking countries, and have focused mainly on the established newspaper sources, and thus on how journalists use *populis**. Studies covering other languages, other sociopolitical contexts, other types of media, and other types of actors are scarce, particularly from a comparative perspective. Finally, only a few studies have analysed the use of *populis** on the pragmatic level, that is, the functions of *populis** in discourse.

In order to fill these gaps, this thesis has presented a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the meanings and functions of *populis** in mass media and Twitter discourse. Relying on a framework which draws on the combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, I have argued for a comprehensive approach to analysing the use of *populis** in discourse. This approach was implemented in two complementary case studies: a cross-linguistic comparison of the use of *populis** in mass media discourse in Belgium, France, and Spain (Chapter 4), and a pragmatic analysis of the functions with which *populis** is used by political actors and lay users on Twitter (Chapter 5).

By grounding this research in the theoretical framework of sociopolitical keywords, I have focused on three main aspects of the use of *populis** in discourse: (i) its collocational meanings, (ii) its pragmatic functions, and (iii) its context-specificness. Together, the two case studies have answered the overarching research question of this thesis:

What are the meanings and functions of *populis** in mass media and social media discourses and how do they compare and contrast across different public spheres and types of actors?

The first case study has answered the two specific research questions regarding the use of *populis** in mass media discourse. Regarding the frequency and distribution of the word forms of *populis** (RQ 1a), the analysis has shown that the distribution of the abstract nouns, the person-referring nouns, and the adjectives differs across types of media in the four public spheres studied. Namely, the abstract nouns *populism(s)* are used to refer to an abstract phenomenon mainly presented as dangerous for democracy while the person-referring nouns are used to emphasise the persons behind this label. These are mostly plural nouns referring to ideologies which pertain to the same semantic field (e.g. 'populists, nationalists, separatists'). When *populis** is used as an adjective, it qualifies the noun and thus has a different effect than the use of *populis** targeting an individual, a collective or a group. Thus, this distinction of the grammatical form has highlighted the nuances in the meaning. For instance, the person-referring noun *populist* can be used to underline the role of the persons as responsible for the negative consequences of populism, whereas the use of the abstract noun or of a qualifying adjective can serve for generalisation a strategic use to include several realities and thus to target a broader audience.

Addressing RQ 1b, the findings suggest that the semantic prosody of *populis** is negative in all corpora, and the referents are overall similar, mainly concerning actors who are commonly presented as populist (e.g. Trump and Salvini). In this regard, the findings confirm observations made in other languages and sociopolitical contexts (Kranert, 2020). However, this analysis has also shown a clear preference for specific actors and ideologies, and a set of specific and consistent semantic elements which are attached to *populis**. This was done by grouping the collocates into semantic categories and by further comparing the concordance lines containing the collocates of *populis**, a method which has not yet been employed to analyse *populis**. This method has made it possible to determine the following trends. Namely, in the cases when *populis** refers to the right wing, it is consistently associated with the radical right-wing ideologies and attitudes such as nationalism, extremism, racism, anti-immigration and Euroscepticism. In the cases where *populis** refers to the left wing, it

is consistently associated with communism, socialism, and extremism. A prominent difference across the four public spheres is that the French, French-speaking, and Dutch-speaking Belgian media focus predominantly on populism and populists in other, mainly European countries, despite the existence of political actors classified as populists in their own public spheres. In contrast, the Spanish media in addition to the international context also discuss specific types of populism and specific left-wing populists in the national Spanish context.

The second case study has answered the research question regarding the pragmatic functions of *populis** in the social media discourse of political actors and lay users (RQ 2). In Chapter 5, I have presented a qualitative analysis of the use of *populis** by two categories of actors and in a different discursive context (Twitter). The existing research on the way laypeople use *populis** is scarce. Thus, this analysis has added new findings regarding this aspect of the use of *populis**. Moreover, the comparison of its use by different actors has highlighted the differences at the pragmatic level of analysis. Indeed, previous research has pointed out the role of *populis** as primarily a delegitimisation tool. This thesis has confirmed this finding. However, it has nuanced our understanding of *populis** as a delegitimising tool as well as provided new findings related to its pragmatic functions in discourse.

Specifically, the analysis presented in Chapter 5 has shown how the attention to the pragmatic function of *populis** helps to determine that the term is not used in a random way, but rather depends on the interactional context, and variables such as the speaker and the target of its use. As such, a comparative analysis has determined three types of uses of *populis**: as (i) a referring device, (ii) a categorising device, and (iii) as a metalinguistic device. The latter includes a variety of pragmatic functions which depend on the speakers' broad (political) and communicative strategies, for example to reproduce a previous use of *populis** in order to strengthen an argument and thus to self-legitimise or to deny the categorisation as *populis**, or to question the meaning of *populis** in a previous use and initiate a discussion about its perceived correct meaning and perceived correct attribution to a specific leaning, party or actor.

The qualitative analysis has pinpointed the pragmatic differences of how these three types of use of *populis** are articulated across different types of actors. When used as a categorising device, it is used mainly to discredit the target of its use. However, the

difference between the way this categorisation is achieved by politicians and by lay users of Twitter is apparent when the occurrence of *populis** is qualitatively analysed within its context. Thus, in the tweets of lay users the negative categorisation through the use of *populis** is achieved by explicit attack, whereas in the tweets of politicians, the negative categorisation and the deligitimisation of the target of the use of *populis** is done in a more implicit way, for example by leaving the referent unspecified. Moreover, a comparison of the use by different types of actors suggests that the meaning of *populis** is presented as self-evident in the tweets by political actors, whereas more metalinguistic comments can be found in the tweets by lay users.

Taken together, the findings of the two case studies answer the overarching research question of this thesis as follows. *Populis** is a flexible and multifunctional discursive device used with multiple meanings and for different purposes. Its use is not random: the meanings activated and the functions performed depend on the grammatical form, the co-occurring lexical items, the type of media, the sociopolitical context, the speaker, and the target of its use. This thesis has thus nuanced the account of *populis** found in previous research. In the following section, I consider what may explain the patterns observed, what their implications are for the theoretical discussion of sociopolitical keywords, and where the design of this study constrains the conclusions that can be drawn.

6.2 Critical reflection

6.2.1 Reflections on patterns of use of *populis**

Different languages and sociopolitical contexts. The most prominent cross-contextual difference identified in Chapter 4 is that the French and Belgian media externalise populism, locating it in other countries, while the Spanish media also domesticate it, discussing national actors as populists. This result calls for an explanation which the collocational findings alone do not provide. The mere presence of political actors classified as populist cannot account for this difference: France had such parties on both sides of the political spectrum in 2019 (*Rassemblement national* and *La France Insoumise*), as did Flanders (*Vlaams Belang*, alongside the left-wing *PTB/PVDA* active nationwide), and while the French-speaking Belgian public sphere had no radical right-wing populist party of real political significance, it did have the left-

wing *PTB*. Yet the media of these three public spheres discussed populism predominantly as a European and worldwide phenomenon. What distinguishes the Spanish context in 2019 is that several elections were held throughout the year and that a party often classified as left-wing populist (UP) was a realistic candidate for participation in the national government. In the Spanish media, the populist label was then attached to a potential coalition partner (UP), and it functioned not only as a descriptive resource for covering foreign politics but as a discursive tool in domestic political competition. It circulated across the media outlets as such, most visibly in the reported speech of opposition politicians (Cs, PP) accusing Pedro Sánchez of forming a coalition with 'populists'.

Moreover, the Catalan crisis provided an additional national anchor, apparent in the association of *populis** with context-specific terms such as *separatismo* 'separatism' and *independentismo* 'independentism'. These patterns might be interpreted as the difference in the media coverage depends on the specific sociopolitical contexts.

A second reflection concerns the conflation of the notions of 'populism' and 'nationalism'. The recurrence of *nationalis** among the strongest collocates in all three languages may seem to confirm this conflation in public discourse, which is criticised in the academic literature (De Cleen et al., 2018). However, the concordance analysis has shown that the two terms are not used as synonyms: their co-occurrence intensifies the negative prosody and adds specific meaning elements to each. This suggests that what the academic critique describes as conceptual conflation functions, at the level of discourse, as a productive association – one which speakers exploit precisely because the two terms are not identical.

Different actors. Chapter 5 found that metalinguistic comments about the meaning of *populis** are characteristic of the tweets by lay users and almost absent from the tweets by political actors. Indeed, lay users of Twitter contest the meaning of *populis**: they propose definitions, reject others' definitions, and comment on the use of the term (the "semantic struggle" in Kranert's (2020) words, or the metalinguistic comments which Schröter (2008) treats as indicators of semantic conflict). Political actors rarely contest the meaning, but they do contest the attribution: the meta-discursive pattern identified in Chapter 5 includes explicit denials of the populist categorisation, accompanied by clarifications of the speaker's own position. A possible explanation for this pattern is

the affordances of Twitter and the specific timeframe and sociopolitical situation. First, the tweets by political actors were collected from official accounts during an electoral year. The use of *populis** as a tool for campaigning rather than as a main object of discussion is expected. Second, tweets addressed to a national electorate during a campaign presuppose a shared background knowledge. Third, official party accounts are typically managed by communication professionals, so the tweets reflect a party's communicative strategy rather than that of an individual speaker. Journalists, finally, mostly use the term as an uncontested resource, although the established media outlets contain discussions of its meaning in analytical articles and expert interviews.

Different data sources. The comparison of types of media has shown that the discussion of populism as a phenomenon and a threat to democracy is mainly situated in the established media, which target an elite audience, whereas the media types targeting broader audiences mainly use *populis** to label actors already known as populists. The comparison of mass media and Twitter points in the same direction: the use of *populis** in the media is relatively unified, whereas on Twitter it is heterogeneous, ranging from campaign slogans to insults to metalinguistic debate. It must be acknowledged, however, that the comparison across data sources and, by extension, across the three types of actors is not systematic. Namely, the use of *populis** by journalists was studied in four public spheres through the analysis of large corpora, while its use by political actors and lay users of Twitter was analysed in one language through the manual qualitative analysis of a small sample of data. The Spanish media subcorpus provides a same-country, same-language bridge between the two case studies. Indeed, the semantic elements attached to *populis** in the Spanish media and in the Spanish politicians' tweets converge to a large extent, pointing to a shared dominant discourse about populism in Spain. This bridge, it should be noted, connects the media data to the political actors only: the lay users' sample extends beyond Spain to the Spanish-speaking Twitter space at large (see Section 6.2.3). Nevertheless, the differences observed between actors cannot be fully separated from the differences in platform, country, and method, and I return to this limitation in Section 6.2.3.

6.2.2 Reflections on *populis** as a sociopolitical keyword

Beyond the findings regarding *populis** itself, this thesis contributes to the theoretical discussion of sociopolitical keywords. The findings allow for a more precise characterisation of the semantic and pragmatic features of *populis** than such labels commonly attached to it as vague, meaningless, and empty. Jeffries and Walker (2018, p. 196–197) describe the keywords they analyse as relatively "empty of meaning", with a "paradoxical status as assumed and simultaneously empty", corresponding to "politically significant (although sometimes semantically empty) lexis" (Jeffries & Walker, 2018, p. 17). Regarding *populis** specifically, Schwörer's (2021) analysis of politicians' tweets in several European countries suggested that the terms were used randomly and "with inconsistent meanings" (p. 9), and the perception of populism as a "meaningless buzzword" (Schwörer, 2021, p. 4) is widespread in public discourse. The findings of the two case studies point in a slightly different direction. *Populis** is not empty but overloaded: it functions as a semantic node which accumulates meaning through its frequent association with other words, ideologies, actors, and values. This meaning concentration can produce an impression of vagueness, since the semantic chain associated with the term is so extensive that it loses specification (Hambye et al., 2025). But the accumulation is not random: as the collocational profiles show, the associations are consistent, at least in the four public spheres analysed. Moreover, the apparent inconsistency becomes nuanced once the pragmatic function and the target of each use are taken into account.

Furthermore, the findings can also be related to the role of *populis** in anti-populist discourse (Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Demata et al., 2020). The data analysed in the two case studies suggest that *populis** serves as a boundary which marks which political attitudes and positionings are legitimate and which are not, even when it is used as a fixed descriptor of widely known populists. Specifically, the established media, targeting elite audiences, frame populism as a threat to democracy; the recurrent "rise of populism" construction circulates across all types of media with almost no analytical discourse on the reasons for this rise; and the quoting practices of the media circulate politicians' strategic uses of the label.

This last point invites a reflexive turn towards academic discourse, including this thesis. The analysis presented here has examined how journalists, politicians, and lay users attribute the populist label, yet the research design itself relied on such attributions: the selection of contexts and the interpretation of referents drew on expert classifications of parties as populist (Rooduijn et al., 2024), and the analysis repeatedly describes actors as "commonly presented as populist". Research on discourses about populism cannot stand entirely outside the labelling practice it studies, and scholars have warned that academic discourse participates in the circulation and hype of the term (De Cleen et al., 2018; Brown & Mondon, 2021). Making the sources of classifications explicit and treating the label as an object of analysis rather than as an analytical category, as this thesis has aimed to do, mitigates this but does not remove it. A study of sociopolitical keywords should acknowledge that academic usage is one of the sites where the keyword's meaning is produced, and that the present study is part of its object.

6.2.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

The most important structural limitation of this thesis concerns the comparability of the two case studies. The two case studies are complementary, but they do not provide a systematic comparison of the use of *populis** across public spheres and across different actors. The comparison of journalists, political actors, and lay users is crossed with differences in country, language, platform, method, and sample size: journalists were analysed in four public spheres through the collocational analysis of large corpora, political actors and lay users in one language and on one platform through the manual annotation of 400 tweets. Thus, the claims presented and discussed above should be read as suggestive, and a research design adopting a systematic comparative and contrastive approach would be needed.

A second limitation is that the study is a synchronic snapshot of one year. The choice of 2019 remains well motivated, but the analysis of the meanings and functions of *populis** would benefit from a diachronic analysis (e.g. Kranert, 2020) in order to observe whether the identified patterns persist in a changed political landscape. For example, whether the tendencies observed in Spain hold after the decline of UP.

Third, the variable of "lay users" has an impact on the interpretation of the findings. The sample of lay users was drawn from the Spanish-speaking Twitter space, and it cannot be ruled out that it includes politically engaged professionals, activists, or automated accounts. Moreover, the two datasets are not matched geographically: the political actors all hold a mandate in Spain, whereas the lay users' sample spans the Spanish-speaking Twitter space, including Latin American users and topics (one of the examples analysed in Chapter 5 targets a Chilean politician). The politician/lay-user comparison therefore also crosses the national context, which qualifies two claims made above: the "shared dominant discourse about populism in Spain" is established for the media and the political actors, while the lay half of the Twitter data is only partly Spanish. Moreover, lay users of Twitter (in 2019) are a politically engaged segment of the public, and, as stated in Chapter 3, the sample does not allow for generalising conclusions about the use of *populis** on Spanish-speaking Twitter. The finding that populism remains a controversial issue open to semantic struggle should therefore not be generalised.

Fourth, regarding the first case study, it has to be noted that the subcorpora are of unequal size. For example, in the French-speaking Belgian media corpus, the frequency of *populis** in the established media is significantly higher than in the other three media sources. I made the choice to determine the collocates of *populis** in each subcorpus even in those with a very low frequency, in order to maintain the comparability across public spheres. However, in some subcorpora there are fewer than five content words in the lists of collocates, which limits the analysis. Nevertheless, I decided to present the five strongest collocates in each subcorpus since this made it possible to determine the collocate that is consistent across the types of media, namely ‘rise’. In addition, the low frequency of *populis** in particular media sources is a finding in itself, as it points to the link between the use of (specific forms of) *populis** and the type of media.

Fifth, the qualitative annotation of the Twitter data involves interpretative parameters, such as "conceptual field", "object", and “target”, and the interpretation of the term's meanings and functions can be influenced by the co-occurring lexical items and by extralinguistic knowledge.

These risks were addressed through the iterative development of the annotation categories, through the coding of data samples by several researchers, and through transparent documentation of the categorisation process (Chapter 3), but they cannot be eliminated. In addition, numerous tweets in the lay users' sample have in the meantime been deleted or have become uninterpretable because the tweet they reply to has been deleted; this instability of online data resulted in the incomplete annotation of some data. Finally, the detailed qualitative analysis was necessarily carried out on a small sample and in one language, which limits the transferability of the specific findings, though not of the method, to other sociopolitical keywords and other languages.

These limitations point to avenues for future research. A diachronic analysis of *populis** could provide an answer to whether *populis** is a sociopolitical keyword in a particular period of time (Kranert, 2020) or whether it can also be understood as a key concept in history (Koselleck, 2004; Spira, 2015). Moreover, through a diachronic analysis of the use of *populis**, one can observe how sociopolitical keywords develop new meanings and what are the functions behind the semantic change.

An analysis of politicians' discourse in other genres (e.g. parliamentary debate, interviews) would test the explanation for the absence of metalinguistic comments in campaign tweets. The cross-linguistic analysis can be extended to social media, including platforms other than Twitter, and a case study on Spain's regional parliaments and co-official languages would allow for a cross-linguistic comparison of several sociopolitical keywords, including *populism* and *nationalism*, within one country.

Furthermore, the metaphors of *populis** identified in Chapter 4 could be analysed in more detail through a mixed-method approach, and the pragmatic specificities of the use of *populis** could be further explored through the analysis of argumentation strategies. Overall, the methodology developed in this thesis, which considers the co-textual, contextual, and interactional dimensions of use, comparatively and across multiple datasets, can be adopted in studies of other sociopolitical keywords, including in less-studied languages.

6.2.4 Contributions

This thesis makes empirical, methodological, and practical contributions. Empirically, it has provided a detailed comparative account of the meanings and functions of *populis** covering three languages, four public spheres, and four types of mass media, as well as the Twitter discourse of political actors and lay users. The latter category of speakers has received very little attention in previous research on the use of *populis**. Several findings converge with recent work on adjacent data: the strategy of delegitimising Pedro Sánchez through the populist label attached to his potential ally has also been identified in Spanish parliamentary discourse (Aulit & De Cock, 2025; Shchinova, 2024), which strengthens the finding. Methodologically, the combination of the cross-linguistic analyses of collocation and concordance lines, and the integration of manual annotation of data offers a framework which can be transferred to the study of other sociopolitical keywords.

Implications for lexicographic work. The findings of this thesis are relevant for the lexicographic treatment of ‘populism’ and ‘populist’. Dictionaries are not blind to the evaluative dimension of these terms: usage labels such as "often derogatory" record part of the evaluative load. What corpus analysis adds to any such label is threefold. First, it shows that the negative evaluation is not an occasional usage but the dominant pattern across languages, media types, and actors. Second, it identifies the patterns of use, for example the ideologically sorted sets of lexical items. Third, it documents the semantic differences between the grammatical forms (e.g. the abstract noun for the phenomenon-as-threat, the person-referring noun for actors, the adjective for qualified entities) which suggests that the grammatical forms deserve a differentiated treatment within an entry. Corpus-evidenced usage notes would give dictionary users a more accurate picture of what speakers communicate when using these terms than the denotational meaning alone.

Implications for journalistic practice. The findings also have implications for media professionals who, as Chapter 4 has shown, participate in the discourse about populism in two ways: through their own framing, since it is above all the established media that present populism as a threat to democracy, and through their quoting practices, since reproducing politicians' strategic uses of the populist label circulates and amplifies its delegitimising force. Two concrete points follow. First, the recurrent

pattern "rise of populism" appears in the data as a fixed formula, almost never accompanied by analytical discourse on the reasons for this rise; naming the actors, demands, and conditions behind a "rise" would replace a *cliché* with information. Second, the analysis suggests a practical distinction between reporting an existing classification and producing a new one: writing that a party is "described as populist by its opponents" or "classified as populist by political scientists" attributes the label to its source, whereas adopting "populist" in the journalist's own voice performs the categorisation and imports its evaluative and associative loads. The findings of this thesis, by making that load explicit, provide an empirical basis for such editorial choices.

6.3 Concluding remarks

The combination of methods and the comparison of languages, sociopolitical contexts, types of media, and types of actors have shown that *populis** is not a randomly used buzzword but a powerful sociopolitical keyword: negatively connoted yet meaningful, seemingly vague yet overloaded with patterned meaning, apparently descriptive yet centrally involved in marking the boundaries of political legitimacy. The rapid spread of *populis** in contemporary public discourse is thus not a sign of its emptiness, but of its usefulness for the speakers who deploy it. The approach developed in this thesis, combining corpus-assisted discourse analysis across multiple datasets, can serve as a starting point for further work on other sociopolitical keywords, in other discursive contexts, and in other languages, including less-studied ones.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 1A. Collocates of *populismo* in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalismo	99	486	10,87363
derechas	65	396	10,34377
izquierdas	46	401	9,84057
auge	42	263	9,83581
izquierda	33	1200	8,78996
extrema	27	924	8,6734
nacionalista	18	234	8,64147
contra	40	2243	8,55457
ascenso	15	142	8,47122
puro	14	53	8,4675
derecha	31	1863	8,35335
Frente	14	188	8,32455
disfrazarse	12	17	8,28575
demagogia	12	69	8,22741
tendencia	12	155	8,13581
nacional	16	651	8,11278
catalán	13	297	8,11173
combate	11	70	8,10078
combatir	11	125	8,04158
rancio	10	25	8,01359
político	21	1420	8,01348
Vox	27	2580	7,8544
caído	9	72	7,80908
comunismo	9	80	7,80033
concepto	9	132	7,74471
bueno	9	149	7,72698
otro	14	982	7,68777
antídoto	8	31	7,68485
cultivo	8	42	7,67245
Venezuela	9	211	7,66411
frente	15	1188	7,65956
independentismo	9	231	7,6444
ola	8	81	7,62931
Trump	12	801	7,58778

mejor	13	974	7,58605
separatismo	8	123	7,58426
pobreza	8	138	7,5685
nacionalismos	8	140	7,56641
alternativa	9	314	7,56537
consecuencia	8	154	7,55188
Podemos	16	1591	7,53138
desfiles	7	7	7,51964
vanidad	7	11	7,51503
ortodoxia	7	19	7,50586
permitirse	7	20	7,50472
ido	8	208	7,49717
reaccionario	7	28	7,49561
proteccionismo	7	39	7,48317
otra	11	803	7,46084
libertad	9	433	7,45912
define	7	75	7,44322
intenta	7	86	7,43123
práctica	7	108	7,40754
fiscal	8	349	7,36338
crítica	7	153	7,36027
fundamental	7	172	7,34077
circundante	6	6	7,2984
agravando	6	8	7,2961
veneno	6	13	7,29034
improvisación	6	16	7,2869
huida	6	30	7,27095
actúa	6	37	7,26303
caldo	6	38	7,26191
puede	15	1966	7,25898
crecimiento	8	471	7,25685
xenofobia	6	53	7,24511
todo	17	2438	7,24158
muro	6	93	7,20126
Madrid	13	1659	7,19761
lucha	7	322	7,19541
liberalismo	6	110	7,18302
económica	8	563	7,18142
creciente	6	118	7,17451
Chile	6	123	7,16922
peor	7	351	7,16892

preocupa	6	135	7,1566
fascismo	6	135	7,1566
enemigo	6	143	7,14825
documento	6	146	7,14513
frenar	6	149	7,14202
riesgos	6	151	7,13995
avance	6	171	7,1194
Errejón	6	187	7,10316
Europa	16	2578	7,10027
económico	7	475	7,06084
debe	8	757	7,03422
hipocresía	5	20	7,01929
totalitario	5	20	7,01929
nuevo	10	1302	7,00848
antieuropeo	5	30	7,00791
freno	5	44	6,99213
problemas	7	564	6,98797
parar	5	48	6,98765
electoral	9	1087	6,98381
utiliza	5	52	6,98319
Colau	7	630	6,93622
claramente	5	116	6,9136
estilo	5	137	6,89148
exterior	5	143	6,88522
dictadura	5	145	6,88314

Appendix 1B. Collocates of *populismos* in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalismos	74	140	11,99513
auge	31	263	10,46837
extremismos	15	46	9,94111
identitarios	11	32	9,53462
izquierdas	18	401	9,43014
vacuna	10	30	9,40306
derechas	17	396	9,35614
radicalismos	9	14	9,29956
contra	41	2243	8,96041
frenar	9	149	8,93391
frente	22	1188	8,77819
nacionalistas	12	452	8,7616
rugen	6	6	8,73947

asolando	6	6	8,73947
extremos	7	122	8,63743
alejado	6	49	8,61055
intentan	6	63	8,57094
populismos	10	451	8,50015
querer	6	98	8,47644
Europa	31	2578	8,38814
movimientos	7	233	8,38319
cultivo	5	42	8,36773
ascenso	6	142	8,36579
continente	6	211	8,20775
asolan	4	5	8,15765
opresor	4	7	8,15138
combaten	4	8	8,14825
nacen	4	11	8,13891
alarmantes	4	14	8,12964
porqué	4	14	8,12964
pasando	5	132	8,12717
incidencia	4	15	8,12656
excluyentes	4	19	8,1143
resurgir	4	23	8,10215
necesario	6	263	8,09913
Deusto	4	26	8,09311
caldo	4	38	8,05749
amenazan	4	43	8,0429
allá	6	310	8,00753
nuevos	6	315	7,99812
suponen	4	59	7,99718
reformas	6	320	7,98877
fascistas	4	63	7,98598
amenaza	6	324	7,98134
mejor	11	974	7,97965
comunistas	4	68	7,97209
crecimiento	7	471	7,95405
hablamos	4	75	7,95288
desastre	4	87	7,92052
viejo	4	125	7,82258
ultraderecha	6	417	7,81843
origen	4	153	7,75445
América	4	171	7,71229
europeos	8	802	7,70538

Cambio	3	20	7,69622
peligrosos	3	21	7,69318
aprovechan	3	22	7,69014
latinoamericanos	3	25	7,68108
unen	3	33	7,65718
derecha	14	1863	7,62931
centro	7	717	7,61383
personalmente	3	51	7,60482
desigualdades	3	72	7,54604
noventa	3	75	7,53784
defienden	3	85	7,51082
juicio	4	267	7,50614
tiempos	4	268	7,50414
común	5	456	7,49221
hacer	11	1560	7,48358
simplemente	3	98	7,47644
respuestas	3	112	7,4403
combatir	3	125	7,40754
advierte	3	126	7,40505
redes	4	338	7,37064
reacción	3	141	7,36822
división	3	144	7,36096
democracias	3	153	7,33941
primero	4	360	7,33112
todos	11	1815	7,31159
independentista	3	168	7,30419
avance	3	171	7,29725
libro	4	391	7,27719
tanto	7	1044	7,25853
domingo	5	619	7,25449
evitar	4	411	7,24344
sociales	5	637	7,23049
toda	5	640	7,22653
mundo	8	1299	7,22439
apoyar	3	208	7,21428
nacional	5	651	7,2121
Venezuela	3	211	7,20775
da	4	448	7,18302
independentismo	3	231	7,165
nacionalista	3	234	7,1587
lejos	3	243	7,13995

peligro	3	243	7,13995
izquierda	7	1200	7,11561
opción	3	258	7,10923
lucha	3	322	6,98505
intereses	3	329	6,97209

Appendix 1C. Collocates of *populista* Adj. in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
radical	35	282	10,06454
derecha	68	1863	9,7146
discurso	34	747	9,5025
deriva	20	129	9,47958
estilo	20	137	9,46706
Estrellas	18	172	9,26153
nacionalista	19	234	9,24934
ola	16	81	9,23513
izquierda	36	1200	9,2121
Movimiento	17	188	9,15525
italiano	19	314	9,14071
retórica	15	108	9,09793
corte	13	61	8,96912
Italia	26	921	8,96066
izquierdas	17	401	8,87072
auge	15	263	8,86797
nacionalismo	18	486	8,85364
momento	25	1077	8,77812
Liga	15	358	8,74324
partido	55	3492	8,71763
independentista	12	168	8,68259
extrema	21	924	8,65001
explosión	10	27	8,6495
euroescéptico	10	37	8,63193
medida	13	314	8,59322
Gobierno	45	4108	8,23417
líder	22	1712	8,17114
movimiento	10	388	8,12103
xenófoba	7	36	8,1191
fuerza	11	576	8,04475
formación	14	1055	7,95873
Ejecutivo	10	544	7,94147
Wilders	6	18	7,92854

gana	7	160	7,91709
Insumisa	6	25	7,91608
Cinco	6	73	7,83342
nacional	10	651	7,83007
conservador	7	236	7,80595
derechas	8	396	7,78933
Salvini	10	704	7,77793
Matteo	7	268	7,7616
M5S	6	126	7,74733
Boris	6	166	7,68561
nueva	10	836	7,6557
gobierno	12	1169	7,6498
ultranacionalista	5	39	7,62844
Johnson	7	372	7,6262
instituciones	8	579	7,58215
Francia	9	756	7,57653
Steve	5	70	7,57541
mensaje	7	421	7,56656
quiere	9	779	7,55522
Bolsonaro	6	262	7,54742
pueblo	7	438	7,54644
Holanda	5	100	7,52589
solución	6	290	7,50948
europeísta	5	142	7,45929
Vox	18	2580	7,45182
primer	10	1108	7,43242
proyecto	8	757	7,40568
socialdemócrata	5	179	7,40306
gobernar	6	373	7,40257
busca	5	194	7,38088
rotativo	4	5	7,367
amplificar	4	5	7,367
hongkonés	4	8	7,36156
manipulador	4	10	7,35795
pensar	5	218	7,34608
antisemita	4	17	7,34536
enfrentado	4	24	7,33289
supremacista	4	24	7,33289
Roma	5	228	7,33182
Mouffe	4	27	7,32757
calado	4	34	7,31525

autoritarismo	4	39	7,30651
trataba	4	40	7,30477
rebaja	4	41	7,30303
magnate	4	43	7,29956
contrarrestar	4	47	7,29264
gobernante	4	48	7,29092
xenófobo	4	48	7,29092
mediático	4	51	7,28575
puro	4	53	7,28232
medidas	6	493	7,26078
aboga	4	66	7,26022
alcalde	6	497	7,25629
Jair	4	69	7,25517
aprobado	4	83	7,23182
masiva	4	84	7,23016
rumbo	4	87	7,22521
Incluso	4	98	7,20721
amenaza	5	324	7,20169
partidos	12	1891	7,19695
propuesta	5	330	7,19393
Europa	15	2578	7,18964
Abascal	6	572	7,17451
Trump	7	801	7,17254
única	5	370	7,14326
romper	4	160	7,10974
Brexit	6	646	7,09813

Appendix 1D. Collocates of *populista* N. in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
exigencias	6	61	10,10115
inmediato	6	63	10,08512
Ministros	6	87	9,90548
acusan	4	39	9,70538
estudiar	4	41	9,68712
manido	3	6	9,63077
Sadr	3	9	9,59628
ilustrado	3	13	9,55154
insulto	3	22	9,45568
refuerza	3	23	9,44541
antisistema	4	72	9,43014
Estrellas	6	172	9,40505

básicamente	3	31	9,36579
demostración	3	31	9,36579
Sanders	3	32	9,35614
Movimiento	6	188	9,32757
signo	3	54	9,1587
rostro	3	56	9,14202
débil	3	62	9,09311
deberían	4	131	9,04
propuestas	6	272	8,97763
camino	6	337	8,75524
sé	3	165	8,4403
Johnson	5	372	8,38529
derechas	5	396	8,3163
voz	3	203	8,25853
diferencia	3	236	8,11736
habla	3	313	7,83342
extrema	7	924	7,78222
contrario	3	349	7,71768
izquierda	8	1200	7,63587
palabras	3	399	7,57094
discurso	5	747	7,56537
popular	3	402	7,56259
futuro	6	961	7,50948
da	3	448	7,4403
apoyo	4	884	7,03133
otro	4	982	6,89671
siempre	4	1003	6,86943
decir	3	776	6,78083
quien	3	882	6,61918
Gobierno	8	4108	5,95492
derecha	3	1863	5,63295
más	10	9238	5,13025

Appendix 1E. Collocates of *populistas* Adj. in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalistas	76	452	11,19672
movimientos	48	233	10,86729
euroescépticos	28	102	10,33365
partidos	97	1891	10,3122
líderes	38	619	9,98583
separatistas	25	199	9,98564

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalistas	76	452	11,19672
movimientos	48	233	10,86729
fuerzas	37	590	9,98184
auge	24	263	9,81678
independentistas	29	463	9,79189
radicales	16	112	9,50614
formaciones	14	339	8,91861
ascenso	11	142	8,90676
proteccionistas	9	26	8,85931
Gobiernos	12	269	8,80689
políticas	23	1186	8,71379
opciones	10	177	8,70354
xenófobos	8	31	8,67807
discursos	9	140	8,6211
ultraderecha	12	417	8,58215
ultraderechistas	7	25	8,49902
argumentos	8	123	8,4843
extrema	16	924	8,41786
mensajes	8	170	8,39452
extienden	6	10	8,31117
eurófobas	6	16	8,29725
demagogos	6	25	8,27662
planteamientos	6	47	8,22741
políticos	16	1148	8,2211
medidas	10	493	8,21602
tendencias	6	60	8,1991
antisistema	6	72	8,17345
nuevos	8	315	8,14825
europeos	12	802	8,12246
aniden	5	6	8,05749
derecha	20	1863	8,05047
nacionalismos	6	140	8,03614
euroescépticas	5	17	8,03191
ambas	6	163	7,99251
errores	6	165	7,98877
autoritarios	5	39	7,98208
posiciones	6	205	7,91608
programa	8	539	7,83509
comercio	5	121	7,81018
extremos	5	122	7,8082

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalistas	76	452	11,19672
movimientos	48	233	10,86729
propuestas	6	272	7,80196
alarmistas	4	6	7,73556
olas	4	10	7,7262
culpado	4	13	7,71923
equiparar	4	13	7,71923
superficial	4	14	7,71691
clases	5	173	7,7109
solicitado	4	20	7,70308
aceptan	4	22	7,6985
críticas	5	184	7,69075
ideas	6	345	7,68712
grupos	6	349	7,68108
determinados	4	34	7,67133
peso	5	199	7,66372
extremismos	4	46	7,64465
liberales	7	542	7,63868
utilizan	4	50	7,63587
derechas	6	396	7,61198
administración	4	61	7,61198
serían	4	65	7,6034
extremistas	4	67	7,59912
familiar	4	73	7,58637
opiniones	4	73	7,58637
irrupción	4	79	7,57374
aquellas	4	86	7,55913
promesas	4	94	7,54262
común	6	456	7,52832
oferta	4	112	7,50614
organizaciones	4	114	7,50215
Socialista	4	121	7,48825
verdes	4	124	7,48233
algunas	5	311	7,47644
lenguaje	4	127	7,47644
marcha	5	318	7,4655
liderar	4	133	7,46472
aliados	4	134	7,46278
apoyo	8	884	7,456
reglas	4	152	7,42825

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalistas	76	452	11,19672
movimientos	48	233	10,86729
avance	4	171	7,39267
constitucionalistas	4	180	7,37612
estadounidense	4	180	7,37612
materia	4	195	7,34895
pesar	5	400	7,34322
izquierdas	5	401	7,34179
vendieron	3	5	7,32287
tienen	8	1029	7,32228
dicten	3	6	7,32052
predominan	3	7	7,31818
batasunos	3	7	7,31818
simplistas	3	9	7,3135
compartiendo	3	9	7,3135
buenistas	3	10	7,31117
matones	3	10	7,31117
logren	3	14	7,30187
presa	3	16	7,29725
agendas	3	18	7,29264

Appendix 1F. Collocates of *populistas* N. in the Spanish media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nacionalistas	86	452	11,45904
separatistas	45	199	10,94496
derechas	34	396	10,20329
disfrazarse	16	17	9,85534
extrema	28	924	9,28281
doblar	10	14	9,18494
derecha	40	1863	9,08591
independentistas	16	463	9,01701
pactar	13	314	8,94722
izquierda	24	1200	8,81265
coalición	15	790	8,51995
decirles	6	21	8,43014
manos	9	313	8,41838
Podemos	22	1591	8,39604
apuesta	8	253	8,35254
cooperación	7	162	8,33365
extremistas	6	67	8,31818

Estrellas	7	172	8,3135
Movimiento	7	188	8,28183
izquierdas	9	401	8,27814
euroescépticos	6	102	8,23845
tengan	6	125	8,18836
auge	7	263	8,14202
constitucionalistas	6	180	8,07519
podemos	7	315	8,05247
Cinco	5	73	8,04116
Tenemos	6	255	7,93391
permitirnos	4	6	7,88366
manden	4	6	7,88366
resulta	5	151	7,87072
eurófobos	4	22	7,84265
avance	5	171	7,83007
entregado	4	31	7,82009
preferido	4	40	7,79788
formada	4	45	7,78568
gobierno	11	1169	7,71292
ultras	4	81	7,70079
dicen	5	240	7,69805
bloquear	4	87	7,68712
haber	8	746	7,66126
aumentar	4	102	7,65349
Italia	9	921	7,64832
acuerdo	14	1749	7,64119
acuerdos	6	441	7,63368
subrayado	4	115	7,62496
progresistas	4	127	7,59912
bloqueo	4	166	7,5182
formar	5	358	7,49697
Sánchez	23	3630	7,49462
socialistas	7	727	7,48994
incendiarios	3	5	7,47122
expedientes	3	6	7,46862
característico	3	7	7,46602
suponga	3	8	7,46343
haríamos	3	11	7,45568
cerrando	3	12	7,45311
refugiado	3	13	7,45054
desprecian	3	14	7,44797

construyeron	3	15	7,44541
asumidas	3	17	7,4403
sentados	3	20	7,43268
fuerzas	6	590	7,43141
ejercen	3	24	7,42257
umbral	3	24	7,42257
Cuando	5	409	7,41805
queremos	4	222	7,40941
sabiendo	3	30	7,40754
Socialistas	3	30	7,40754
estatus	3	33	7,40009
vetar	3	35	7,39514
instancia	3	36	7,39267
pueden	6	627	7,38529
debacle	3	40	7,38284
tenga	4	242	7,37247
sanchismo	3	47	7,36579
contrarrestar	3	47	7,36579
permitiría	3	49	7,36096
opción	4	258	7,34358
legalidad	3	58	7,33941
estadounidenses	3	60	7,33466
recordó	3	66	7,32052
miedo	4	274	7,31525
concesiones	3	69	7,3135
van	5	481	7,3135
formado	3	71	7,30884
socios	4	283	7,29956
hablamos	3	75	7,29956
suman	3	82	7,28347
mentiras	3	88	7,26981
nosotros	5	522	7,25719
hacen	4	312	7,25013
AfD	3	101	7,24067
prioridad	3	104	7,23402
medias	3	106	7,22961
insiste	3	107	7,22741
apoyado	3	111	7,21864
conservadores	4	336	7,21047
formaciones	4	339	7,20558
calles	3	121	7,19695

combatir	3	125	7,18836

Appendix 2

Appendix 2A. Collocates of *populisme* in the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
montée	35	213	10,58239
gauche	27	1055	9,12008
contre	25	1176	8,90323
nationalisme	8	87	8,71923
nourrit	7	24	8,68065
économique	11	378	8,62496
Europe	24	1492	8,59983
lutter	7	68	8,57134
populisme	12	516	8,54742
peut	12	691	8,32522
faire	16	1126	8,30216
Origines	5	5	8,24511
pur	5	23	8,19781
lit	5	24	8,19522
terme	6	140	8,18622
dépasser	5	36	8,16458
forme	6	174	8,11532
Publié	7	317	8,07265
peuple	7	376	7,97605
appelle	5	152	7,89776
orientale	4	15	7,89671
vagues	4	16	7,89409
progressisme	4	18	7,88886
Monde	6	298	7,88279
droite	13	1271	7,88186
abandon	4	26	7,86814
Seuil	4	35	7,84518
bon	5	180	7,84013
extrêmes	4	44	7,82258
mondial	4	60	7,78325
autoritaire	4	62	7,77841
positions	4	64	7,77359
pensée	4	77	7,74261
vague	4	85	7,72388
partout	4	88	7,71691
temps	6	412	7,69774
mettre	5	266	7,67627
centrale	4	125	7,63368

aujourd'hui	6	475	7,60482
savoir	5	309	7,60083
démocratie	6	523	7,53784
Quand	4	172	7,53443
passager	3	5	7,50815
simplifiée	3	5	7,50815
grandissant	3	8	7,50015
terreau	3	9	7,4975
démagogie	3	9	7,4975
émergé	3	11	7,49221
Dani	3	14	7,4843
ronde	3	17	7,47644
céder	3	20	7,46862
incarné	3	21	7,46602
glisse	3	21	7,46602
souvent	4	216	7,44733
concept	3	30	7,44286
droites	3	35	7,43014
semble	4	226	7,42825
conséquence	3	37	7,42509
construit	3	43	7,41004
avoir	7	816	7,40754
voient	3	44	7,40754
face	5	434	7,40158
émergence	3	47	7,40009
racisme	3	57	7,37551
politique	13	2031	7,37513
fascisme	3	60	7,36822
fait	11	1662	7,35811
estimé	3	78	7,32522
table	3	81	7,31818
nouveau	5	500	7,30651
même	8	1127	7,3013
bas	3	90	7,29725
unique	3	94	7,28805
conditions	3	98	7,2789
appel	3	102	7,26981
mot	3	106	7,26078
Je	6	748	7,25966
actuel	3	108	7,25629
haut	3	110	7,25181

porte	3	115	7,24067
ailleurs	4	332	7,24011
contexte	3	118	7,23402
existe	3	120	7,22961
idées	3	120	7,22961
nationaliste	3	133	7,20126
peu	5	580	7,1991
autre	5	585	7,19265
veut	4	366	7,18462
forte	3	145	7,17557
voit	3	154	7,1566
façon	3	158	7,14825
économiques	3	165	7,13375
stratégie	3	168	7,12758
américain	3	182	7,09913
premier	5	664	7,09431
fort	3	196	7,07123
faut	5	694	7,05866
national	4	464	7,03566
effet	3	221	7,02272
extrême	5	734	7,01245

Appendix 2B. Collocates of *populismes* in the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
montée	71	213	12,65789
comprendre	10	141	10,152
nationalismes	4	16	9,65127
Europe	27	1492	9,07629
contexte	4	118	8,95015
débat	7	355	8,83581
face	6	434	8,40257
Hongrie	3	144	8,40009
jeu	3	160	8,32287
droite	8	1271	7,53036
toujours	3	518	7,20775
démocratie	3	523	7,19695
peu	3	580	7,07915
Nous	3	603	7,03422
contre	5	1176	6,95233
extrême	3	734	6,80196

gauche	4	1055	6,76878
Macron	3	859	6,61055
deux	3	1214	6,17451
pays	3	1592	5,82092
nous	3	1599	5,81512
fait	3	1662	5,76399
Noémie	4	21	9,60768
décidé	6	117	9,54057
édité	3	22	9,18408
mènent	3	10	9,29034
barrage	3	22	9,18408

Appendix 2C. Collocates of *populiste* Adj. in the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
gouvernement	59	1085	10,25511
italien	28	380	10,03092
stratégie	19	168	9,87072
coalition	21	266	9,81678
mouvement	29	637	9,71078
leader	19	249	9,7049
droite	40	1271	9,53403
parti	38	1304	9,43335
nationaliste	13	133	9,40123
discours	17	329	9,39746
dérive	10	37	9,26123
eurosceptique	10	55	9,2134
ANO	9	15	9,16993
tentation	9	45	9,08778
ligne	12	230	9,07915
Salvini	19	700	9,02272
vague	9	85	8,98505
Matteo	16	590	8,91386
poussée	8	58	8,88366
Italie	17	696	8,86708
gauche	21	1055	8,7924
formation	9	185	8,7563
pouvoir	17	892	8,64763
Rome	9	247	8,63077
vote	11	491	8,51106
Premier	9	337	8,46602

face	10	434	8,45929
autoritaire	6	62	8,45826
M5S	7	169	8,42798
étoiles	7	184	8,39584
extrême	12	734	8,31935
poupe	5	19	8,3107
apporte	5	22	8,30234
positionnement	5	23	8,29956
éclater	5	25	8,29402
Europe	18	1492	8,2121
vent	5	60	8,20039
hongrois	5	77	8,15702
alliance	6	203	8,13375
soutien	6	222	8,09511
chef	9	647	8,01005
un	78	9529	7,99394
Baudet	4	22	7,98041
moment	6	291	7,96291
style	4	36	7,94201
rhétorique	4	42	7,92586
réaction	4	42	7,92586
décision	5	181	7,91679
Thierry	4	49	7,90724
ministre	12	1160	7,8906
Andrej	4	62	7,8733
Mouvement	5	202	7,87278
jaunes	7	513	7,82722
premier	8	664	7,81885
Parti	7	569	7,74936
arrivée	4	141	7,68259
côté	5	302	7,67988
populaire	5	304	7,67627
Ligue	5	305	7,67447
Publié	5	317	7,65304
Pologne	4	164	7,63149
fait	13	1662	7,62429
humaniste	3	10	7,59912
mesure	4	180	7,59699
chiite	3	13	7,59061
FvD	3	14	7,58778
pèse	3	15	7,58496

duo	3	16	7,58215
hostile	3	24	7,55982
anti-immigration	3	27	7,55154
préféré	3	39	7,51887
estiment	3	41	7,5135
grand	5	401	7,51136
impasse	3	44	7,50548
passé	4	225	7,50414
conservatrice	3	50	7,48957
dirigé	3	53	7,48167
allié	3	54	7,47905
souffle	3	54	7,47905
contestation	3	58	7,46862
identitaire	3	61	7,46084
logique	3	68	7,44286
antisystème	3	70	7,43776
Brexit	6	643	7,43014
phénomène	3	75	7,42509
Babis	3	82	7,40754
politique	13	2031	7,39666
démission	3	106	7,34895
femme	3	107	7,34656
démocratie	5	523	7,32757
toute	4	322	7,32228
troisième	3	123	7,30884
réponse	3	124	7,30651
Bolsonaro	3	125	7,30419
Viktor	3	126	7,30187
révolution	3	127	7,29956
menace	3	129	7,29494
participation	3	137	7,27662
mouvements	3	142	7,26529

Appendix 2D. Collocates of *populiste* N. in the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
Nigel	10	91	10,51457
Farage	10	107	10,41504
qualifié	7	38	10,3895
gendarmerie	3	6	9,46602
super-groupe	3	8	9,44541
opportuniste	3	10	9,42509

Nekkaz	3	11	9,41504
Rachid	3	13	9,39514
Ancien	3	19	9,33703
Babis	4	82	9,25181
communiste	4	96	9,1608
courant	3	50	9,06926
islamiste	3	54	9,03807
mesure	5	180	9,03191
affaires	4	197	8,63368
dirigeant	3	116	8,62496
Karoui	3	122	8,59061
Brexit	9	643	8,57001
étoiles	3	184	8,27662
Mouvement	3	202	8,19695
montée	3	213	8,15033
française	3	224	8,10518
italien	4	380	7,99718
coalition	3	266	7,94472
droite	10	1271	7,8666
Parti	5	569	7,8666
certains	3	312	7,7873
gauche	6	1055	7,37064
parti	7	1304	7,31851
extrême	4	734	7,24011
mouvement	3	637	6,99625
Salvini	3	700	6,88279
gouvernement	4	1085	6,7497
Europe	3	1492	5,91874
on	3	1584	5,83929
fait	3	1662	5,77519
politique	3	2031	5,50548

Appendix 2E. Collocates of *populistes* Adj. In the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
partis	53	578	11,03618
mouvements	24	142	10,97394
nationalistes	19	174	10,52341
leaders	13	69	10,38756
forces	17	167	10,38702
progressistes	9	40	9,995
européens	15	331	9,72698

eurosceptiques	8	64	9,70998
dirigeants	11	194	9,66827
gouvernements	8	101	9,54879
montée	10	213	9,47018
discours	11	329	9,28451
progression	5	43	9,1321
formations	6	104	9,12144
promesses	5	65	9,02731
Milan	5	73	8,99101
accents	4	19	8,93391
percée	4	50	8,776
poussée	4	58	8,73791
italiens	4	86	8,61198
perçoivent	3	8	8,57934
terrain	4	101	8,54879
expériences	3	16	8,53511
alliés	4	106	8,52832
anti-immigration	3	27	8,47644
Viktor	4	126	8,44925
risques	3	37	8,42509
Orban	4	160	8,32404
Europe	17	1492	8,32176
figures	3	64	8,29494
alliances	3	66	8,28575
vont	4	178	8,26191
extrême	9	734	8,22888
jeunesse	3	93	8,16711
continent	3	101	8,13375
plupart	3	110	8,09712
élites	3	113	8,08512
libéraux	3	115	8,07717
étaient	4	250	8,0371
mesures	3	132	8,01132
nouveaux	3	132	8,01132
voir	4	262	8,00282
succès	3	138	7,98877
plusieurs	5	399	7,98208
arrivée	3	141	7,97763
Hongrie	3	144	7,96658
Pologne	3	164	7,89496
peu	6	580	7,88973

leurs	6	650	7,77279
alliance	3	203	7,76478
droite	10	1271	7,75207
autres	6	738	7,63806
européennes	7	907	7,63243
sommes	3	248	7,62786
surtout	3	258	7,59912
UE	4	439	7,57374
force	3	270	7,56537
désormais	3	277	7,54604
notamment	4	455	7,54057
Donald	3	301	7,48167
trop	3	309	7,46084
pouvoir	6	892	7,42888
Trump	4	518	7,41692
électeurs	3	336	7,39267
tous	5	732	7,38382
contre	7	1176	7,33061
Pen	3	431	7,17557
Italie	4	696	7,11583
fois	3	524	6,99064
par	19	4872	6,92572
faire	5	1126	6,89671
Matteo	3	590	6,87244
Nous	3	603	6,85025
politiques	3	669	6,74261
pays	6	1592	6,73869
très	4	997	6,71691
Salvini	3	700	6,6947
gauche	4	1055	6,65127
élections	3	1004	6,29379
politique	4	2031	5,84518

Appendix 2F. Collocates of *populistes* N. in the French media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nationalistes	26	174	10,80259
Autriche	9	88	9,5589
européens	13	331	9,3921
progressistes	6	40	9,1629
alliance	8	203	9,01701
Europe	25	1492	8,83409

VVD	4	14	8,69166
sillage	4	19	8,66908
dirigeants	6	194	8,62786
victoire	6	219	8,55706
jeu	5	160	8,46706
offre	4	84	8,40381
gauche	14	1055	8,40009
partout	4	88	8,38898
pourraient	4	93	8,37064
tendent	3	8	8,30419
face	7	434	8,28183
FvD	3	14	8,27662
qualifier	3	16	8,26755
pouvoir	11	892	8,23664
arrivée	4	141	8,20558
parlent	3	40	8,1629
théorie	3	42	8,15451
progression	3	43	8,15033
extrêmes	3	44	8,14617
savent	3	50	8,12144
poussée	3	58	8,08911
étoiles	4	184	8,07222
eurosceptiques	3	64	8,06533
attaques	3	66	8,05749
contre	12	1176	8,05456
réunion	3	72	8,03422
croire	3	101	7,92675
Italiens	3	105	7,91254
alliés	3	106	7,90901
Vox	3	113	7,88452
libéraux	3	115	7,8776
malgré	3	116	7,87416
coalition	4	266	7,84772
droite	11	1271	7,83921
forces	3	167	7,70845
Verts	3	184	7,65718
chose	3	202	7,60482
Mouvement	3	202	7,60482
peuple	4	376	7,59273
font	3	219	7,55706
comme	13	1961	7,55578

faire	8	1126	7,51921
Rome	3	247	7,48167
notamment	4	455	7,43395
force	3	270	7,42257
peut	5	691	7,36483
Parlement	5	702	7,34895
toujours	4	518	7,31876
tous	5	732	7,30651
on	9	1584	7,28805
électeurs	3	336	7,26529
Parti	4	569	7,23182
veut	3	366	7,1991
Italie	4	696	7,03566
Salvini	4	700	7,02989
vous	4	706	7,02129
sera	3	458	7,01321
partis	3	578	6,80196
Nous	3	603	6,7616
politiques	3	669	6,66015
monde	3	688	6,63222
faut	3	694	6,62351
être	5	1360	6,62236
On	3	733	6,56815
extrême	3	734	6,56676
deux	4	1214	6,43299
nous	5	1599	6,42863
européen	3	867	6,39267
élections	3	1004	6,23292
France	4	1663	6,05895

Appendix 3

Appendix 3A. Collocates of *populisme* in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
montée	27	205	10,44427
extrémisme	16	46	10,10518
droite	39	1351	9,48693
crispations	8	14	9,20558
identitaire	9	76	9,18693
religieuses	8	25	9,17028
contre	25	1087	9,07685
forme	9	165	8,95318
racisme	7	60	8,87072
réponses	6	37	8,71768
partout	7	128	8,68323
Alors	8	208	8,68259
lutter	6	55	8,66312
extrême	14	724	8,63493
nationalisme	6	69	8,62207
conférence	6	75	8,60482
populisme	10	422	8,58722
Brève	5	5	8,55706
introduction	5	19	8,51136
Cas	5	19	8,51136
contrer	5	33	8,46706
Brexit	10	570	8,35614
puissance	5	71	8,35326
Comment	6	181	8,32993
politologue	5	100	8,27208
démocratie	9	530	8,26303
réponse	5	106	8,25584
connoté	4	5	8,23513
incompatible	4	5	8,23513
combiner	4	6	8,23182
réfute	4	11	8,21537
choix	6	234	8,20992
États-Unis	5	128	8,19781
national	6	243	8,1905
Mudde	4	19	8,18943
antisémitisme	4	40	8,12348
dénoncer	4	43	8,1143
discours	7	403	8,10518

renforcer	4	73	8,02559
grande	6	346	7,98505
est-il	4	91	7,97486
libre	4	98	7,95561
Europe	13	1340	7,91091
autre	8	672	7,89409
peuple	5	261	7,88939
peut	9	816	7,88684
jour	5	287	7,8361
mes	4	145	7,83258
opportunisme	3	6	7,81678
gauche	7	589	7,81442
comparer	3	7	7,81347
simplisme	3	7	7,81347
analysez-vous	3	8	7,81018
simplification	3	9	7,80689
désenchantement	3	10	7,8036
sexisme	3	10	7,8036
tentés	3	12	7,79706
livre	4	162	7,79055
Trump	7	608	7,78776
sincérité	3	15	7,7873
autoritarisme	3	17	7,78083
xénophobie	3	21	7,76798
monte	3	22	7,76478
parfois	4	176	7,75683
victoire	4	183	7,74026
causes	3	31	7,73634
central	3	32	7,73321
méthodes	3	34	7,72698
visage	3	35	7,72388
raconte	3	39	7,71152
organisée	3	43	7,69927
personnage	3	44	7,69622
ennemi	3	44	7,69622
produit	3	50	7,67807
tomber	3	51	7,67507
doute	4	214	7,66908
mondialisation	3	56	7,66015
alternative	3	60	7,64832
Etats-Unis	4	228	7,63806

extrêmes	3	70	7,61918
conséquences	3	76	7,60197
souvent	4	253	7,58426
contexte	3	87	7,57094
retour	3	165	7,36822
Matteo	4	366	7,36338
questions	3	168	7,36096
politique	12	1969	7,35675
PTB	3	171	7,35374
deux	8	1193	7,33555
médias	3	191	7,30651
Johnson	3	195	7,29725
moins	5	613	7,2954
vrai	3	202	7,28118
face	4	415	7,27719
pendant	3	214	7,25405
Orban	3	257	7,1608
faire	7	1281	7,06673
part	3	309	7,05553
Salvini	4	583	7,01558
citoyens	3	358	6,96291

Appendix 3B. Collocates of *populismes* in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
montée	78	205	12,83007
nationalismes	8	8	10,73321
extrémismes	6	13	10,27208
Libéral	5	7	10,06454
montent	4	24	9,59061
combattre	4	29	9,54879
fond	6	120	9,52968
partout	6	128	9,48693
insatisfaction	3	6	9,33703
Giuliano	3	7	9,32757
installe	3	11	9,29034
bords	3	13	9,27208
Devant	3	16	9,24511
heure	5	124	9,24511
nourrir	3	18	9,22741
Jean-Yves	3	18	9,22741
Camus	3	22	9,19265
face	10	415	9,19007

racisme	3	60	8,89846
défi	3	61	8,89148
perspective	3	81	8,75841
situation	5	247	8,70354
Brexit	9	570	8,68611
forme	3	165	8,30419
Comment	3	181	8,23182
comment	3	191	8,18836
époque	3	223	8,05749
Europe	12	1340	8,04774
pris	3	252	7,94834
gilets	3	258	7,92675
climat	3	259	7,92318
débat	3	322	7,7146
crise	3	408	7,47122
Trump	4	608	7,44158
aujourd'hui	3	530	7,18408
nouveau	3	572	7,09712
tous	3	739	6,79543
élections	3	957	6,47775
droite	3	1351	6,0371

Appendix 3C. Collocates of *populiste* Adj. in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
italien	40	246	10,78083
gouvernement	70	1250	10,35697
leader	21	169	10,00861
droite	54	1351	9,90158
coalition	24	327	9,89496
formation	20	218	9,8361
hongrois	16	93	9,79055
ANO	14	26	9,77118
parti	53	1522	9,74707
mouvement	23	448	9,63634
Premier	21	455	9,49447
poussée	11	68	9,31223
pouvoir	24	751	9,29725
tsunami	9	28	9,12827
ministre	24	929	9,10518
dérive	9	38	9,10115
nationaliste	10	114	9,06218

base	10	150	8,97985
extrémiste	8	27	8,96108
discours	13	403	8,88346
premier	13	465	8,78755
chefs	8	100	8,77359
eurosceptique	7	36	8,74396
Viktor	8	138	8,68485
joue	7	75	8,64245
face	11	415	8,62338
vague	7	85	8,61753
Orban	9	257	8,60768
italienne	7	97	8,58819
Rome	8	184	8,58426
protester	6	19	8,56815
menace	7	113	8,54997
populaire	8	213	8,52427
nouveau	12	572	8,52022
percée	6	43	8,50281
fondateur	6	47	8,49221
dirigeant	6	53	8,47644
Italie	11	526	8,45802
exclusion	6	78	8,41253
internationale	6	80	8,40754
contre	16	1087	8,36882
démission	6	100	8,35855
onde	5	10	8,33041
mensonge	5	21	8,29956
néerlandaise	5	25	8,28851
radicale	6	133	8,28118
raciste	5	31	8,27208
choc	5	34	8,26394
Vrais	5	38	8,25315
Andrej	5	43	8,23978
Finlandais	5	46	8,23182
dangereux	5	51	8,21864
Baudet	5	54	8,21079
Thierry	5	57	8,20299
vote	8	410	8,17186
appelé	5	70	8,16964
tchèque	5	73	8,16206
Nigel	5	83	8,13705

Farage	5	96	8,10518
extrême	10	724	8,06572
climato-sceptique	4	6	8,01986
liesse	4	6	8,01986
avant-première	4	7	8,01701
Pauline	4	7	8,01701
desquelles	4	8	8,01416
réactionnaire	4	11	8,00565
Hanson	4	14	7,99718
sénatrice	4	15	7,99438
voor	4	17	7,98877
xénophobe	4	17	7,98877
politique	19	1969	7,9788
deux	13	1193	7,97593
longtemps	5	157	7,96438
souverainiste	4	29	7,95561
forces	5	161	7,95561
surtout	6	299	7,94472
brésilien	4	35	7,9393
oppose	4	37	7,93391
europhobe	4	37	7,93391
anti-immigration	4	37	7,93391
suspension	4	43	7,91785
évoqué	4	43	7,91785
Trump	8	608	7,88756
fil	4	55	7,88626
camp	4	75	7,83509
Babis	4	75	7,83509
alliés	4	79	7,82507
Ligue	6	368	7,82507
acte	4	82	7,81761
polémique	4	84	7,81265
extrême-droite	4	84	7,81265
européennes	7	525	7,80735
Fidesz	4	107	7,75683
côté	6	412	7,75366
genre	4	111	7,74733
tendance	4	114	7,74026
avant	7	580	7,73188
Salvini	7	583	7,72787
sièges	5	276	7,72388

régime	4	122	7,72155

Appendix 3D. Collocates of *populiste* N. in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
radicale	26	133	11,63974
Nigel	10	83	10,56038
Farage	10	96	10,47644
europhobe	6	37	10,16711
Babis	7	75	10,1
Jair	5	42	9,8625
va-t-elle	4	11	9,82009
sois	4	11	9,82009
Ancien	4	13	9,80033
comparé	4	19	9,74261
maintient	4	20	9,73321
confronté	4	22	9,7146
droite	38	1351	9,71168
Bolsonaro	6	110	9,65423
cap	4	35	9,59912
référence	4	50	9,47644
lauriers	3	5	9,46602
dominer	3	7	9,44541
Thierry	4	57	9,42257
communiste	4	66	9,35614
soi-disant	3	17	9,34656
promis	4	74	9,29956
vague	4	85	9,22521
brésilien	3	35	9,18408
faux	3	44	9,10923
a-t-elle	3	51	9,05358
dirigeant	3	53	9,03807
Baudet	3	54	9,03037
créer	4	120	9,01132
jouer	4	128	8,96658
hongrois	3	93	8,75841
leader	4	169	8,75683
parle	4	186	8,67807
réussi	3	116	8,61918
formation	4	218	8,54057
européennes	7	525	8,44322
Parti	5	361	8,37064

scrutin	4	276	8,32052
Comment	3	181	8,28575
sein	4	314	8,19265
Orban	3	257	7,97394
jour	3	287	7,86729
Brexit	5	570	7,8625
nouveau	5	572	7,8584
Salvini	4	583	7,51417
mouvement	3	448	7,40009
extrême	4	724	7,25517
fait	9	1854	7,21282
européen	5	1075	7,08233
Trump	3	608	7,04969
comme	7	2070	6,70145
président	4	1126	6,70079
politique	6	1969	6,54673
européenne	3	1023	6,40879
parti	4	1522	6,30651

Appendix 3E. Collocates of *populistes* Adj. in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
leaders	33	117	11,35091
nationalistes	34	157	11,26091
partis	63	1010	10,62524
mouvements	20	122	10,61112
formations	16	117	10,30651
illibéraux	9	13	9,8938
forces	13	161	9,86124
gouvernements	11	113	9,77995
montée	13	205	9,7289
dérives	8	32	9,63806
émergé	7	10	9,54526
eurosceptiques	8	65	9,50015
illustré	6	9	9,32757
extrémistes	7	65	9,30751
rétablissement	6	21	9,27208
accents	6	24	9,25853
extrême	19	724	9,25216
courants	6	29	9,23623
formules	6	29	9,23623
discours	12	403	9,13375
droite	27	1351	9,06839

radicale	7	133	9,05916
face	11	415	8,9837
identitaires	5	38	8,93391
dirigeants	7	186	8,89148
Hongrie	6	128	8,85364
idées	6	160	8,74891
agitent	4	9	8,74261
sirènes	4	12	8,72854
irréalistes	4	13	8,72388
propos	6	186	8,66908
utilisent	4	26	8,66461
spectre	4	32	8,63806
confrontation	4	33	8,63368
souverainistes	4	37	8,6163
poussée	4	68	8,48825
continent	4	76	8,45697
ajoute	4	77	8,45311
opportunistes	3	5	8,34656
contes	3	6	8,34179
transforment	3	7	8,33703
indéniable	3	9	8,32757
défauts	3	9	8,32757
relèvent	3	10	8,32287
associant	3	10	8,32287
réalisation	3	11	8,31818
tendance	4	114	8,31701
cynisme	3	12	8,3135
magiques	3	14	8,30419
concrète	3	15	8,29956
islamistes	3	17	8,29034
xénophobes	3	21	8,27208
droites	3	23	8,26303
plusieurs	6	348	8,25181
contrairement	3	35	8,20992
prêts	3	41	8,18408
autres	10	878	8,12348
attaques	3	61	8,10115
italiens	3	63	8,09311
extrêmes	3	70	8,06533
partisans	3	75	8,0458
Europe	13	1340	8,0236

yeux	3	94	7,97394
pouvoir	8	751	7,96658
ancien	4	262	7,8733
service	3	124	7,86729
plutôt	4	275	7,84013
succès	3	143	7,8036
pense	4	293	7,79543
forte	3	154	7,76798
peur	3	157	7,75841
Etats	3	168	7,72388
Rome	3	184	7,67507
partie	4	445	7,46472
toujours	5	631	7,46395
tous	5	739	7,30512
monde	5	751	7,28851
européens	3	353	7,24067
Salvini	4	583	7,21864
gauche	4	589	7,20884
ailleurs	3	401	7,13788
fait	9	1854	7,09913
temps	3	525	6,90197
Italie	3	526	6,90021
France	3	581	6,80689
UE	3	593	6,7873
deux	5	1193	6,78083
Trump	3	608	6,76319
ministre	4	929	6,74026
politiques	3	766	6,53104

Appendix 3F. Collocates of *populistes* N. in the French-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
extrémistes	20	65	10,87898
nationalistes	15	157	10,12553
droite	41	1351	9,68336
poussée	8	68	9,54467
montée	10	205	9,39119
puissance	7	71	9,33975
Face	6	62	9,15451
menacés	5	10	9,12717
sentir	5	33	9,01815
identitaires	5	38	8,9955
face	10	415	8,87484

rouvrir	4	10	8,80524
rassemblant	4	12	8,79543
voor	4	17	8,77118
montent	4	24	8,73791
FvD	4	28	8,71923
menace	5	113	8,69257
gauche	11	589	8,69125
progressistes	4	38	8,67357
Forum	4	40	8,66461
grâce	5	126	8,64597
chacun	5	134	8,61802
forte	5	154	8,55044
extrêmes	4	70	8,53648
faits	4	76	8,51216
veulent	5	192	8,43014
véracité	3	5	8,41504
adeptes	3	8	8,40009
juriste	3	11	8,38529
dits	3	12	8,38039
Monique	3	13	8,37551
sorties	3	16	8,36096
extrême	10	724	8,34608
débat	6	322	8,34417
VVD	3	24	8,32287
radicaux	3	27	8,30884
ordre	4	131	8,30651
champ	3	28	8,30419
politiques	10	766	8,28713
oppose	3	37	8,26303
rapport	5	264	8,22653
donnent	3	59	8,16711
laisse	3	59	8,16711
aucun	4	175	8,1608
britannique	4	176	8,15765
doivent	4	176	8,15765
langue	3	62	8,15451
État	4	200	8,08412
sont	23	2607	8,02671
cas	6	478	8,01321
libre	3	98	8,01132
pouvoir	8	751	7,98598

Etoiles	3	115	7,94834
souvent	4	253	7,93391
partout	3	128	7,90197
sièges	4	276	7,8733
Mouvement	3	167	7,77118
électorale	3	176	7,74261
dirigeants	3	186	7,71152
font	3	206	7,65127
voit	3	220	7,61055
centre	3	233	7,57374
sondages	3	234	7,57094
force	3	238	7,55982
mieux	3	244	7,5433
vu	3	256	7,51082
groupe	4	442	7,49816
partis	7	1010	7,47085
contre	7	1087	7,38739
faut	5	773	7,27753
européens	3	353	7,27208
également	3	372	7,22961
grand	3	401	7,16711
crise	3	408	7,15242
jamais	3	437	7,09311
Premier	3	455	7,05749
pays	7	1515	6,99518
peut	4	816	6,89802
campagne	3	549	6,88452
Brexit	3	570	6,84856
autres	4	878	6,81885
dit	3	599	6,80033
toujours	3	631	6,74891
bien	4	995	6,68033
Europe	5	1340	6,65748
élections	3	957	6,30884
fait	5	1854	6,26056
politique	5	1969	6,18494
parti	3	1522	5,76718

Appendix 4

Appendix 4A. Collocates of *populisme* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nationalisme	30	106	10,54276
opkomst	28	158	10,33365
rechts	34	357	10,25774
jeugdwerkloosheid	14	16	9,65507
meningsuiting	14	40	9,59547
racisme	15	132	9,48693
klimaat	16	198	9,44733
vrije	14	121	9,41075
extremisme	12	28	9,40257
vatbaar	12	39	9,37551
groeiende	11	74	9,16711
soort	13	248	9,05478
minder	18	595	9,00502
vorm	9	112	8,79271
links	11	270	8,77468
rechtse	11	299	8,72472
demagogie	7	16	8,65507
maakt	11	385	8,58599
voedt	7	44	8,58577
genoemd	7	80	8,50129
zowel	8	175	8,49221
doof	6	8	8,45311
leugenachtig	6	9	8,45054
plat	6	15	8,43522
uitsluiting	6	23	8,41504
licht	7	122	8,40861
uiterst	7	125	8,40221
overal	7	128	8,39584
onvrede	6	39	8,37551
democratie	14	842	8,36131
golf	6	48	8,35374
duidelijk	10	454	8,34608
extreem	6	57	8,3323
strategie	6	67	8,30884
Niet	8	274	8,30826
antisemitisme	6	69	8,30419
zaken	7	177	8,2956

vertrouwen	8	288	8,28404
haat	6	90	8,25629
komt	12	743	8,24511
altijd	12	770	8,21537
woordenstrijd	5	5	8,19781
euroscepsis	5	5	8,19781
bitsige	5	7	8,19265
Rechts	5	11	8,18238
neigen	5	14	8,17472
bredere	5	15	8,17218
Europa	17	1379	8,17158
noodzakelijke	5	16	8,16964
stromingen	5	19	8,16206
uitersten	5	20	8,15954
woord	6	140	8,14825
polarisering	5	40	8,11004
noemt	6	159	8,10923
kom	5	52	8,08114
hoek	5	56	8,07163
Brexit	6	190	8,04774
wint	5	82	8,01132
extreemrechtse	6	211	8,00753
ziet	7	352	7,98558
tijden	5	109	7,95124
soms	6	243	7,94834
juiste	5	112	7,94472
news	5	118	7,93176
uitgangspunten	4	4	7,87847
Long	4	4	7,87847
Louisiana	4	4	7,87847
Geenszins	4	4	7,87847
ondermijnden	4	4	7,87847
wakkerden	4	4	7,87847
Regenboogcoalitie	4	4	7,87847
Vormt	4	4	7,87847
pro-samenwerking	4	4	7,87847
pro-arbeider	4	4	7,87847
onfrisse	4	6	7,8733
strijdt	4	6	7,8733
lageropgeleiden	4	6	7,8733
herhaal	4	7	7,87072

deuk	4	7	7,87072
loert	4	7	7,87072
Jackson	4	8	7,86814
haakjes	4	8	7,86814
tocht	4	9	7,86557
anti-establishment	4	9	7,86557
opwerpen	4	10	7,86301
geëist	4	15	7,85025
Jesse	4	17	7,84518
winnen	5	161	7,84215
kenmerken	4	20	7,83761
omschrijven	4	21	7,83509
tol	4	21	7,83509
Amerikaans	4	23	7,83007
nadrukkelijk	4	24	7,82757
neiging	4	25	7,82507
druk	5	173	7,8181
Duitsers	4	32	7,80771
merk	4	35	7,80033
profiteren	4	36	7,79788
Google	4	43	7,78083
terrein	4	48	7,76878

Appendix 4B. Collocates of *populist* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
zoveelste	10	36	10,89566
rechtse	22	299	10,69456
alfamannen	6	6	10,43522
Seifeddine	5	5	10,18238
Makhlouf	5	5	10,18238
islamistische	5	13	10,10276
Nigel	6	54	10,01511
extreem	6	57	9,99251
blanke	6	70	9,89846
dolgedraaide	4	4	9,87072
pseudo-populist	4	4	9,87072
weldoordachte	4	4	9,87072
contradicties	4	5	9,86045
blootleggen	4	5	9,86045
Farage	6	79	9,83677
nationalist	4	8	9,83007

mad	4	10	9,81018
ontpopt	4	16	9,75207
Party	4	30	9,62496
linkse	8	228	9,49221
echte	7	183	9,48994
Schrap	3	3	9,46602
wegzet	3	4	9,45568
lettre	3	5	9,44541
wijdverbreide	3	6	9,43522
opschuiven	3	14	9,35614
etiket	3	14	9,35614
strategie	4	67	9,33466
links	8	270	9,33466
staatshoofd	3	25	9,25405
winnaar	4	83	9,22521
politicoloog	3	36	9,1587
beweging	5	170	9,06454
Bolsonaro	4	110	9,05749
Marc	3	51	9,03807
voert	3	56	9
hoeft	3	59	8,97763
gebruikt	4	129	8,95015
Mitsotakis	3	68	8,91254
corruptie	3	99	8,70845
Brexit	4	190	8,65127
islam	3	112	8,63077
langer	4	214	8,54879
iemand	4	230	8,4843
kandidaat	3	146	8,44541
ziet	5	352	8,39119
weet	4	297	8,24178
Wie	3	279	7,88799
mag	3	290	7,85025
nu	12	1613	7,81265
houden	3	315	7,76798
ben	4	530	7,62062
goed	6	919	7,54194
geen	13	2161	7,5349
Trump	5	786	7,47331
wil	7	1243	7,37795
maken	5	952	7,23447

grote	5	1005	7,16585
heel	4	789	7,14669
heeft	12	2997	6,97163
zich	9	2420	6,85025
hij	12	3879	6,61378
door	8	2678	6,54159
moet	5	1634	6,53239
zo	5	1827	6,38308
worden	6	2274	6,35015
niet	12	8032	5,5892
wordt	3	2016	5,5135

Appendix 4C. Collocates of *populisten* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
nationalisten	27	100	10,65949
sterker	17	87	10,02677
macht	24	478	9,73165
zullen	29	689	9,70823
opkomst	14	158	9,56656
rechtse	17	299	9,54443
oplossingen	12	108	9,46862
rechts	17	357	9,43641
links	15	270	9,42106
kaart	8	49	9,0458
opmars	8	79	8,96108
vallen	10	211	8,95998
gekomen	9	165	8,91254
wereldwijd	8	99	8,90724
geldt	8	101	8,90197
Macron	13	498	8,81627
heel	17	789	8,816
manipulatoren	6	6	8,7616
autocraten	6	8	8,75524
strijd	8	204	8,65349
systeem	9	311	8,60387
bieden	6	107	8,47122
weet	8	297	8,46084
nauw	5	22	8,44848
extremisten	5	25	8,43929
vreest	5	39	8,39712
groeit	5	60	8,33609

Trump	12	786	8,31701
worden	26	2274	8,29052
natuurlijk	6	207	8,23182
weten	7	332	8,20188
Demagogen	4	4	8,18302
pseudo	4	4	8,18302
hoefden	4	4	8,18302
feesten	4	5	8,17982
tegengesproken	4	5	8,17982
afleiding	4	5	8,17982
Progressieve	4	5	8,17982
beteugelen	4	6	8,17663
knagen	4	6	8,17663
WOII	4	7	8,17345
doorgebroken	4	8	8,17028
goed	12	919	8,16922
schilderen	4	9	8,16711
opiniemakers	4	9	8,16711
Democratisch	4	9	8,16711
meteen	6	238	8,165
topkandidaten	4	10	8,16395
Leiders	4	10	8,16395
Leugens	4	12	8,15765
Kakutani	4	12	8,15765
pluralisme	4	12	8,15765
radicalen	4	12	8,15765
oogt	4	13	8,15451
monopolie	4	14	8,15138
proportioneel	4	15	8,14825
Tayyip	4	16	8,14513
moeizaam	4	17	8,14202
Recep	4	18	8,13891
Rutger	4	19	8,13581
verontrustend	4	20	8,13272
overwinnen	4	24	8,12042
demagogen	4	24	8,12042
wantrouwen	5	142	8,1198
leer	4	25	8,11736
Wilders	5	144	8,11491
Turnhout	4	27	8,11126
conservatieve	5	150	8,10034

Bregman	4	32	8,09612
verklaren	4	33	8,09311
extremistische	4	33	8,09311
simpele	4	35	8,08711
retoriek	4	37	8,08114
kiessysteem	4	38	8,07816
altijd	10	770	8,07281
Erdogan	4	40	8,07222
treden	4	40	8,07222
bescherming	4	45	8,05749
vaak	8	539	8,05456
doen	11	909	8,05429
geven	7	416	8,05414
dreigen	4	48	8,04872
landen	8	544	8,04726
vrijheid	5	175	8,04116
News	4	51	8,04
zogenaamde	4	51	8,04
lieten	4	57	8,02272
verspreiden	4	58	8,01986
David	4	62	8,00848
Gucht	4	66	7,99718
makkelijk	4	67	7,99438
alle	9	749	7,94592
haat	4	90	7,93122
immers	4	91	7,92854
partijen	12	1170	7,92586
enkel	5	256	7,86455
lijken	4	116	7,86301
Europese	17	1987	7,83835
gevolg	4	133	7,82009
verkozen	4	146	7,78811

Appendix 4D. Collocates of *populistisch(e)* in the Dutch-speaking Belgian media

Collocate	Freq	Coll. freq.	logDice
Vijfsterrenbeweging	83	322	11,52798
Lega	42	375	10,46454
partijen	76	1170	10,45921
M5S	27	127	10,25106
radicaal-rechtse	22	126	9,95759
regering	47	1446	9,5567

leiders	18	190	9,54604
macht	23	478	9,45076
politici	23	637	9,2521
beweren	12	47	9,24957
rechtse	16	299	9,18943
oprichter	11	19	9,18797
nationalistische	11	55	9,10628
partij	41	1866	9,09018
denk	14	280	9,02764
beweging	12	170	8,99812
ANO-partij	9	9	8,922
ANO	9	13	8,91254
uiterst	10	125	8,82208
toer	8	9	8,75207
formules	8	17	8,73321
Volkspartij	9	99	8,72284
bestond	8	34	8,69394
golf	8	48	8,66238
extreemrechtse	10	211	8,66015
coalitie	10	227	8,63193
opkomst	9	158	8,60578
Italië	14	611	8,56656
komiek	7	14	8,54761
Beppe	7	17	8,54057
Grillo	7	28	8,51503
oplossing	8	129	8,49221
Senaat	8	136	8,4784
radicaal-rechts	7	56	8,452
eurosceptische	7	67	8,42798
politicus	8	185	8,38529
juni	7	88	8,38319
remedie	6	10	8,33466
groter	7	125	8,30751
opgeschoven	6	24	8,30187
anti-Europese	6	29	8,29034
PD	7	161	8,2375
leider	8	281	8,21864
sociaaldemocratische	6	65	8,20992
succes	7	178	8,20558
volk	8	290	8,20396
spel	6	72	8,19479

erger	6	72	8,19479
verliest	6	84	8,16922
rechts-populistische	7	224	8,12261
Rome	6	120	8,09511
mobiliserende	5	5	8,08352
antimigratiepartij	5	7	8,07875
anti-immigratiepartij	5	10	8,07163
Finnenpartij	5	12	8,0669
beetje	6	140	8,05553
ontgoocheling	5	19	8,05047
omwille	5	20	8,04813
aangetrokken	5	22	8,04348
alleen	11	777	8,03317
diepe	5	36	8,01132
factor	5	40	8,00226
Precies	5	41	8
waar	14	1197	7,99678
Sommigen	5	44	7,99325
Deense	5	46	7,98877
gedachtegoed	5	47	7,98654
boodschappen	5	51	7,97763
leidde	5	57	7,96438
koers	5	63	7,95124
besturen	5	68	7,94039
opmars	5	79	7,91679
rechts	7	357	7,90649
bevolking	6	222	7,90372
dreigt	5	87	7,89986
Zeker	5	87	7,89986
Italiaanse	9	637	7,89846
massa	5	100	7,87278
kant	6	248	7,85874
eerste	9	679	7,85025
worden	20	2274	7,83359
voorzitter	6	297	7,77761
razernij	4	4	7,76399
thermometer	4	4	7,76399
gebrand	4	4	7,76399
Instabiliteit	4	4	7,76399
anti-immigrantenpartijen	4	4	7,76399
vastklampt	4	4	7,76399

onrechtmatig	4	4	7,76399
EU-subsidies	4	5	7,7616
Radicale	4	5	7,7616
volksmenners	4	5	7,7616
verwierven	4	7	7,75683
multimiljardair	4	8	7,75445
hoofdoorzaak	4	9	7,75207
denkende	4	9	7,75207
verdubbelen	4	10	7,7497
dubbelzinnig	4	10	7,7497
bonte	4	11	7,74733
zondagavond	4	15	7,73791