Prefinal author version: please consult final version to be published in *Multilingual corpus research. Advances and challenges*, edited by Noelia Ramón Pérez and María Pérez Blanco. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Do we think populists actually *do* something? A discursive analysis of *populists* as agents or patients in tweets in French, Spanish, and Dutch

Running head: Discursive analysis of *populists* as agents or patients

Barbara De Cock

Université catholique de Louvain

This chapter analyses how the term *populist(s)* is used in comparable corpora of French, Spanish and Dutch tweets, focusing more specifically on whether populists are presented as agentive and on what kind of actions are typically attributed to populists through a combination of corpus linguistics methods, agentivity analysis, and discourse analysis. The results show that *populists* are presented as agents of intentional actions, but also often as patients of those actions, or in association with non-intentional actions. The latter include cases where the mere fact of labelling someone as *populist* is discussed and contested. In this analysis, I also develop how both linguistic and sociopolitical contextual specificities influence the representation of *populist(s)* in the different comparable corpora involved.

Keywords: populist, discourse analysis, agentivity, Twitter, Dutch, French, Spanish

1. Introduction

This paper is about how the term *populist(s)* is used in tweets in French, Spanish and Dutch. The term *populism* has a long history and has been used to refer to a Russian sociopolitical movement in the second half of the 19th century, which inspired a French literary movement, mainly in the 1930s (Paveau, 1998). Since then, populism as a political phenomenon has attracted a lot of interest in different fields of academia and, more generally, in the press. From the second half of the twentieth century, *populism* has been mainly used to refer to a specific (type of) political movement, though it has been given different meanings depending on the discipline and geographical area of the researchers involved (Hunger & Paxton, 2022). Thus, this term has been associated, among others, to right-wing parties with a strong nativist discourse (e.g., *Rassemblement National* in France or *Vlaams Belang* in Belgium) or to (extreme) left-wing parties with a strong anti-elite discourse (e.g. *Syriza* in Greece, *Podemos* in Spain).

Mudde has described populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). From this perspective, populism can be combined with other ideologies or political orientations as long as the ideology opposing the people to the elite is present.

A second important strand has approached populism as a communicative style (Laclau, 2005; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Bos et al., 2011; Cranmer, 2011). Work in this field has paid particular attention to how some politicians or movements represent *the people* in their discourse and invoke it in their overall argumentation (see Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019; Van Leeuwen, 2015, 2019; Connett, 2023, among others).

A third approach, mainly focusing on Latin-American politics, has considered populism to be a "political strategy" (Weyland, 2001, p.14) with particular ways of mobilising citizens (Jansen,

2011). This perspective focuses on the "socio-cultural side of populism" (Hidalgo-Tenorio et al., 2019, p. 2) and on the circumstances that make a fertile ground for populist leaders.

As will be shown more in Section 3, there has been extensive research on the meanings attributed to populism, often through collocational analyses or metaphor analysis. However, there has not yet been research on the semantic roles in which populists are represented, whereas research on the representation of other collectives has shown this to be a promising avenue. It is then these semantic roles that will be addressed in the present paper, focusing on how populists are being represented in the public discourse on Twitter (now X).[1] While not all parts of society are equally represented on Twitter, this platform offers a wider variety of contributors than political or media discourse sources, making it particularly relevant to analyse discourse in a phenomenon of broader societal and political relevance, such as *populism*. Thus, the tweets included in the comparable corpora discussed in this chapter may have been written by politicians or journalists but are more often produced by citizens who are not public persons and who do not necessarily have a professional link with the topic of populism. In these accounts, the author of the tweet is not necessarily the account holder, since especially public persons often have communication professionals who tweet in their name. Nevertheless, these public persons remain the *principal* of the message, in Goffman's (1981) terms, even if they are not the author.

In the first place, based on the overall negative representations of populist(s) and the body of research on anti-populist discourse, our first hypothesis is that populist(s) will be more often represented as agents of intentionally negative actions than as agents of intentionally positive actions or as patients and recipients of intentionally negative actions. This analysis will take into account the impact of language-specific features on the representation of agents. Our

[1] Since the data analysed in this study were collected when Twitter was known under that name and since the platform's functioning has changed following its purchase by Elon Musk and subsequent renaming to X, the name Twitter will be used in this study as it represents the context in which the data analysed were produced.

second hypothesis is that populists are more associated with behaviour harming other citizens and/or society as a whole. In this analysis, particular attention will be paid to how the sociopolitical context may influence the representation of populist(s) in the different comparable corpora involved. This topic will be analysed from a contrastive perspective based on comparable corpora of tweets in Dutch, French, and Spanish, with a focus on discourses circulating in Belgium, France, and Spain.

2. National contexts of Belgium, France, and Spain

This section briefly describes the national contexts of Belgium, France, and Spain to provide the necessary background for the analysis. Indeed, as we will see, the countries differ regarding the existence of parties considered 'populist', the political orientation of such parties, the role they (can) play in government, and the importance of subnational levels and their association with populist parties.

Spain and France have far-left and far-right parties that are frequently considered populist. In Spain, this concerns far-left *Podemos*, which ran in the 2019 elections as part of the broader coalition *Unidas Podemos*, and in France *La France Insoumise*. On the far-right, *Vox* is frequently considered populist in Spain and *Rassemblement National* in France. The Belgian situation is more complex. Far-right populists have a longstanding tradition in Flanders, but are virtually absent in Wallonia, whereas far-left populists have a longstanding tradition in Wallonia and have only recently gained electoral success in Flanders.

The Spanish government formed by Pedro Sánchez after the last 2019 elections included *Unidas Podemos*, a far-left formation considered populist both in academic work (e.g. Sánchez García, 2019; Mazzolini & Borriello, 2022) and by Spanish center-right and right-wing parties

(De Cock, 2023). *Podemos* leaders have extensively referred to Laclau as an inspiration (Sánchez García, 2019, p.276). In France, populist parties have not been part of the government so far, though their electoral results have sometimes been high. In Belgium, the far-left parties that are considered populist have not yet been in the government. However, there has been frequent discussion about including *Vlaams Belang*, the most far-right party in Flanders, in the regional government, but this has not yet been the case. On the other hand, the *N-VA*, a rightist Belgian Dutch-speaking regionalist party, has already been in national and regional governments and is considered populist by some, though there is no consensus on this topic (see Van Haute et al., 2018, for a more detailed discussion).

The countries involved have developed subnational levels to different degrees, which is relevant for our research, since we will see that calling certain actors "populist" may be associated with these levels and/or with parties representing regionalist or independentist tendencies. According to Niessen's (2022) Substate Autonomy Scale,[2] France has the lowest score of the three countries concerned, with 0.400. Spain has a higher score, between 0.682 and 0.699, and Belgium has the highest, ranging from 0.710 to 0.905, showing that the latter two countries give more autonomy to their substate entities than France.

3. Theoretical background and key notions

In this section, I first discuss the literature on the term *populism* and then the importance of semantic roles in discourse analysis.

[2] The scale is based on a weighing system relying on the degree to which administrative and legislative competences are exercised by the sub-state level or by the national level. The fact that the scores for Spain and Belgium are expressed as ranges reflects that not all substate entities of these respective countries have developed their autonomy to the same extent.

Given the fact that the terms *populism* and *populist* are being used to refer to a wide variety of phenomena, attention has also been given to the meaning(s) these terms are used for and how these meanings are constructed (on UK discourses, see Bale et al., 2011; Brown & Mondon, 2021; Demata et al., 2020; on Belgium, see Shchinova, De Cock & Hambye, 2024; and more specifically on Flanders, see Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; on Greece, see Nikisianis et al., 2019; on Israel, see Hamo et al., 2019; on Spain, see Shchinova, 2023; comparing UK and German media outlets, see Kranert, 2020). While the meanings of *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* are indeed by no means stable (Schwörer, 2021; Hunger & Paxton, 2022), the above-mentioned analyses have shown that these terms often have negative connotations through associations with the idea of menace, danger, and extremes. Indeed, there is overall a strong anti-populist discourse (Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020) in the media, presenting populism and populists in a negative way.

Research has attested a higher presence of the Spanish term *populismo* ('populism') in various corpora of the *Real Academia Española* since the 1990s (Santiago Guervós, 2015), which is in line with the increased attention to populism in society at large over the past few decades.

As mentioned above, one of the approaches to populism considers it as a specific communicative style and studies in this vein have focused on specific stylistic features. Thus, in his comparative analysis of Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders and Liberal politician Alexander Pechtold, Van Leeuwen (2015, 2019) shows that the difference between those politicians is not found in the mere number of references to *people* but in other factors. These studies show that Wilders places *people* (and other nouns with similar reference) much more frequently in the subject position than Pechtold (Van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 47-48; Van Leeuwen, 2019, p. 326). Wilders moreover mentions *the people* much more frequently as the subject of a verb expressing cognition or emotion, when expressing important points of view of his party (Van Leeuwen, 2015, p.54). In doing so, he presents his party's political views as representing

the views of the people, thus suggesting he represents the people. Pechtold, on the other hand, tends to represent the people's views as separate from his/his party's. This leads Van Leeuwen to suggest that other factors, such as semantic roles, could also be relevant in discursive analyses (Van Leeuwen, 2019, p. 335).

The current study then adopts a discourse analysis approach, focusing on the semantic roles fulfilled by *populist(s)*. This approach is motivated and inspired by previous analyses on the representation of other collectives, such as Van Leeuwen's, which have shown the impact of presenting a specific group as agentive or not in the conceptualisation of this group. De Cock and Michaud Maturana (2014) have highlighted its importance for the representation of state agents in reports on human rights violations in Chile, whereas De Cock et al. (2022) have shown that semantic roles play a crucial role in the representation of immigrants in Belgian online political discourse. This body of research will inspire the analysis of the representation of *populist(s)* in Twitter discourse.

In this analysis, following Palmer (1994, p. 25, relying on Croft, 1991), the agent will be considered "the cause or 'initiator' of the action and the patient the one directly affected by it". In addition to these roles, which are at the heart of the hypothesis concerning the association with intentional actions, the recipient role takes up a particular space as an entity that is more indirectly affected than the patient but does not hold an agentive position.

The intentionality of the action is also taken into account. Following Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2012, p. 137), intentionality is considered "the degree of the Agent's involvement" and is operationalised as the extent to which the Agent does something openly and on purpose. Analysing this aspect gives insight into the conscious and intentional choice to try to affect a patient somehow, which is relevant if we want to analyse to what extent *populists* are represented as carrying out intentionally harmful actions.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data

The data collected consist of messages published on Twitter in Dutch, French, and Spanish, containing the terms *populist* or *populists,* viz. *populista(s)* (Spanish)*, populiste(s)* (French)*, populist(en)* (Dutch). Henceforth, *populist(s)* will be used to refer to all these forms, whereas the language-specific form will be used when discussing specific examples. Within the context of the project "Discourse, populism and democracy — Tracking the uses of populism in media and political discourse (TrUMPo)", we obtained all tweets from 2019 containing *populist(s)* in Dutch, French, and Spanish through TweetBinder. The project focused on 2019, since it was a year of European and local elections in the three countries involved, which is an important factor for comparability. This led to vast corpora (615,450 tweets with *populista(s)*, 116,165 with *populist(en*) and 89,609 with *populiste(s)*),[3] which nevertheless contained a considerable amount of noise and needed to undergo several further operations, which will be summarised here (see De Cock et al. forthcoming for a detailed description). In the first place, these procedures are concerned with filtering for merely technical reasons, such as removing duplicate tweets in the corpus. In the second place, the fact that some of the search terms coincide in several languages (e.g., *populist* in Dutch, English, Swedish) led to linguistically heterogeneous results, which required further filtering based on automatic language detection to exclude the languages that are not relevant for this research. Third, automatic language detection of tweets proved at times inaccurate, among other reasons due to code switching (e.g.,

[3] The amount of tweets is a more relevant measure than the amount of words or tokens, in this case. Indeed, word counts are less representative for Twitter corpora since they also include mentions of other users through the @-sign, hashtags, links, etc., which makes a word count less informative for these data.

in hashtags or usernames), requiring rectification. After carrying out these filtering processes, which were motivated by more technical issues, the project also aimed at filtering tweets according to their relevance in the public spheres under analysis: Belgium, France, and Spain. This required a combination of techniques, as tweets are not associated with a specific country. Indeed, Twitter users can activate geolocalisation of their tweets, but only a minority of them do so, and this geolocalisation has often proved to be erratic. Therefore, we combined filtering based on geolocalisation with geographic references in the biographies of the accounts, which allowed us to narrow down the corpus. Ultimately, determining the relevance for a given public sphere cannot be automatised. This is why we proceeded to carry out a subselection of 200 tweets per language for this study through random sampling, obtaining three comparable corpora.

This random sampling was complemented with one further criterion, namely the relevance of the tweets to the circulation of discourses on populism in Belgium (both the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking parts), France and Spain. Adopting an ecological approach[4] to how Twitter users receive tweets, it was then not the aim to select only tweets published in Spain, France and Belgium, but rather tweets that would be read and considered a relevant part of the reading experience of users from Spain, France, and Belgium. Indeed, Twitter (and now X) does not function at a specific geographical level (although it is more popular in some regions than others), and users read messages posted from different countries, for example, Spanish users frequently also read messages from/concerning Latin-American countries. Moreover, this approach also does justice to the fact that tweets can be published by users who are for some reason currently not living in what they consider their homeland, and to the intensive interest for French media and politics in the French-speaking part of Belgium, leading to considerable

[4] An ecological approach implies not entirely isolating the tweets from the broader context of which it is part but rather adopting a holistic approach and recognising media complexity and hybridisation of movements. This also means taking into account the interaction between online and offline productions and events. (cf. Treré, 2019).

circulation between the two areas. Concretely, following a discussion among at least two project members on each specific tweet in this dataset, we discarded tweets that would be considered entirely irrelevant or not understandable at all (in terms of sociopolitical context) from the Spanish, French, or Belgian perspectives, e.g. a tweet published in French concerning a leader described as populist in a French-speaking country with which Belgium has little contact.

Tweets may contain non-standard language and will be reproduced as published. References to public persons have been maintained, but references to non-public persons have been anonymised for ethical reasons, by replacing their Twitter handle with *@x*.

4.2 Annotation method

The three datasets in Spanish, French, and Dutch have been analysed through a combination of corpus linguistics methods, semantic roles analysis, and discourse analysis. While the hypotheses build on prior research, based on larger corpora, the fine-grained nature of an ecological data selection and of this analysis in terms of roles and intentionality limits the applicability of large-scale corpus linguistics analyses.

In order to test these hypotheses, the occurrences containing *populist(s)* were coded for the criteria described in the remainder of this section. The coding was done manually in an Excel file, both because corpus analysis tools handle tweets poorly due to their atypical construction (presence of hashtags and user tags, frequent code-switching, non-standard language use etc.) and because some of the parameters annotated in this study cannot be easily automatised.

In the first place, each occurrence was coded for singular vs. plural use of the term, and I also looked into who is being qualified as populist. In the second place, occurences were coded for whether *populist(s)* depends on a verb, a noun (in the case of deverbal nominalisations) or neither of these. In the third place, if a verb or noun is concerned, its expressing an intentional

action or not is annotated, since this impacts the semantic roles expressed (Ariño-Bizarro & Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2020). As we will see, a considerable number of uses of *populist(s)* in the corpus depend not on a verb but on a noun which can represent an action (e.g., *la renuncia del populista* 'the resignation of the populist'). The potential intentionality expressed through substantives was encoded. Finally, in the case of a verb or noun expressing intentionality, the role was coded, namely whether *populist(s)* is the agent or patient/recipient of the action. While patient and recipient roles are distinct semantic roles, they are considered in the context of this research in one category since this study focuses on whether *populists* are represented as carrying out intentional action. As opposed to agents, *populists* as patients and recipients is not carrying out an action intentionally, which justifies these two roles being analysed jointly in this study. Agents were coded regardless of their syntactic function, including subjects of active constructions or agent complements of passive constructions.

All these parameters hold for the three languages involved. In the analysis, further language-specific features that are relevant for this study will be commented upon, such as the potential use of *populists* as subject of a 1st or 2nd person plural form in Spanish, and the Spanish passive system. The annotations are then analysed following a mixed-methods approach. Whenever (lack of) significance is mentioned, this was tested by means of a chi-squared test.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Who are the populists?

This section briefly addresses from a more qualitative perspective who is referred to by the term *populist(s)*. In the three datasets, uses are rarely generic. However, they may be non-specific in the sense that they can refer to a group or type of person about whom some basic information is given without necessarily offering a concrete identification, for example, *los populistas de izquierda* ('the populists from the left') includes only a general political orientation.

The French data focus more clearly on a restricted number of actors as populists. This concerns mainly international far-left and far-right populists, with the exception of singular references to the French far-left leader Mélenchon. The Spanish data show a wider variety of potential referents in singular (e.g., *Podemos* leader Pablo Iglesias, pope Franciscus, *Izquierda Unida* leader Alberto Garzón, Stalin, and numerous otherwise unknown Twitter users). For the plural forms, there is a clear focus on the far-left political party *Unidas Podemos*, the communists (often used as a proxy for *Unidas Podemos*) and far-right *Vox*, reflecting the tensions concerning the 2019 electoral results and subsequent creation of a coalition government. The Dutch data show a wide variety of singular and plural referents, reflecting the ongoing struggle on Twitter concerning the term *populist(s)* (see also 5.4). This can be seen in the specifications regularly added through various morphosyntactic processes, talking about *groenlinkse populisten* 'green left populists'*, rechts-populisten* 'right populists'*, de populisten van N-VA* 'the populists of N-VA [rightist Belgian Dutch-speaking regionalist party]'.

5.2 Populists and intentionality

Given the frequent association of populists with the ideas of menace or danger (Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Demata et al., 2019; Borriello, 2022), the uses of the term *populist(s)* are expected to be associated with verbs expressing intentional harm.

Table 1. Expression of intentionality with *populist(s)*

		French	Spanish	Dutch
Intentional	Verb	82 (41%)	88 (44%)	80 (40%)
	Noun	23 (11.5%)	15 (7.5%)	14 (7%)
Total		**105 (52.5%)**	**103 (51.5%)**	**94 (47%)**
Non-intentional	Verb	41 (20.5%)	60 (30%)	59 (29.5%)
	Noun	33 (16.5%)	13 (6.5%)	16 (8%)
Total		**74 (37%)**	**73 (36.5%)**	**75 (37.5%)**
Not applicable		21 (10.5%)	21 (10.5%)	31 (15.5%)
TOTAL		**200 (100%)**	**200 (100%)**	**200 (100%)**

Table 1 shows the proportion of intentional vs. non-intentional content occurring with the term *populist(s)*. The category 'not applicable' concerns mainly cases where *populist(s)* is used as a label, often in reaction to a preceding tweet. These cases will be discussed later in Section 5.4. While we can observe slight differences between the languages, a chi² test showed that these are not significant (p = .59389). Overall, there is a dominance of tweets associating *populist(s)* with intentional actions (such as *to lie* in Examples (1)) as compared to non-intentional actions (*to need* in Example (2)), although the latter are also very frequent.

(1) *El populista **miente** y eso da igual (...) El tono faltón incluso despectivo y el estilo macho alfa son otras señales de alarma https://t.co/OeIbmPJzFR*

'The populist **lies** and that doesn't matter to him (…) The irreverent even contemptuous tone and the alfa male style are other alarm signals *https://t.co/OeIbmPJzFR*'

(2) *Los populistas **necesitan** la división entre los buenos y los malos entre los nuestros y los otros. Miquel Roca Junyent en @lavanguardia https://t.co/hMFDsNmC0c*

'The populists **need** the division between the good and the bad and between our people and the others. Miquel Roca Junyent in *@lavanguardia* https://t.co/hMFDsNmC0c'

However, not all intentional verbs associated with populist represent the idea of intentional harm. On the one hand, some intentional verbs associated with populists express an action that is not necessarily harming, e.g., *commemorate* in Example (3).

(3) *@x @MLP_officiel @HeninBeaumont Oh la rigolade ..des ptits populistes qui* ***commémorent*** *le 8 mai 1945..C est comme un poulet qui sollicite un poste chez KFC..*
'@x, @MLP_officiel @HeninBeaumont Oh the joke.. the small populists who **commemorate** 8 May 1945. It's like a chicken applying for a job at KFC.'

On the other hand, as shown in Table 1, populists are also associated with non-intentional verbs, meaning that the representation of populists as related to intentionally harming actions has to be nuanced. Indeed, other representations are at stake, which will be fleshed out in the remainder of this analysis.

5.3 Patient or agent representation

This section discusses whether *populist(s)* are associated with a patient or agent role in the data analysed.

Table 2. Agent or patient/recipient role of *populist(s)* with verbs or nouns expressing intentionality

		French	Spanish	Dutch
Verb	Agent	37 (35.2%)	34 (33.0%)	42 (44.7%)
	Patient or recipient	45 (42.9%)	54 (52.4%)	38 (40.4%)
Noun	Agent	18 (17.1%)	9 (8.7%)	7 (7.4%)
	Patient or recipient	5 (4.8%)	6 (5.8%)	7 (7.4%)

TOTAL		105 (100%)	103 (100%)	94 (100%)

Table 2 zooms in on whether *populist(s)* is used as agent or patient with verbs or nouns expressing intentionality. A chi² test shows that the three datasets discussed do not display significant differences between the three languages regarding the representation of agents or patients (p = .152031). French and Dutch have a slightly higher use of *populist(s)* as agent (when taking nouns and verbs together), whereas the uses as patient are more frequent in the Spanish dataset. These uses will be illustrated in more detail in the remainder of this section. In view of the literature that shows a tendency to describe populism and populists as a menace or as harming, it is striking that the term *populist(s)* does not present a clearer tendency to being used as agent.

After this descriptive quantitative overview, first the examples of actions with which *populist(s)* is associated as agent are presented. Some of these do evoke the idea that *populist(s)* represent a threat to democracy when in government, as in Example (4) or, more generally, that they cause harm or obstruct good governance, as in Examples (5) and (6).

(4) *Mais partout de droite comme de gauche les populistes au pouvoir* ***finissent par mettre en œuvre leur programme liberticide*** *au nom d'une morale simpliste. A quand les premières lois homophobes ?*

‘But everywhere both from the right and from the left the populists in power **end up carrying out** their liberticide programme in the name of a simplist moral. When the first homophobic laws?’

(5) *@x @manuelvalls @EmmanuelMacron Y tanto es el mejor candidato que podíamos tener. A ver si entre todos conseguimos convencer que unirse a @VallsBCN_2019 es apostar por* ***revertir el daño generado por los populistas y separatistas*** *para luego abrir una nueva #Barcelona europeísta llena de progreso y bienestar. Sí!*

‘@x @manuelvalls @EmmanuelMacron And he is the best candidate we could have. Let’s see if between all of us we can convince that supporting @VallsBCN_2019 is betting on **reversing the damage generated by the populists and separatists** to then open a new Europe-oriented #Barcelona full of progress and welfare. Yes!’

(6) *@x Quand le Belang sera à +/- 30% et que la N-VA sera à +/- 20% oui* ***les populistes seront au pouvoir en Flandre et bloqueront toute possibilité d'un begov****.*

‘When the Belang will be at +/- 30% and that the N-VA will be at +/- 20% yes **the populists will be in charge in Flanders and will block each possibility of a begov** (Belgian government).’

In relation to democratic decision-making processes, *populist(s)* are also presented as trying to convince their followers to reject other views, as in Example (7). In the Dutch data, this is expressed, among others, as misusing science or indoctrinating.

(7) *@x Intelligente jonge meiden spijbelen niet om hun engagement te tonen. Die gaan naar school en voeren actie in hun vrije tijd niet als ze in de les moeten zitten. Intelligente jonge meiden laten zich niet* ***indoctrineren door onverantwoordelijke ouders en groenlinkse populisten****.*

‘@x Intelligent young girls don’t truant to show their commitment. They go to school and campaign in their free time when they don’t have to be in class. Intelligent young girls don’t let themselves get **indoctrinated by irresponsible parents and green-left populists**.’

Whereas the preceding tweets all represent populists as carrying out intentionally harmful actions, some are more ambiguous in this respect, as Example (8), where the populists are presented as having recovered the supposedly outdated term *people*. Recuperation can be seen

as instrumentalising negatively. However, this tweet can also be considered as an indirect criticism of other politicians, since it suggests that the term *le peuple* ('the people') was used (too) rarely by others.

(8) *@ARTEfr le peuple c'est tous les français c'est un terme* ***désuet récupéré par les populistes.***

'The people is all the French it is an **outdated term recuperated by the populists**.'

As shown in Table 2, the term *populist(s)* appears not only as agent but also as patient or recipient of intentional verbs, in fairly similar proportions as its uses as an agent. While *populist(s)* are not presented as agentive in these cases, some of these patient or recipient users do evoke the idea of antagonism and of *populist(s)* as a danger, which has to be fought, as in Example (9).

(9) *Au PPE Donald* ***Tusk déclare la guerre*** *aux «populistes» et «autocrates» [link to newspaper article]*

'In the EPP Donald Tusk **declares the war to** « populists » and « autocrats ».[link to newspaper article]'

However, especially in the Spanish and Dutch tweets, they also appear as those whom one can vote for or make a coalition with, reflecting that the electoral success and/or the presence of parties considered populist by some in a coalition following the 2019 elections was considered a realistic option. In Spain, those messages mainly target the left-wing *Unidas Podemos* (10), labelled populist by liberal *Ciudadanos* and right-wing *Partido Popular* (Shchinova, 2023; De Cock, 2023; Aulit & De Cock, 2025). Messages with *populistas* occasionally also target far-right *Vox*, as well as Catalan and Basque independentist parties.

(10) *Ahora los que dejáis que gobierne el sanchismo **con populistas** sois vosotros que por vuestros santos cojones no negociáis con Vox.* https://t.co/wyU3JrV6aq

'Now those who let sanchism govern **with populists** are you who won't fucking negotiate with Vox.'

The messages in Dutch concern less a specific party but refer more to different actors, often political parties, represented as populist, for example, far-right or far-left parties, Brexiteers. Note that many of these messages also directly or indirectly criticise how political and economic actors deal with populists. Example (11) asks a Belgian Member of the European Parliament whether politicians who criticise voters of populist parties aren't populists themselves. Example (12) criticises technological companies for promoting populists rather than fighting dictatorships.

(11) *@kvanbrempt Dus jullie zijn grote dictatoren daar is dat incesthol Brussel? Als mensen **kiezen voor een populist** dan is dat de wil van de kiezer. Maarre ben je zelf ook niet gewoon een drammerige variant van de populist?*

'@kvanbrempt So you are big dictators there in that incest hole Brussels? If people **choose a populist** then that is the will of the voter. But uhm aren't you yourself just a pushy version of the populist as well?'

(12) *#SoMeQue s'est-il passé en 10 ans ? Hier ils renversaient les dictatures.Aujourd'hui ils **promeuvent** les pires populistes :https://t.co/1kykTeLA60.*

'What happened in 10 years' time? Yesterday they threw over dictatorships. Today they **promote** the worst populists.' (on tech companies)

An important observation on the representation of agents and patients concerns which syntactic structures are used and what place they hold for agent expression or agent-defocussing. Indeed,

the complete absence of impersonal constructions with *se* in the Spanish corpus to express agent-defocussing and the (albeit limited) presence of the periphrastic passive merits further attention. This absence makes the data similar to the French and Dutch ones as to the use of the periphrastic passive and could thus go unnoticed. However, impersonal constructions with *se* are fairly frequent to express agent-defocussing in more general Spanish-language corpora (De Cock, 2014, p. 250) and in any case much more frequent than the periphrastic passive (constructed with *ser* 'to be'), which tends to have a very low frequency in Spanish (Pierre, 2021, pp. 285-286; Pierre, 2022).[5] The absence of a usually frequent agent-defocussing construction in combination with the presence of an otherwise low frequency periphrastic passive with expressed agents points at a marked preference for constructions that clearly oppose the agent and the patient, as in (13) where the populists are presented as those who use certain people (in the preceding tweet identified as the poor). Thus, the dichotomous representation of those who use others and those who are used is clearly put forward through the Spanish periphrastic passive construction.

(13) *@x @x te faltó agregarle que estas personas también* ***son utilizadas por los populistas*** *y con el agravante de crear monopolios en servicios que en muchos casos terminan siendo caros e ineficientes*
'@x you forgot to add to this that these people **are** also **used by the populists** and with the aggravating factor of creating monopolies in services that in many cases end up being expensive and inefficient.'

5.4 Labelling others as *populist(s)* and contesting the categorisation as populists

[5] Agent-defocussing constructions could be *Se ataca a los populistas por ser antidemocrácticas.* ('Populists are being attacked for being anti-democratic.') This Spanish construction does not hold a clear place for an agent complement (though some agent-like complements have been described in such constructions, see Delbecque (2014)).

The considerable amount of tweets where *populist(s)* is not used in combination with a verb expressing intentional action or those where it appears without a verb at all overwhelmingly concern uses where *populist(s)* labels a person or group with an attributive construction (14) or simply as a reply to a tweet (15), in this case a tweet by Guy Verhofstadt criticising Salvini and Orban's blocking of EU-wide measures on migration.

(14) ***Populist #Johnson*** *schermt met gesloten grenzen en nieuw immigratie beleid dat alleen de 'very best minds' zal aantrekken*.
'**Populist #Johnson** flaunts with closed borders and new immigration policy that will only attract the 'very best minds"

(15) *@guyverhofstadt Oh man. De enige echte* ***populist*** *ben jij.* 🙄
'@guyverhofstadt Oh man. The only true **populist** is you. 🙄'

Some tweets engage in resisting this membership categorisation (Widdicombe, 1998) by means of the label *populist*, again often criticising non-populist politicians' behaviour, as in Example (16), where the author considers that Macron followers too easily discard anyone who disagrees with them as extreme or populist. The author resists the idea that disagreeing with Macron would mean that one is a populist.

(16) *marre de votre discours nihiliste à vous les macronistes ...* ***des qu'on est pas d'accord avec vous on est des extrêmes ou populistes*** *... Vous avez perdu le sens et la valeur des mots vous les videz de leur substance à des fins politiques. Déprimant.*
'fed up with your nihilist discourse of you macronist… **as soon as one doesn't agree with you, one is extreme or populist…** You have lost the meaning and value of the words you empty them of their substance for political aims. Depressing.'

Furthermore, membership categorisations by the media are being contested, as in Example (17), where a viewer questions the categorisation of the Dutch far-right politician Thierry Baudet as populist. Note that these rejections all imply – without making it explicit – that *populist* is considered a negative or stigma term which one does not wish to be associated with, as has been shown also in Filardo-Llamas et al. (2024), a study on tweets containing *I am not a populist*. Thus, while the membership rejection tweets overall do not explicitly associate *populist(s)* with negative actions, the mere fact of resisting the categorisation shows the term *populist(s)* is seen as negative.

(17) *RT @x: \"**De rechtse populist Thierry Baudet**\" hoor ik in #VTMnieuws Mag ik ff weten wie er aan de Medialaan heeft beslist om deze toppoliticus van een recent opgerichte en succesvolle partij 'Forum voor Democratie' zo te noemen en op welke gronden? Geen onredelijke vraag me dunkt. #FvD*
'RT @x: \"**The right-wing populist Thierry Baudet**\" I hear in #VTMnews Can I just know who on Medialaan [street where the TV station is located] has decided to call this top politician of a recently founded and successful party 'Forum voor Democratie' [Forum for Democracy] this way and on which grounds? Not an unreasonable question, I think. #FvD'

Challenging the membership categorisation by the media (in this case, *VTM*, a Belgian Dutch-speaking commercial TV channel) can be seen as part of a broader strategy of some populist parties to reject mass media and consider them untrustworthy (Phelan & Maeseele, 2023). Yet, an analysis of Belgian media discourse has shown that these media typically use the term when qualifying actors that are considered across the board as populist and rarely use it for actors or parties about whom there is no consensus about them being populist (Shchinova et al., 2024). On Twitter, however, the membership categorisation concerns a much broader array of actors,

showing how the variety of tweeters reflects a variety of political and societal positions, often contesting the way in which the term *populist(s)* is used.

In addition to explicit challenges of membership categorisation, indirect speech and thought representation strategies further contest the use of the term *populist(s)*. Thus, Example (18) concerning a demonstration organised by *Rise for Climate* suggests that the organiser of a similar right-wing event would be presented as populist. This tweet echoes other Dutch-speaking tweets concerning the 2019 student climate marches, which consider that the Green parties and/or supporters of the climate movement should be considered populist.

(18) *Als dit een rechtse mars was dan was de organisator een **populist** of erger. [link referring to a newspaper article on climate marches]*
'If this were a right-wing march then the organiser was a **populist** or worse. [link referring to a newspaper article on climate marches]'

Note that some of the intentional verbs also evoke the idea of labelling, namely of intentionally calling others populists, as in Example (19). Many of these labelling strategies could be described as relational processes (Halliday, 1985, p. 113). However, they often go beyond an attributive or identifying process and make the act of attributing or identifying very explicit, as can be seen in (19) with the term *étiqueté* ('labelled').

(19) *Tous les médias au monde déteste le peuple et leurs représentants.. Il les **ont étiqueté** populistes. Ils n'aiment que les progressistes (rien à voir avec le progrès) (…)*
'All the media in the world detest the people and their representatives. They **have labelled** them populists. They only like progressists (nothing to do with progress) (…)'

While the three datasets include such examples of labelling, a chi-square test showed that the Dutch dataset contains significantly more cases of labelling as opposed to not explicitly

labelling uses (p = .001004), if compared to the French and Spanish datasets, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Labelling uses of *populist(s)*

	French	Spanish	Dutch
Labelling	26 (13%)	29 (14.5%)	52 (26%)
Non-labelling	174 (87%)	171 (85.5%)	148 (74%)
Total	200 (100%)	200 (100%)	200 (100%)

This significantly higher presence in Dutch is not linked to a specific person or party being labelled populist but rather to a very broad variety of actors, including various that would not be considered populist in most academic analyses, such as the Green party, Guy Verhofstadt in his capacity of group chair of *ALDE* (currently *Renew Europe*) in the European Parliament, the former Belgian Minister and Socialist Party leader Louis Tobback. This multiplicity of actors categorised as populist provides evidence for a clear struggle concerning the term, which can be linked to two main factors. On the one hand, the fact that some (far)-right parties with considerable success, such as *Forum voor Democratie* (Netherlands) or *Vlaams Belang* (Belgium), are being labelled populist, leads their supporters to question the term *populist* and/or to qualify those who criticise their party as *populist* in turn. On the other hand, the climate marches by young people, inspired by Greta Thunberg's school strike, are opposed by people who question the need for action concerning climate change and who qualify the Green parties and/or other organisers of such demonstrations as populists who indoctrinate youngsters.

While Dutch stands out for its significantly higher presence of labelling, Spanish stands out for allowing the labelling of a speaker or interlocutor group and simultaneously presenting this group as the subject. Due to its pro-drop nature, the position of subject pronoun in Spanish does not have to be taken up by a pronoun. It can be left open (which is the most frequent case) or,

in the case of 1st and 2nd person plural forms, also be filled by full noun phrases referring to a group, such as *los populistas de izquierda* 'left-wing populists' in Example (16). This specific construction (De Cock, 2010, 2014) typically refers to a community (here left-wing populists). Its use in a 2nd person plural is less frequent but face-threatening since the individual, in Example (20) Spanish journalist Julia Otero, is presented as representative of a whole community, associated with negative content (being pitiful and sending hate messages). The construction has an overall low frequency (De Cock, 2010) and also has a low frequency in our corpus. However, the fact that the Dutch and French data do not contain other constructions with a 2nd person plural directly being labelled as populist suggests that the existence of the specific construction allows for carrying out a kind of attack in Spanish that is less evident in the other languages.

(20) *@julia_otero Venga @julia_otero c la maldita demagogia. Vete a tu mansión y relájate. Mira q eres cretina no te crees ni tu la gilipollez que acabas d escribir.* ***Los populistas d la izquierda sois muy lamentables*** *siempre con esos mensajes d odio siempre*

'@julia_otero Come on @julia_otero with the cursed demagogy. Go to your mansión and relax. Look you are an idiot, not even you believes the stupidity you have just written. **The left-wing populists [you] are always very pitiful** with those hate messages always.'

6. Conclusions

In contrast to previous research evidencing the prevalence of anti-populist discourses associating populists with the idea of danger or menace, the present analysis has shown that the

representation of populists in tweets in Dutch, French and Spanish offers a more nuanced view. Due to the fine-grained nature of this analysis, it was carried out on a relatively small amount of data, and this is a limitation that has to be acknowledged. However, the results identify some trends and relevant elements when analysing the representation of populists in comparable corpora.

In the first place, while the term *populist(s)* often appears with the expression of an intention, cases without the expression of an intention are also very frequent. In the former case, *populist(s)* may appear as agents, but in French and Spanish more frequently as recipients or patients, viz., they are not always represented as those carrying out specific actions, but there is rather a focus on how other actors take a position towards populists. This action can show antagonism, e.g., fighting against them (French data), but potentially also giving them power by voting for them or making a government with them (Dutch and Spanish data). On the other hand, the non-intentional cases reflect the specific 2019 political situation in Spain and Flanders (Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), where a government participation of parties labelled populist by some was clearly seen as a possibility. Moreover, these uses often imply a critique of how other actors, be it politicians, media, or society at large, deal with populist(s) and thus tend to question the current strategies used to try to stop populists. In answer to our second hypothesis, when *populist(s)* are represented as the agent of an intentional action, this action typically concerns behaviour that harms democratic function, or deceiving or lying, in line with the anti-populist discourses that have been attested in the literature (Goyvaert & De Cleen, 2020).

While the findings are largely similar across the three datasets, from a contrastive linguistics perspective, it is important to point out the total absence of impersonal passive constructions in Spanish, which normally do occur quite frequently and certainly more than periphrastic passives. The presence of the periphrastic passives combined with the absence of impersonal

passives in this corpus underlines the preference for constructions that clearly oppose agent and patient.

The non-intentional uses – and to a much smaller extent some of the intentional ones – concern labelling a specific actor, party or group as *populist(s)* in a negative way. First, this prevalence confirms that *populist(s)* is a 'battle term' (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017) or, to quote a more philosophical approach, an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie 1955). Twitter seems a particularly fruitful context for discussion concerning the use of the term *populist(s)* and for using it concerning actors whose populist nature is not commonly agreed upon. Indeed, such discussions are more prevalent on Twitter if compared to media discourse (Shchinova et al., 2024) and parliamentary discourse (Bailly et al., 2024; Aulit & De Cock, 2025). This is most likely due to the variety of voices that can participate on Twitter and to its affordances to react to tweets since tweets discussing the use of *populist(s)* often appear in reaction to a previous mention of *populist(s)*. The fact that various tweets express a rejection of the label *populist(s)* shows that it often functions as a 'stigma term' (Kranert 2020), conferring a negative view on a person or group. Second, the significantly higher presence of these uses discussing the label *populist* in the Dutch data can be explained by the specific sociopolitical context. Indeed, it reflects a more vivid debate concerning who can or should be considered *populist*. On the one hand, this can be linked to on-going battles regarding the legitimacy of some far-right parties labelled populist by many politicians and media in the Netherlands and in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. For the latter, this is also linked to the high substate autonomy since these discussions mainly concern *Vlaams Belang*, which advocates for an independence for Flanders. On the other hand, the public debate concerning climate marches by (secondary school) students in 2019, which were far more prevalent in Belgium than in France or Spain, also seems to be a factor that enhances the discussions on Twitter concerning who is populist. This shows the importance of sociopolitical factors to analyse discourses on populism. The variety of voices

present on Twitter probably also explains why tendencies concerning the representation of populists as a danger that were observed in other studies on journalistic or political corpora are only partially confirmed on Twitter, mainly because populists often do not appear as agents. This chapter then shows the importance of taking into account also the sociopolitical context, thus adopting an interdisciplinary approach, when analysing comparable corpora concerning terms with high political relevance, such as *populist(s).*

Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the ARC 20/25-109 project "Discourse, populism and democracy — Tracking the uses of 'populism' in media and political discourse" (TrUMPo), funded by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. I would like to thank Laetitia Aulit, Philippe Hambye and Coline Rondiat, for their comments on the initial draft, as well as Christoph Niessen for his help with discussing the aspects of the paper related to political sciences. I would furthermore like to thank the editors of this volume and the reviewers for their useful suggestions. All remaining errors are of course my responsibility.

References

Aulit, L., & De Cock, B. (2025). Los términos populismo(s) y populista(s) en debates parlamentarios españoles: contextos, usos y efectos en la argumentación. *Discurso & Sociedad*, *19*(1), 23-48. https://doi.org/10.14198/dissoc.19.1.02

Ariño-Bizarro, A., & Ibarretxe-Antuñano, I. (2020). La intencionalidad de los eventos causales desde la perspectiva de la tipología semántica. In F. López García (Ed.), *La involuntariedad en español* (pp. 33-54). Peter Lang.

Bailly, J., Rondiat, C., Augé, A., & Reuchamps, Min. (2024). Populism as a centrist strategy for disqualification. The use of "populism(s)/populist(s)" in Belgian, French and Spanish Parliaments. *Parliamentary Affairs.* https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsae016

Bale, T., van Kessel, S., & Taggart, Paul. (2011). Thrown around with abandon? Popular understandings of populism as conveyed by the print media: A UK case study. *Acta Politica, 46*(2), 111–31. https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2011.3

Borriello, A. (2022). Endiguer la vague. Les ressorts du discours anti-populiste dans le journal Le Monde (2016-2017). *Mots : mots, ordinateurs, textes, sociétés : travaux de lexicométrie et de lexicologie politique*, 101-123. https://doi.org/10.4000/mots.30080

Bos L., Van Der Brug W., & De Vreese, C. (2011). How the media shape perceptions of right-wing populist leaders. *Political Communication*, *28*(2), 182-206.

Brown, K., & Mondon, A. (2021). Populism, the media, and the mainstreaming of the far right: The Guardian's coverage of populism as a case study. *Politics, 41*(3), 279–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720955036Connett, R. (2023). *El populismo como discurso en Venezuela y en España (1999-2018). Estudio de textos de Hugo Chávez y Pablo Iglesias*. Peter Lang.

Cranmer, M. (2011). Populist communication and publicity: An empirical study of contextual differences in Switzerland. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *17*(3), 286-307.

Croft, W. (1991). *Syntactic categories and grammatical relations*. University of Chicago Press.

De Cock, B. (2010). La funcionalidad discursiva del esquema construccional: Los españoles hemos hecho historia en Europa. *Linguistica Espanola Actual, 32*(2), 173-195.

De Cock, B. (2014). *Profiling discourse participants. Forms and functions in Spanish conversation and debates* (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series; 246). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

De Cock, B. (2023). ¿Una coalición progresista o populista? Un análisis discursivo de la investidura del Segundo Gobierno Sánchez en España. In T.A. Messina Fajardo, & R. Castillo Ochoa (Eds), *Personajes, discursos y frases célebres* [Miscellanee Mediterranee. Vecchi e Nuovi mondi; VII] (pp. 91-109). Aracne editrice.

De Cock, B., Dupret, P., Hambye, Ph., & Pizarro Pedraza, A. (2022). Polarising representations of immigrant communities in Belgian French-speaking online political discourse. In L. Filardo-Llamas, E. Morales-López, & A. Floyd (Eds.), *Discursive approaches to socio-political polarisation and conflict* (pp. 80-98). Routledge.

De Cock, B., & Michaud Maturana, D. (2014). La expresión de la agentividad en el Informe Rettig (Chile, 1991). *Revista Internacional de Linguistica Iberoamericana, XII*(23), 123-140.

De Cock, B., Rolin, E., Teuber, R.F., & Werner, R. (forthc.). Building a multilingual multi-genre corpus for interdisciplinary research: Data selection, collection techniques, and ethical considerations. In L. Aulit, A. Augé, B. De Cock, M. Reuchamps, & S. Roginsky (Eds.), *Discourse, populism and democracy. Tracking the uses of populism in media and political discourse*. Routledge.

Delbecque, N. (2014). Passive voice and causal roles in Spanish. In N. Delbecque, K. Lahousse, & W. Van Langendonck (Eds.), *Nuclear and non-nuclear cases* (pp. 217–318). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Demata, M., Conoscenti, M., & Stavrakakis, Y. (2020). Riding the populist wave. Metaphors of populism and anti-populism in the Daily Mail and The Guardian. *Iperstoria, 15*, 8-35. https://doi.org/10.13136/2281-4582/2020.i15.686.

Filardo-Llamas, L., De Cock, B., Hambye, Ph., & Shchinova, N. (2024 online first). “I am not populist”. Mechanisms for the re-negotiation of category membership on Twitter. *Pragmatics and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1075/ps.24027.fil

Gallie, W.B. (1955). Essentially Contested Concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, *56*, 167–198. https://doi.org/10.2307/4544562

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Basil Blackwell.

Goyvaerts, J., & De Cleen, B. (2020). Media, anti-populist discourse and the dynamics of the populism debate. In B. Krämer, & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.), *Perspectives on Populism and the Media* (pp. 83-108). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar.* Edward Arnold.

Hamo, M., Kampf, Z., & Weiss-Yaniv, N. (2019). Populism as a keyword and as a meta-discursive resource for positioning in mediated political discourse. *Discourse, Context & Media, 29*,1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.11.005

Hidalgo-Tenorio, E., Benítez-Castro, M.-A., & De Cesare, F. (2019). Unravelling populist discourse. In E. Hidalgo-Tenorio, M.-A. Benítez-Castro, & F. De Cesare (Eds.), *Populist discourse. Critical approaches to contemporary politics* (pp. 1-13). Routledge.

Hubé, N., & Truan, N. (2016). France: The reluctance to use the word populism as a concept. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strombäck, Claes H. de Vreese (Eds.), *Populist Political Communication in Europe* (pp. 181–95). Routledge.

Hunger, S., & Paxton, F. (2022). What's in a buzzword? A systematic review of the state of populism research in political science. *Political Science Research and Methods, 10*(3), 617-633. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.44

Ibarretxe-Antuñano, I. (2012). Placement and removal events in Basque and Spanish. In A. Kopecka, & B. Narasimhan (Eds.), *Events of Putting and Taking. A crosslinguistic perspective* (pp. 123-143). John Benjamins.

Jagers J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourses in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(3), 319-345

Jansen, R.S. (2011). Populist mobilisation: a new theoretical approach to populism. *Sociological Theory, 29*(2), 75-96.

Kranert, M. (2020). When populists call populists populists: “Populism” and “Populist” as political keywords in German and British political discourse. In M. Kranert (Ed.), *Discursive Approaches to Populism Across Disciplines: The Return of Populists and the People* (pp. 31–60). Springer.

Laclau, E. (2005). *La razón populista*. Fondo de cultura económica de España.

Mazzolini, S., & Borriello, A. (2022). The normalisation of left populism. The paradigmatic case of Podemos. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society 23*, 285–300.

Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist, *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541-563.

Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Niessen, C. (2022). Measuring evolving regional autonomy demands and statutes: introducing the Sub-state Autonomy Scale (SAS). *Regional Studies, 56*(9), 1589-1603.

Nikisianis, N., Siomos, T., Stavrakakis, Y., Markou, G., & Dimitroulia, T. (2019). Populism versus anti-populism in the Greek press: Post-structuralist discourse theory meets corpus linguistics. In T. Marttila (Ed.), *Discourse, culture and organisation: Inquiries into relational structures of power* (pp. 267-295). Springer.

Palmer, F.R. (1994). *Grammatical roles and relations.* Cambridge University Press.

Paveau, M.-A. (1998). Le « roman populiste » : enjeux d'une étiquette littéraire. *Mots. Les langages du politique* 55, 45-59.

Phelan, S., & Maeseele, P. (2023). Critiquing “Mainstream Media” on Twitter: Between moralised suspicion and democratic possibility. *International Journal of Communication, 17*, 4304-4325.

Pierre, E. (2021). *Agent-defocussing structures in Spanish, English and French. A contrastive corpus-based account of the interaction between different passive-like structures*. Unpublished PhD thesis Université catholique de Louvain.

Pierre, E. (2022). ¿Quién es quién? Análisis de corpus de los procesos de desfocalización del agente en español y en francés en dos géneros digitales. *ELUA: Estudios de Lingüística. Universidad de Alicante, 38*, 165-185. doi:10.14198/ELUA.22382.

Sánchez García, F.J. (2019). New politics and the voice of the people. A study of populist language in Spanish political discourse: the case of Podemos. In E. Hidalgo-Tenorio, M.-A. Benítez-Castro, & F. De Cesare (Eds.), *Populist Discourse. Critical Approaches to Contemporary Politics* (pp. 275-291). Routledge.

de Santiago Guervós, J. (2015). La relexicalización en el discurso político actual: el ejemplo de *populismo* a través de la prensa española. *Boletín de la Real Academia Española, 95*(312). http://revistas.rae.es/brae/article/view/118/228

Shchinova, N. (2023). A meaningless buzzword or a meaningful label? How do Spanish politicians use *populismo* and *populista* on Twitter? *Journal of Language and Politics, 22*(6), 846 - 868. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.23042.shc

Shchinova, N. (2024). Who calls whom a populist? A pragmatic analysis of the uses of *populism(s)* and *populist(s)* in French and Spanish parliamentary debates. In R. Butler (Ed.), *Political Discourse Analysis. Legitimisation Strategies in Crisis and Conflict* (pp. 60-77). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Shchinova, N., De Cock, B., & Hambye, Ph. (2024). What does populism mean in Belgian media discourse? A Corpus-Assisted analysis of the terms populism and populist in French- and Dutch-Speaking Media in Belgium. In I. Iñigo-Mora, & C. Lastres-López (Eds), Discourse Approaches to an Emerging Age of Populist Politics (pp. 15-39). Springer.

Schwörer, J. (2021). Don't call me a populist! The meaning of populism for Western European parties and politicians. *Electoral Studies 72*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102358Treré, E. (2019). *Hybrid media activism. Ecologies, imaginaries, algorithms.* Routledge.

Van Haute, E., Pauwels, T., & Sinardet, D. (2018). Sub-state nationalism and populism: the cases of Vlaams Belang, New Flemish Alliance and DéFI in Belgium. *Comparative European Politics 16*, 954-975. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-018-0144-z Van Leeuwen, M. (2015). Taalkundig-stilistische analyse: de casus Wilders/Pechtold, *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing, 37*(1), 33-78.

Van Leeuwen, M. (2019). Measuring people-centrism in populist political discourse. A linguistic approach. In J. Zienkowski, & R. Breeze (Eds.), *Imagining the Peoples of Europe. Populist discourses across the political spectrum* (pp. 315-340). John Benjamins.

Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics*, *34*(1), 1-22.

Widdicombe, S. (1998). 'But don't you class yourself': the Interactional Management of Category Membership and Non-Membership. In C. Antaki, & S. Widdicombe (Eds), *Identities in Talk* (pp. 52-70). Sage.

Zienkowski, J., & Breeze, R. (Eds). **(**2019). *Imagining the peoples of Europe. Populist discourses across the political spectrum.* John Benjamins.