

# Populist Voices from Latin America to Europe

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The publication of this volume is the result of an interdisciplinary and international collaboration, led and coordinated by the research group ROMPOL, *Political discourse in the Romance-speaking countries*, which was formed in 2014 at the Department of Romance Studies and Classics at Stockholm University (Sweden). ROMPOL's main objective has been to analyse the mediated political discourse in Romance-speaking countries – in Europe as well as in Latin America – from a linguistic as well as a social science perspective. The focus of interest lies in how different identities are represented in the discourse and how, in a given communicative situation, the speakers choose to represent themselves, their sympathizers, electors and opponents. It also intends to relate these discursive representations of identities to political and cultural factors that constitute the context of specific communicative events. The most recent scientific international event organized by the group focused on *Political Discourses at the Extremes*, and brought together researchers specialized in media and political discourse analysis. A majority of the studies were carried out on data from TV-debates, news media, social media sites, newspapers, etc. Three themes were in focus, of which the most important was the rise of *populism* and its different modes of expression in Romance-speaking countries, in Europe and in Latin America. Special attention was given to the potential differences and convergences between Romance-speaking countries in Europe and those in the Latin American Region. Furthermore, questions regarding *identities*, *racism* and *discrimination* were also addressed and gave raise

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## How to cite this book chapter:

Sullet-Nylander, F., Bernal, M., Premat, C. & Roitman, M. 2019. "Populist Voices from Latin America to Europe". In: Françoise Sullet-Nylander, María Bernal, Christophe Premat & Malin Roitman (eds.), *Political Discourses at the Extremes. Expressions of Populism in Romance-Speaking Countries*. Stockholm Studies in Romance Languages. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, pp. 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/bax.a>. License: CC-BY

to studies of linguistic features used for representing identities (national, ethnic, etc.) in the public political spheres and in the mass media. Finally, some researchers focused on *ideologies* and *religions*, with works on societal, socio-linguistic and socio-pragmatic phenomena that contribute to different representations of religion and ideology.

One of the main issues that runs through the whole volume is whether or not one can adopt a unique definition of populism for these different continents and countries and in that case, what would be the common traits of populist discourses here and there. It is, as Charaudeau (2011) points out, very difficult to propose a unique definition of populism, because of the different historical and political contexts that influence it in different ways. Nevertheless, this author argues that populism always appears in a context of social and political crisis and that this crisis can take different forms, such as an *economic crisis*, an *identity and moral crisis* and a *crisis of political regime change*, as in many Eastern countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which had to adjust to the market economy and “discovered ultranationalism” (Charaudeau 2011). The presence of a charismatic leader, who promises to give power back to the people, is a characteristic recognized by several researchers. Thus, according to de la Torre & Arnson (2013), a populist style typically rewards a charismatic way of approaching the voters, with leaders using their repertoire of emotions to transgress the traditional rules of the political game that are normally based on mutual respect.

It is important to remember that the word “populism” has not always been a negative term; in fact, against other political backgrounds it was used to express the necessity of creating a political alternative, as it was in the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where a populist party emerged to balance and challenge the political system which was dominated by Republicans and Democrats (Dorna, 1999: 29). This party was the result of disappointment with the representative system at that time (Birnbbaum, 2012). Hence, it is possible to insist on the relation between disappointment, criticism of the establishment and the expression of populist voices. In fact, for some thinkers such as Hirschman, the representative government is doomed to disappoint people (Hirschman, 2002). Whereas the representative government is marked by the competition between different social and political groups, the populist movement aims at producing a homogenous figure of what the people is.

It would be an error to identify populist voices just with far-right and far-left political groups. Indeed, far-right and far-left parties may use a

populist style to contest the rules and influence voters, but populism does not have *per se* any ideological orientation. Besides the importance of a captivating leader, the main characteristics of populism are, according to Mouffe (2005), the reference to the people's will and to their uncensored forms of expressions, and the disappointment *vis-à-vis* the traditional elite. In Latin America, the former President of Argentina, Juan Perón, had a populist voice that was supported by a direct relation with the people and by a condemnation of all forms of political opposition. We find the same trend with forms of left-wing populism in Venezuela during the Hugo Chávez era (Freidenberg, 2007). Political plurality was strongly weakened during these regimes and the direct link to the people was constantly highlighted.

In France, strong leaders such as Emperor Napoléon III, Generals Boulanger and De Gaulle adopted a populist style by exceeding the traditional boundaries between classical political parties. The nation is in this context perceived as being the ultimate reference to produce a sensation of better unity that puts aside the rules of the political game and its bargaining system. One difficulty in the discussion regarding who is populist and who is not populist is the fact that many politicians adopt a populist style in order to gain more votes. The populist style manifests itself through the tendency to explicitly exclude groups which are considered to be the source of the crisis. The search for a scapegoat and *we against them* argumentative strategies are other common feature in these discourses (Charaudeau, 2011).

The question is to know whether populism and nationalism are identical as the waves of populism always emerged during the process of globalization at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the second world war. Populist voices are linked to a form of political reaction with the temptation of defining and simplifying what 'the people' means (Rosanvallon, 2015). This is a common feature of all populist regimes that refuse to analyse the complexity of the debates. Let us note finally, as Charaudeau (2011) does, a lack of homogeneity of populism on the ideological level. To illustrate this statement, he gives a few examples such as the authoritarian form of populism carried by Perón, the anti-American, pro-Cuban and socialist form of populism endorsed by Chávez or the monarchist nationalist and right-wing liberalism of Jean-Marie Le Pen, just to name a few.

After this brief discussion of the possible definitions of populism and its various forms in the past and in the contemporary period in different contexts, we now succinctly describe some of the major issues that are

addressed by the fifteen selected and peer-reviewed papers included in the present volume as well as providing an outline of the theoretical and methodological frameworks within which these studies are conducted. We will then end this introductory text by the summaries of each chapter, provided by the authors themselves. The contributors focus on the emergence of extreme and populist discourses, coming from movements or parties such as Marine Le Pen's *Front National* and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's *France insoumise* in France, Pablo Iglesias' *Podemos* in Spain and Hugo Chávez' *Bolivarian Revolution* in Venezuela, among others. Most studies are carried out within the framework of discourse analysis. The different approaches – at the boundaries of linguistics and the social sciences – are complementary: whereas studies with linguistic and discourse analytical approaches have a starting point of analysis in the structure of the texts and the language use and interaction, the political and social sciences have their starting points in society at a macro-structural level. The common denominator of the chapters is the focus on the discursive and rhetorical characteristics of recently emerged movements of populism and extremism in Europe and Latin America. Some of the studies use the tools and methods of the Anglo-Saxon school of discourse analysis called *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA). These studies refer in particular to the works of Fairclough (1998, 1999, 2015) and van Dijk (2003, 2006). Their approach is concerned with how language phenomena and textual relations both reflect and create power relations in society and how the structures of texts are related to the social and political context. The CDA perspective is interesting as it reveals whether the populist style is just a phase in the conquest of power or a core value in the constitution of a new ideological order. It describes how a process of othering is done, which means how other opinions are represented in the political debate (Van Dijk, 2006). Other papers are in line with the *French school of discourse analysis* with the pioneering works by Michel Foucault and Michel Pêcheux in the late 1960s in France, and more recently relayed by those of Dominique Maingueneau and Patrick Charaudeau. The latter in particular has inspired the recent research in the field of media and political discourse, in France as well as in South America (Charaudeau 2005, 2009, 2011). The key concepts of Charaudeau's approach, as well as that of several authors in this volume, are those of "communication situation" and "positioning". The idea of "positioning" (French *positionnement*) depends on a set of discursive processes (*descriptive, narrative, argumentative*) and a set of words whose semantism reveals

the positioning of the enunciating subject with respect to certain values, all in relation to the situational conditions of production (Charaudeau 2005). Another methodological approach is proposed by Bolívar (2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010, 2013), who uses a critical interactional perspective, centred on dialogue in order to analyse the expressions of populism in Hugo Chávez's political and discursive strategies. Other studies in the volume use a related method to Bolívar's, a sociopragmatic approach that takes into account valid sociocultural aspects of the situation in which the communicative exchanges take place (Bravo, 2002, 2015). Finally, let us mention the framework provided by the combination of *argumentation theory*, *rhetoric* and *discourse analysis* (Amossy 2014) used by some authors to investigate polemic discourses coming from radical movements and to address issues such as racism and identity in the context of the migratory movements.

The first article presented in the volume is written by *Adriana Bolívar*. It deals with the discursive construction of an authoritarian form of populism in Venezuela, embodied by Hugo Chávez. The author claims that, given the resurgence of right-wing and left-wing populisms in the world, it is necessary to study their discursive manifestations in order to understand their relationship with democracy in different cultures. The case of the military authoritarian type of populism initiated by Hugo Chávez is analysed from the critical interactional perspective, whose central notion is dialogue (Bolívar 2007a, 2010, 2013). The features of populism are discussed and the political and discursive strategies, which took Chávez to power and allowed him to keep it for 14 years, are presented.

*Julien Auboussier* addresses the question of the appropriation of Europe by the extreme right in France. It first revisits its historical context in the ideological and strategic motivations that explain it. The second part of the article returns to some specific features of the extreme right discourse on the "Europe of Brussels" (populist rhetoric, strategy of designations of the opponent, dichotomization of debate, among other strategies).

In his study, *Thomas Johnen* analyses the image of the three Abrahamic religions in the recent political programmes of the French Front National in a comparative perspective with other successful populist radical right-wing parties in the EU-Countries of continental Western and Northern Europe. The results show that there is a common tendency of representing Islam negatively and avoiding overt anti-semitism. However, there are differences with regard to Judaism and/

or Israel as well as to the weight of Christianity for the national and/or European culture, which have interesting parallels with the national discourse traditions and the particular radical right-wing history of these parties.

*Esperanza R. Alcaide Lara* discusses the current Spanish political situation with the emergence of new parties such as *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, which present themselves as regenerators of a “catastrophic” situation. The speeches made by these parties’ leaders evoke those of the well-known populist leaders. From the perspective of Discourse Analysis (Charaudeau 2009), the author makes a comparative analysis of the discursive practices of Albert Rivera and Pablo Iglesias. Both have a populist background that is harder to discover in Rivera’s discourse, because of their more moderate linguistic forms. The corpus which is investigated is basically their interventions in the Report of Proceedings of the Spanish Congress of Deputies n° 4 (XII legislature, Investiture Debate).

*Manuel Alcántara-Plá* and *Ana Ruiz-Sánchez* analyse the presence of traditionally marginalized social groups within the political discourse on Twitter as an indicator of the inclusive or exclusive nature of the concept of the “people”. The authors have first identified which groups are present in the discourse on Twitter during the election campaign of December 2015 in Spain and how the discourse is built around them. They use a corpus of 16,306 tweets issued by the accounts of the five largest parties (PP, PSOE, Podemos, Cs and IU) and their respective candidates. The study has been carried out with a Corpus Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) methodology, which allows quantitative and qualitative analysis in extensive corpora. Analysing lexical selection frequencies and the semantic frames they convey, the research focuses on the study of the political exclusion of populist discourse and its low permeability in relation to minorities.

*Fabienne Baidier*’s study focuses on the adjectives “modernized/professionalized” which have been used to describe the Front National in the press since Marine Le Pen was elected leader of the party in 2011. These qualifying adjectives are also found in academic research focused on Marine Le Pen’s persona strategy. The present work analyses her use of modality to build her argument (a positive ethos) toward her conclusion (a legitimate leader). The author of this article works with spoken data collected during the years 2012–2015 and with corpus linguistics tools. First, the most frequent lexical units which fall in the category of modality are studied. Secondly, the context of the units is evaluated

in order to observe the rhetorical use of such units such as building an ethos of sincerity and an ethos of morality.

*Morgane Belhadi's* investigation takes its starting point in the observation that, since Marine Le Pen replaced her father as leader of the far-right party, the National Front has drastically remodelled its communications. How did this change happen, while using a traditional populist rhetoric? In order to answer this question, the author studies the *ethos* of Marine Le Pen through the analysis of two debates, opposing her with Julien Dray in 2002, and with Jean-Luc Mélenchon in 2012, and by examining non-verbal communications such as the way she presents herself through her gestures, her body posture, facial expressions, and the way she dresses.

Using the tools of interaction analysis and the concept of “face”, *María Bernal's* object of study is the Podemos party in Spain. This populist party has represented the third political force of the country (in general elections in 2015 and 2016). In her analysis, the discursive positioning of representatives of both politics and the media about the politician Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Podemos, frequently results from derision and ridicule, with attacks on his personal image and, in many occasions, on aspects such as his personal hygiene, clothing, etc. (Bernal, 2016, Bolívar, 2008). The objective of this work is to deepen the treatment of the figure of Pablo Iglesias and other members of Podemos in terms of the damage to his personal image, face, with *ad hominem* arguments. In order to do this, Bernal explores different types of discourse in the media scene (Charaudeau, 2005), such as editorial and opinion columns published in the main Spanish newspapers, through the notions of ‘face’ and ‘role face’ (Bravo 2002, 2015), framed in Sociocultural Pragmatics (Bravo, 2015), and ideological discourse (van Dijk, 2003).

*Alba Nalleli Garcia Aguëro* argues that schoolbooks are an important testimony to the ideas that a regime wants to transmit and are at the base of the identity scheme of a nation. In Mexico, textbooks have shaped a cognitive model of “Mexican” in which, for socio-political reasons, the indigenous peoples have not been considered. This paper is embedded in the critical discourse studies. From a socio-cognitive approach, the objective is to identify, in three generations of elementary books, the textual and iconic mechanisms by which the figure of the indigenous is constructed in contrast to the prototypical model of “Mexican”, as well as to elucidate the reasons why the indigenous has been silenced discursively.



*Nieves Hernández Flores*, like María Bernal and Esperanza Alcaide Lara, centres her study on the discursive construction of the politician Pablo Iglesias, just some months after the establishment of his party Podemos and three months before his first participation in a general election in Spain (May 2014). The focus of her analysis is a talk during an informal meeting with supporters belonging on the left of the political spectrum. This statement displays the principles of Iglesias' ideology at the beginning of his political career. Methodologically, this proposal includes two related approaches. On the one hand, discourse analysis from a cognitive perspective is employed for identifying and describing the discursive spaces (Zupnik, 1994) that are constructed by the politician in discourse. On the other hand, a sociopragmatic approach shows the social and cultural consequences for the speaker's face in keeping with the different roles he plays during his statement (cf. Bravo, 2002). The study concludes that the creation of discursive spaces permits the candidate to develop his political ideology and to reinforce persuasion.

*Sandra Issel-Dombert* and *Aline Widlers-Lohéac* examine the success of two opposing rhetorical strategies of two far-right parties to win over voters, the *Front National* (FN) in France and the *Union Démocratique du Centre* (UDC) in Switzerland. More specifically, the authors compare their discourse on the crisis caused by the influx of migrants. The analysis of *topoi* allows them to identify the elements in common as well as the differences between the argumentative structures of these two parties. The study is based on Martin Wengeler's theory of *topos* to uncover the argumentative structures. The data are from the speeches of the FN and the SVP, as well as the programmes and tweets of the parties that touch on immigration.

*Véronique Magaud's* paper addresses the issue of identities on the French political and academic scenes following the aggression in Cologne during New Year's Day 2016. The identity positioning is grasped through the contextualization of quotations, phrases, precedents. The analysis examines how the Self and the Other are defined and naturalized through *topoi*, and analogy. Shocking events make the issue of identity more acute and harbour fictions about the Self and the Others. The migrants thus become a key issue in political and academic discourses in media.

*Christophe Premat's* object of study is the movement *La France insoumise* founded by the left-wing leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2016, around a socialist and environmental programme, "L'Avenir en commun". The objective is both to impose an ideological



vision of social relations and to prepare future electoral deadlines. In the course of the presidential election campaign, Jean-Luc Mélenchon repeatedly referred to the idea of a “get-lostism” (French *dégagisme*) which means that a large part of the representatives should be recalled or removed from duty as they have betrayed the meaning of the mandate that people gave them. This contribution proposes to analyse the genealogy of this injunction which has been repeatedly taken up as a slogan. The chapter is based on the critical discourse analysis that focuses on relations between what Berger & Luckmann (1991) call “social reality” and the conditions of emergence of the political discourse (Fairclough, 2015: 49).

Marion Sandré and Émilie Devriendt’s article deals with a polemic within the French radical Left (extra-parliamentary groups) about an antiracist protest held in Paris on October 31, 2015, the “March for dignity and against racism”. The authors study texts opposed to the March, written by anarchist or revolutionary/left communist groups, in order to analyse their argumentative and political goals. Following Amossy’s definition of polemic discourse (2014), they first analyse the way actors are being polarized through designation and then focus on categories addressing ideological and political issues, such as “race”, “identitarianism” and “racialism”, their use and definition being a key to the understanding of the antagonism brought to light by the counter-discourse studied.

The final study presented in the volume is written by Renata Varga. The author compares how Marine Le Pen and Viktor Orbán use the border theme in the context of the arrival of migrants in Europe. The analysis shows two populist visions of border security: one is the restoration and control of national borders; the other is the closure of the external borders of the Schengen Area. These narratives project two conceptions of national sovereignty: closed France and Fortress Europe. They reflect the representation of the borders as symbols of identity in terms of the protection of territory and the assertion of power.

By combining linguistics and social/political sciences in a discourse analytical approach, the papers presented in this volume bring new understanding of the mechanisms behind extreme political discourses in Romance-speaking countries considering different socio-cultural and political contexts. The questions treated here have great relevance for our modern societies. It is our hope that this edited volume will help to promote the analysis of the political discourses, from a linguistic perspective as well as a social science perspective.

We would like to offer our warm thanks to the fifteen authors for the good scientific cooperation over the last two years. We would also like to express our thanks to Stockholm University and the Romance Linguistics network for the financial support that has been awarded to us for the organization of the international symposium in 2016 and for the publication of this volume.

The Editors  
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 María Bernal  
 Christophe Premat  
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