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RADICALIZATION OF LANGUAGE IN POLITICAL SPEECH AND ITS POSITION IN MEDIA COMMUNICATION¹

Zdenka Kumorová*

ABSTRACT

The characteristic language of right-wing populism is clearly identifiable on multiple levels of the Slovak language system. The party's slogans have been oriented towards people, a common man, and that might be the reason why potential voters overlook the party's extremist ideology. Persuasive effect of journalistic texts is emphasized by the targeted application of emotional and expressive statements. Methodologically, the language analysis was performed by sorting out the lexicon according to the conceptual-cognitive component of the lexeme's meaning and the pragmatic component of words. By focusing on the right-wing populists' lexis, we can clearly distinguish its striking expressive stylistic qualifier; in this case, we can talk about an apparent, explicit expressivity. These words are expressive based on the parameter of style or from the emotional-expressive point of view. While analysing the texts, we have derived from statements about functional expressivity in a text, which is either inherent - the expressive component is an inseparable part of a word's meaning and its permanent sign - or adherent - the sign of expressivity is contained only in a certain meaning of a multi-meaning word. The strength of the language of propaganda is obvious on the lexical level where, in addition to the factual component of meaning, we can also identify the pragmatic component which contains certain emotional or evaluating attitudes. The expressive element of particular texts was analysed from a linguistic-stylistic point of view, the analysis was supported by graphic representation. In regards to the intentional choice of lexical means used in the texts, we have detected inherent expressivity, which mediated the text's evocativeness in a direct way. Sometimes, the texts contained adherent expressivity stemming from transferring or widening the meaning based on similarity or logical connection, which is not immediately apparent and is usually encrypted in the text or supported by the visual aspect. These means of expressivity, unlike the automated inherent expressive phrases, neither demonstrate the emotional charge directly nor lead to extreme emotions. This type of communication spreads hatred and xenophobia in society, which is then misused by right-wing parties for their own interests, for example by talking about their attempts to stop the spread of migration or minority catastrophe in Slovakia.

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Introduction

The media setting presents political parties with opportunities to promote their own interests through communication marked with radicalised language. The message of their texts is promoted mainly via the Internet; on their websites, blogs written by members of these parties or billboards and leaflets. In Slovakia, the most prominent manifestations of radicalised language pointing at ideological pre-requisites of linguistic populism and extremism can be identified in the communication of two political parties, Kotlebovci - Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (ĽS Naše Slovensko) [Kotlebovci – People's Party Our Slovakia] and Slovenská národná strana (SNS) [Slovak National Party]. The term right-wing populism or its synonym '*populist radical right*' is defined as "*a narrowly conceived ideology by which the society is divided into two main homogeneous groups of 'the upright' and 'the corrupted' (for example 'fair citizens' versus 'the corrupt elite' or 'the fair nation' versus 'the enemy minorities', etc.)*" (Mikuš et al., 2016, p. 51). Currently, manifestations that can be characterized as right-wing extremism and considered a dangerous social occurrence are defined as "*sets of attitudes, behaviours and acts that are either organized or not, derive from racist or ethnically conditioned social inequality of a person, require ethnic homogeneity of a nation and refuse the principle of equality enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, justify the preference of community over an individual, refuse the liberal democracy's pluralism of values and wish to define democracy as retrograde*" (K prevencii extrémizmu..., 2016).

Manifestations and attitudes of political parties in Slovakia relate to several social indicators - considering the ethnic and social stratification, Slovakia is a diversified country and this fact incites certain cultural, social, economic, linguistic or ethnic debates in society. The recent migration crisis is also being misused for political purposes while it is interpreted incorrectly with the attitude directed against migrants. At the same time, we should not forget that contemporary society is experiencing an expansion of variety and diversity (Sirotová, Michvocíková, 2016, p. 34). Such impulses are being noticed by several political subjects of the extreme right who present them in their communication using radical, expressive language (Schuppener, 2019, 254-255).

This phenomenon is relatively well covered in extensive political science research, e.g. **Mudde** (2005), **Pankowski** (2010), **Baskes**, (2010, 2018), **Caiani**

and Parenti (2013), Pirro (2015, 2019), Kluknavská and Smolík (2016), Pfahl-Traugher (2016, 2020), Wolf (2017), Stojarová (2018), Ižák (2021), but deeper and more targeted research focused on the language and language strategies of right-wing populist parties in Slovakia or in the international context is still lacking.

International experts interested in the linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic aspects of speeches with an extremist and populist character were, for example Chomsky (2002), Lebedová (2013), Wodak (2013, 2019), Kazin (2014), Hildebrand (2017), Reisigl (2020), Schuppener (2019, 2015), who noted the link between the language of right-wing populism and the agitation function of speech. Experts who have been recently working on the language of right-wing populism in Slovakia are Dulebová (2013, 2019), Mikuš, Gurňák and Máriássyová (2016), Štefančík and Hvasta (2019), Štefančík (2020a, 2020b), Gregorík (2021), Fraštková (2019) and Demčíšák (2019), Kumorová (2019, 2021) and Žeňuchová (2021). Štefančík co-authored several publications on the language of right-wing populism. Authors Štefančík, Némethová and Seresová (2021) focused on the People's Party Our Slovakia and they intend to explore how Slovak far-right populists articulate the issue of international migration. Their analysis has found that the language of far-right populists reflects a dichotomy of "we/us" (good) vs. "they/them" (evil). At the same time, Štefančík and Stradiotová (2021) in their research of the language of right-wing extremists derive from the hypothesis that this kind of political language has specific features, especially at the lexical level and they assumed the existence of a dichotomous definition in the sense of a friend vs. an enemy, more precisely we vs. they, or us vs. others. To intensify the effect of the content in their texts, the representatives of linguistic extremism use a formal tool based on the principle of opposing dichotomy (Štefančík, Liďák, 2017, p. 274). The use of hateful lexemes ideologically stems from the already mentioned patriotism or even nationalism, where the authors of posters "find space for ongoing creation of an enemy's image, and when it concerns "common" people, enemies are 'unsuitable' minorities of various type (bureaucratic, ethnic, cultural, religious, etc.), especially different religious and cultural groups (Fraštková, 2019, p. 286). Štefančík (2020, p. 377-382) deals with the communication strategies of the Slovak far right and far left and he finds common features in several narratives: a narrative of Slovakia is threatened, the narrative of Liberal democracy is bad and Russia is our friend.

The characteristic language of right-wing populism is clearly identifiable on multiple levels of the Slovak language system; it is most obvious on the lexical

level as a result of its striking lexicon and semantically evocative content. Verbalization of authors preparing texts for the right-wing populists is characterized by hidden (adherent) expressivity as well as by visible (inherent) expressivity which is contained in a word itself and is quite prominent, easily detectable, in the text. According to co-authors Čechová, Krčmová, Minářová (2008, p. 260), the informative and persuasive effect of journalistic texts is emphasized by the targeted application of emotional and expressive statements. Hypothetically, specific texts of political groups belonging to right-wing populism frequently apply evocative words with either positive or negative meaning; this facilitates the text's expressivity with a certain intention. The expressive element of particular texts was analysed from a linguistic-stylistic point of view, the analysis was supported by graphic representation. Because both words and pictures are important elements of communication and are perceived together, we are going to use the visual-verbal character of promotional materials used in elections to point out the radicalisation of ĽS Naše Slovensko's language. But at the moment, the website of ĽS Naše Slovensko (People's Party Our Slovakia) has not been available since M. Kotleba was tried for spreading extremist content.

1. Communication Strategy of a Right-Wing Populist Party in Slovak Elections

All political parties form their typical communication strategy, but the communication of the above-stated parties (ĽS Naše Slovensko and SNS) is dominated by a more radical language. SNS had been considered a representative of political extremism mainly in the late 1990s until the year 2010. In this period, the party had a *“character of a predominantly nationalistic party with a strongly profiled political discourse typical for their leaders directed mainly towards minorities and, in the past, also towards EU and NATO”* (Mikuš et al., 2016, p. 48). Lately, the communication of SNS seems to have cooled off when talking about its language and style. It has become visibly less radicalised than the rhetoric of ĽS Naše Slovensko (although the level of attenuation related to the party's political discourse in itself is an interesting aspect worth further study). This is the reason, however, why in this study, we are going to analyse solely the language used by ĽS Naše Slovensko. Methodologically, the analysis was performed by sorting out the lexicon according to the conceptual-cognitive component of the lexeme's meaning and the pragmatic component of words. Hypothetically, we have derived from statements about functional expressivity in

a text, which is either inherent - the expressive component is an inseparable part of a word's meaning and its permanent sign - or adherent - the sign of expressivity is contained only in a certain meaning of a multi-meaning word (Findra, 2013, p. 53).

Although the party was originally registered in 2000, it was not until 2010 that it changed its name to ĽS NŠ and later modified it once more to Kotleba – The People's Party Our Slovakia (Kotleba – ĽS Naše Slovensko) and later Kotlebovci – The People's Party Our Slovakia (Kotlebovci – ĽS Naše Slovensko). The People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽS Naše Slovensko), since its changed, Marian Kotleba has been its leader. In this case, a strong leader guarantees the success of the whole party. This fact is emphasised by I. Dulebová (2013, p. 47) who states that *“the politician himself and certain elements of his behaviour acquire an important position in the political discourse”*. ĽS Naše Slovensko presents itself as a national, social, Christian party and at the same time as *“an alternative and the only true opposition to the corrupted and criminal ‘democratic’ system and current parliamentary parties that all have, to a lesser or larger extent, stolen from, betrayed and sold out our country and the nation”* (O nás, 2018). The party employs an emotional-expressive assessment of society while trying to separate itself from the current ruling society by lexemes with the obvious inherent expressivity of words such as *corrupt, criminal, steal, betray, sell out* or the adherent expressivity depicted through the meta-linguistic character of verbalisation - the existence of an expressive lexeme is suggested through the distinguishing function of quotation marks. In this context, the quotation marks refer to the negative evaluation of an originally factual lexeme and they always *“point out to a certain intent of the author or possible emerging connotations; they are never a mere meaningless signal of a situation”* (Čechová et al., 2008, p. 262). In another characteristic, the party distances itself from external as well as internal enemies again through an expressive text: *“Our uncompromising program, open and striking rhetoric and our fight against parasites and thieves in the parliament as well as in settlements are reasons why the foreign-paid media continuously denigrate us and why the ruling power and its police machinery persecute us”* (O nás, 2018). In this characteristic, the party's ideology is also presented through a militant vocabulary – *“it is these precise expressions that are to evoke an idea that it is them - the extremists - who have the solution for protecting people against internal or external threats”* (Štefančík, Liďák 2017, p. 478). In particular, in lexemes related to protection (that is also here), the evaluating expression *fight against* seem more aggressive in connection with

words containing a negative evaluation such as *thief* or *machinery*. An increased expressivity is also facilitated by lexemes with adherent (*parasite*) or contextual expressivity in connection with words *paid media* and *ruling power*. The party infers its aggression also in verbal attacks through the phrase *striking rhetoric* - this is the basic attribute of the language used by extremist parties. This description also utilizes concretisation in order to become more illustrative and to strengthen the impact on the addressee's emotions. In connection with negative political rhetoric, *the paid*, mainstream, opinion-forming *media* are also considered an internal enemy - this linguistic strategy is chosen precisely to identify the supporters of the current non-functional socio-political system in Slovakia. These populists describe their own alternative media as those that tell the truth (Štefančík, Liďák, 2017, p. 480). This strategy is repeatedly employed in the rhetoric of ĽS Naše Slovensko: "*I appreciate the work of the so-called 'alternative media' and their effort to supplement the tendentious mainstream newscast in a difficult information war*" (Kotleba, 2019).

The regional support of ĽS Naše Slovensko got off the ground in 2013, but as early as 2009, the party's representative, M. Kotleba, tried to gain the position of the district leader in the regional elections of Banská Bystrica district, in which he unexpectedly received 10.03% of votes and won the fourth place. This was the first step that foreshadowed his victory in the Banská Bystrica district elections of 2013. Regional elections in Slovakia are specific due to low interest of voters. According to analysts, there are several reasons for this: it is connected either to voters not understanding the importance of these elections or to the overall apathy of voters concerning regional politics. This fact helped the right-wing ĽS Naše Slovensko to be successful in the regional elections. In the 2016 parliamentary elections in Slovakia, the position of the party significantly strengthened, the party gained 8.4% of votes (5th place among all the parliamentary parties) and Kotleba himself received 156 355 votes and became one of the most voted candidates in these elections. For the frustrated voters of the previous election period, ĽS Naše Slovensko that saw a way out of the unfavourable economic and socio-cultural situation became a suitable alternative. As a result of the higher unemployment rate, the party appealed to young voters coming out of high schools or universities, ethnic conflicts or big differences between the west and east parts of Slovakia attracted people living in these regions or places aggrieved by the coexistence of several minorities. The speed by which the party was able to gain the support of a vast mass of people was very surprising. "*The Kotlebas are strong on social networks. These networks*

substituted for the media space of so-called standard media." (Dömeová, 2016) ĽS Naše Slovensko members addressed their potential voters via several Facebook pages where they were very active and their communication was strong. It is reflected in a huge number of views, comments and fans who became attracted to their demonstrative and concrete rhetoric. The party's advertising campaign was mostly based on attacking another political party or an opponent while the goal of such promotion is to form a negative image of the competing part or to push it into an unusual or unfavourable situation (Bradová et al., 2008, p. 39-41). Their radicalised communication concerning the migration issue in the current political discourse focused on the threat of losing or not being able to find work as a result of the influx of migrants. The strength of the language of propaganda is obvious on the lexical level where, in addition to the factual component of meaning, we can also identify the pragmatic component which contains certain emotional or evaluating attitudes. Pragmatism in verbalisation is a natural part of common communication; this component, contrary to the factual part, depends on the actual context, it helps to create a set of connotations related to expressive characteristics of lexemes or characteristics based on socially and culturally conditioned associations (Čechová et al., 2008, p. 169).

2. Attributes of the Language Used by Right-wing Populists in Slovakia

The language of extremism or right-wing populism is characterized by typical attributes in terms of content or form while the result is a linguistically simple communication enriched by an expressive evaluating lexicon. Such a form of expression sounds as if it was created by a common citizen of Slovakia. Through this type of content, the language of right-wing populism sympathizes with citizens' emotions, requirements and injustices. In the texts written by the representatives of right-wing populism, the voters find affinity and reference to real problems of Slovak citizens. To strengthen the impact of their content, representatives of linguistic extremism use a contrasting formal tool based on the principle of opposing dichotomy (Štefančík, Liďák 2017, p. 274). Depicting up-to-date topics through dichotomic opposition seems to be especially effective with the Slovak population; the communication impact on voters can be proven by substantial successes of ĽS Naše Slovensko in the parliamentary, regional and, as of late, also presidential elections. Although this strategy is effective in terms of a quick acquisition of voters, if it produces no real action, the success tends to

be short-term. Therefore, ĽS Naše Slovensko employed various anti-campaign strategies in the elections. In 2017, the voters reacted against the unproductive politics of the party and together tried to reverse this situation, which finally resulted in the loss of its candidates in regional elections as well as M. Kotleba's loss in the fight for the post of Banská Bystrica district leader. Kotleba's candidacy in the presidential elections of 2019 did not grant him the residence in the presidential palace (he finished in fourth place), but the party's position strengthened again.

For the propagators of extreme right-wing ideology, the use of emotional-expressive words is one of the most efficient strategies as their objective is to win over a wide spectrum of the population through the emotional impact of their communication. Their statements are also supported by a simple structure and easily detectable and decipherable linguistic means. This rhetoric attracts people who do not tend to verify the authenticity of constructed and emotionally based facts; they become easily influenced and manipulated by extreme populists whose goal is to strengthen their own predatory (economic-power) position in politics. The emotional-expressive lexicon with a negative evaluating tone shuns the formal inexpressive lexicon and the radicalised political speech becomes crude, aggressive and ruthless, void of any signs of politeness or compromise. The expressive lexicon in these texts reveals an emotional evaluating component with an affective evaluating lexical meaning (Orgoňová, Bohunická, 2011, p. 53). These lexemes are characterized mainly by crude words, which is nothing exceptional in the language of extremism, mainly in specific public texts on social networks, reflecting on a certain social topic: "*a Filipino Henry has been beaten to death by a rough-neck*" (Mizík, 2018), where *rough-neck* is a substandard word with an inherent negative expressivity meaning "*no-good person*" and the lexeme *beat* points to adherent negative expressivity of one of the meanings of a multi-meaning word "*to cause pain by blows*". The same applies to expressions "*bootlickers of the American Embassy*" or "*cronies in the government*" (Kotleba, 2018), in which *bootlicker* is a pejorative word with a strong negative emotional tone reflecting a contemptuous attitude and the word *crony* contains a qualifier of an inherent expressivity. "*In an official communication, their language is tempered by using softer expressive statements; what (strategically) comes to the fore are lexemes with an emotional evaluating lexical meaning without the descriptive evaluating component, where it is only the context that makes it clear to which characteristics the positive or negative evaluating component was applied.*" (Orgoňová, Bohunická, 2011, p. 50) Eventually, the evaluating component itself

is intentionally applied in a lexeme in which the evaluating component is part of the descriptive evaluating meaning of the word. In this case, direct intellectual evaluating components are tied to the transferred meaning with an emotional evaluating component as an expression of a relationship to the given entity (Dolník, 2007, p. 22-28). This strategy is used by ĽS Naše Slovensko representatives when trying to identify internal and external enemies: *parasite* or *asocial*. The Roma minority became the subject of communication while the party intended to induce addressees' negative evaluating relationship towards the foreign, minority component of the Slovak population.

Right-wing populists use this communication strategy continuously in the regional as well as nation-wide political rhetoric. In the parliamentary elections of 2016, the following text appeared on billboards as well as in the party's program statement: *We are going to set straight the thieves in ties and the parasites in settlements*. The election campaign motto was directed against both internal enemies: the current ruling coalition and the numerous Roma minority in Slovakia. The syntagmatic connections substituting these entities - *thieves in ties* and *parasites in settlements* - are expressive through their evaluating component of meaning and are presented mainly by swear-words and vulgarisms. Also, these "lexical units have a function of expressing an intensive negative or positive emotional reaction towards the personality of another person or his or her actions" (Orgoňová, Bohunická, 2011, p. 53). The evaluating component in the phrase *thieves in ties* is obvious because it is distinguished via the affectively evaluating lexical meaning reflecting a high level of emotional experiencing. Its influence on the addressee is strengthened by the lexeme *ties* which directly refers to persons in the political sphere. Both words act in contrast: tie as an expression of noblesse, adornment, seriousness - thief as a representative of a socially inferior community, as a dishonest person who reaps profit at the expense of others. A communication strategy focusing on a negative campaign aiming to prevent another candidate's election is nothing novel, in the case of ĽS Naše Slovensko it was a frequently used communication tool. A negative campaign centres on the opponent's shortfalls, weakens the position of a stronger candidate in order to prevent his winning (Lebedová, 2013, p. 157). In the phrase *parasites in settlements*, the emotional evaluating component is implied and it is a result of transferring the meaning along the intellectual evaluating component (Dolník, 2007, p. 22-28). It means that the emotional negative component itself is achieved secondarily based on the primary knowledge of reality, "*parasite - sponger*"; and based on understanding the characteristics of such a creature, it

is evaluated as sponging. This transferred character trait is further assigned to people living in Slovak settlements, that is the Roma people. The phrase “*we are going to set straight*” contains the subject “*we*” (in the Slovak version, the subject is unexpressed); this is another effective communication strategy of right-wing populism - setting oneself apart from others via the use of personal pronouns (Štefančík, Liďák, 2017, p. 276). In addition to the intellectual evaluating component, the phrase with the descriptive component “*to discipline someone*” also bears the fixed emotional evaluating component “*to deal with something or someone bad, undisciplined*”. This component is strengthened in the contextual expressivity by its connection with other elements of the text (Zima, 1961). Negative associations related to the Roma and other minorities, or the government, was obvious on anti-minorities billboards in slogans such as *It’s easy for them to laugh! From our taxes!* (See Pic. 1) and *We are going to whip into shape those asocial individuals and political thieves* (See Pic. 2), *We are going to send them to labour camps* (see Pic. 3). This aggressive propagandistic rhetoric is exceptionally effective in elections as voters feel various economic-social frustrations behind which they see current ruling parties or individuals.

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Sources: Picture 1: [online]. [accessed on 19.03.2016]. Available at:

<https://www.peticie.com/forum/161198>. Picture 2: [online]. [accessed on 19.03.2016]. Available at: <https://www.peticie.com/forum/160904/start/175>. Picture 3: [online]. [accessed on 01.02.2016]. Available at: <http://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/nase-slovensko-februar-2016.pdf>.

The principle of contrast in the dichotomy US GOOD – THEM BAD can be observed in several pre-election slogans; after all, this strategy dominated in the party's election program itself. We are going to demonstrate it on a slogan based on the principle of contrast FOR vs. AGAINST, where the contradictory dichotomy is implied by using different colours, red for the current system and blue for the candidate for mayor, Š. Vartovník; the colour contrast (not just a verbal one) became one of the party's non-verbal communication tools (see Pic. 4).

At the background of the dichotomic opposition of pronouns YOUR vs. HIS in D. Rajtek's slogan (*Your representative is obliged to represent the citizens and the interest of the town. Not the groups, his pride and his financial profit*) (see Pic. 5), we can observe the party's attempt to distance itself from the current situation in Slovakia. The pronouns strengthen the negative effect on the addressee not only in connection with the inherently negative evaluating lexeme *pride* and the contextually evaluating phrase *financial profit* but also by repeating the connectors. The polyptoton trope (repeating a possessive pronoun in its different grammatical form) serves as a concretisation of the previous lexeme – *groups*. This word is an elliptical representation of the syntagmatic phrase *financial groups*, which is expressive within the style – in the expert style, it is an economic term. The term *financial group* indirectly associates with the expressive phrase *financial sharks*. The strategy of employing this phrase in the ĽS Naše Slovensko slogan was not coincidental, the objective was to take advantage of the negative media coverage of financial oligarchs who were scandalously tied to the political scene. It indirectly refers to a negative occurrence in society – the government's support of financial groups with the aim of prioritising their own profits. This language strategy was frequently used by the party in order to increase promotional influence. The dull, long slogan of D. Rajtek (Pic. 5) along with his promotional material filled with too much information seem less effective, though.

Equally effective is the "application of the mobilisation policy, which antagonizes while attempting to mobilise through topics that the addressed masses might see as threats" (Mikuš et al., 2016, p. 52). This is achieved via linguistic means focusing on fear and its elimination. As a result, slogans used in

the regional elections were dominated by phrases such as *Safe and Prosperous Nitra*, while the word safe suggests that voters will be provided with protection against threats or that they would not need to feel threatened; these are basic evaluating meanings without the descriptive component. The same applies to the lexeme *prosperous* which contains an implied positive evaluating component related to profit, promised to all voters who live in the region. The efficiency of the appeal was supported by the presence of Pribina (in the form of a statue) (see Pic. 6) who strengthens the historical stability and prosperity of the region; this represents a typical orientation of right-wing populist parties towards the past and certain historical events.

Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



Sources: Picture 4: [online]. [accessed on 15.11.2020]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>.
 Picture 5: [online]. [accessed on 15.11.2020]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>.
 Picture 6: [online]. [accessed on 11.09.2020]. Available at: https://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1882571495129825&id=563516073702047&set=a.563528277034160&source=44&refid=13&__tn__=%2B%3E.

The Pribina program was employed by several ĽS Naše Slovensko candidates in the Nitra region, while the candidates concretized themselves through their own photographs, for example, J. Kecskés (see Pic. 7).

Another elliptically expressed slogan with the presence of populism is *Piešťany citizens in the first place!* Through the quantitative expressivity contained in the ordinal number first, it implies importance or primacy. Based on the context, it is possible to identify a positively evaluated characteristic related to Piešťany citizens who were the primary subject of interest for the party's representative, in particular the candidate for the town's mayor, M. Juriš (see Pic. 8). The effect of the slogan is supported by the candidate's photograph, which can be seen as substantiation of promises anchored in words.

The slogan *New would be new with me* (see Pic. 9), used by the candidate for mayor of Nová Dubnica (Nová means new in Slovak), G. Krupová, contained a stylistic figure as a means of wordplay; it is supposed to arouse interest. The lexeme *new* incorporates an evaluating component which assesses the relationship towards the town, while new means other than before and this innovation points to a positive change. The candidate's billboard was visually stark with a prevailing white colour while the attention is supposed to be directed to the playful slogan combining various font types and sizes as well as the candidate's photograph with a charismatic look, gazing towards the voters. Both her poster and her image seemed simple, legible, containing nothing disturbing, which can have a stronger effect on the voter - external attributes are not important, what's essential are actions.

Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9



Sources: Picture 7: [online]. [accessed on 11.09.2018]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>. Picture 8: [online]. [accessed on 23.10.2018]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/222796894852583/photos/a.225858821213057/521252725006997/?type=3&theater> Picture 9: [online]. [accessed on 15.11.2020]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>.

Another populistically designed advertising slogan was Pavel Švaňa's: *In the name of decent people* (see Pic. 10). The orientation towards people is substantiated through an elliptical form, directly via the lexeme *people*. The candidate appealed to voters through the positive evaluating meaning contained in the word *decent*. To strengthen its force, the party often put this lexeme into contrast with the evaluating lexeme with a negative meaning, for example, *WE the decent* or *decent people* versus *Gypsy extremists* or *corrupted politicians*; these expressions frequently appeared in the statements of the party's representatives related to various social events.

Another slogan *Find courage Zvolenites* (see Pic. 11) gambled on the direct address of voters in the town of Zvolen, albeit with an orthographic mistake, a missing comma before the address. The appeal *find courage* in the form of an imperative in second person plural signals a direct contact with the addressee. In journalistic writing, the imperative's role is to win the addressee over and make him/her understand the writer's point of view (Čechová, Krčmová. Minářová, 2008, p. 260). This form tries to persuade the voter more aggressively by pointing out the semantic meaning of the word *courage* as "*fearlessness, to not be afraid*" or "*to not pay attention to danger*". In connection with the word *find*, it becomes a more urgent message encouraging a wider spectrum of voters to enforce this feature by circling the candidate I. Sitár's name on the ballot. A charismatic look and a serious appearance boost the message's urgency.

In the 2017 elections, the lexeme *courage* became the party's ideologically unifying catchword on billboards and posters: *With courage against the system* (see Pic. 12).

Picture 10



Picture 11



Picture 12



Sources: Picture 10: [online]. [accessed on 05.11.2018]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>. Picture 11: [online]. [accessed on 16.10.2018]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/342636936472879/photos/a.342668326469740/343370806399492/?type=3&theater>. Picture 12: [online]. [accessed on 01.02.2017]. Available at: <http://www.necenzurovane.net/volby2016/volby15.html>.

In slogans of several LS Naše Slovensko representatives, the word appeared in various forms: Courageously and responsibly for Hurbanovo in the campaign of M. Rusňák (see Pic. 13) or With courage and pride for our Vranov (see Pic. 14) - one of the slogans of J. Mihalčina's campaign. All the slogans are constructed in the same way - the evaluating appellation lexemes are assigned to town citizens or towns for which the candidates are running. In slogans containing the town's name, the same message is expressed through a synecdoche, where the place is substituted with persons. In general, metonymy is a common linguistic

tool used by the party.

The slogan TRADITIONALLY AND RESPONSIBLY was used by more candidates in regional elections of 2017. This slogan was then personified via particular people's names and photographs used on posters, but the unifying message of the party was manifested by a striking red background (as can be seen, for example, on the poster of A. Hudecová, see Pic. 15). The candidate A. Hudecová demonstrates the preservation of ideological traditions verbally as well as visually. She supports the seriousness of her message by her neat appearance, formal clothes and an overall pleasant look. This case, too, has confirmed that the party's persuasive tactic is based on verbal as well as visual communication with the recipient. ĽS Naše Slovensko likes the lexicon that refers to higher forces like God, Christianity, Church - the poster of A. Hudecová is symbolically dominated by a photograph showing a part of town (Nové Zámky) with a church. "God and the Church are important elements of the political lexicon; one reason is also the reference to the existence of the first Slovak Republic (1939 – 1945) which was led by a Catholic priest" (A. Hlinka) (Štefančík, Lidák, 2017, p. 276).

The Christian motif became a strong promotional element also in the case of M. Kotleba during the last Presidential elections; commentators, journalists and voters themselves agree that in connection with this anti-system candidate, the results in Slovakia are surely alarming: "The first round of presidential elections shows that Slovakia has a problem, a bigger problem than we might have admitted" (Bardy, 2019). Faith and Christianity are becoming marketing practices of our populists and autocrats (Demčíšák, Frašítková, 2019, p. 78-79). The Christian motif in the form of an ellipse For God, for the Nation has appeared as either the main or the secondary slogan on promotional materials used by several representatives of the party; this slogan is a symbolic link to the fascist Hlinka party; the slogan For God and for the Nation appeared in the upper part of the badge.

Picture 13



Picture 14



Picture 15



Sources: Picture 13: [online]. [accessed on 15.11.2018]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>. Picture 14: [online]. [accessed on 11.10.2017]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/JozefMihalcinPSK/photos/a.1730753507226800/1744214022547415/?type=3&theater>. Picture 15: [online]. [accessed on 21.09.2018]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>.

The basic language strategy of the right-wing populism used by several candidates in regional elections is the use of personal pronouns to differentiate themselves from others. In the European Parliament elections 2019, the candidate L. Bočkayová (candidate for the mayoral race) chose a more aggressive strategy of engaging the voters by commenting on the social situation in Slovakia. On her Facebook page she wrote: “*Splendid, we are going to be fed by waste and carcasses while the Maecenases in the Union decide... they force us to import fourth-category garbage. This is one of the reasons why our MPs run for the EP ...*” (Bočkayová, 2019). The expressive, colloquial expression *splendid* draws attention to the elliptical sentence, where its lexical meaning “*a great thing*” is clearly ironic and thus its expressivity points to the negative evaluating

parameter of the expression. The lexeme *carcass*, serving as an intensifier of the previous expression with a negative evaluating component *waste*, is a supplementary (or analogous) expressive component of the text. The strong expressive message is intensified by the phrase *Maecenases in the Union*, where the outwardly factual phrase becomes immediately negative; within the context, it acquires a negative evaluating attitude of the text's author. The expressive lexeme *garbage* in connection with the quantitative expressiveness of the ordinal number *fourth* intensifies the negative assessment of reality. These lexemes evoke the emotionality of the author's language that affects the addressee's sentiments and motivates him or her to agree with the author. The feeling of disgust the addressee is supposed to feel was misused by L. Bočková to promote the party in the European elections. She thus uses a popular strategy of right-wing extremism - the dichotomic opposition indicated in the external enemy - and at the same time, puts herself in the position of rectifying the situation if the party gets voted into the European Parliament.

The promotional material of M. Uhrík (see Pic. 16) was based on a negative campaign aimed at the district administrator Belica. Visually and verbally, the campaign was more aggressive; its goal was to contrast the results of the existing administrator with the candidate's visions. What's interesting from the visual point of view, in addition to the dichotomic intention based on verbal contrast, is the significant segmentation and informative saturation of the leaflet. It is also supported by several colours used to differentiate the content. A slogan identifying the candidate with the party's message dominates the leaflet. This general slogan for the parliamentary elections is further concretized in M. Uhrík's visions by using blue colour and smaller letters. The black colour is used to state the specific added value of the candidate and the green in the bottom rim identifies his name, titles and his function in the party. Compositionally, the leaflet is constructed in a logical and functional manner and suitably supplemented by the candidate's photograph. He wasn't successful enough to secure the post of Nitra district administrator, but he gained 23,502 votes which can be considered strong support.

Populist sentiments had been boosted through topics related to potential threats to voters. Traditionally, the local Roma minority has been considered the biggest enemy. This strategy was exceptionally effective mainly in the regional elections; statistical results have confirmed bigger gains for the party in towns and villages with a higher proportion of Roma people (Mikuš et al., 2016, p. 56). The strategy of finding an enemy in local minorities did not work with any other

minority because the party did not find support in the other significant minority in Slovakia – the Hungarians.

The slogan *Together for a better life* (see Pic. 17) in our town points to common interests of the voter and the candidate – it is strengthened by the possessive pronoun ‘*our*’. The adverb *together* is not included without intention, the word’s meaning points to “a larger quantity”, thus the slogan aims to emphasize the need to activate a larger number of citizens to collectively fight against the Roma problem in the town of Bánovce nad Bebravou. A photograph on the election leaflet transmits an image of Roma citizens as passive, inactive. The expressive appeal is evoked by the semantic meaning of the phrase *real change* – “*real, true promises substantiated by actions*”, making sure that reality is not going to look like in the photograph which suggests social and cultural apathy, poverty and a lack of interest.

In the context of the word change, it is possible to decipher an evaluating meaning of the lexeme *real* with an evaluating parameter positive, “true” and thus good. The semantic essence of the word change itself contains “the acquisition of different features or characteristics” – different with the meaning of positive. The slogan of the party’s partners M. Uhrík and L. Bočkayová (see Pic. 18) also utilizes the semantic motif of a true change, that is substituting or replacing something bad – the original ruling parties and the dysfunctional system. The intensity of the slogan’s expressiveness is increased by using the cardinal number *the only one* whose role is to emphasize the lexical meaning of the lexeme *hope*.

Picture 16



Picture 17



Picture 18



Sources: Picture 16: [online]. [accessed on 15.09.2017]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/1817519238567186/photos/obyvatelia-nitrianskeho-kraja-m%C3%A1te-jasn%C3%BA/1868897836762659/>. Picture 17: [online]. [accessed on 13.09.2018]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>. Picture 18: [online]. [accessed on 01.11.2017]. Available at: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/1294024/debakel-kotlebovcov-v-komunalnych-volbach/>.

Orientation towards people as a communication tool was employed by other candidates as well: Your candidate or your voted representative. Interest in people, after all, is manifested in the party's name itself, People's Party Our Slovakia. To intensify their impact, the party's pre-election promotional materials contain images pointing to common interests and unifying topics with the citizens of Slovakia.

The more emotional and personally motivated addresses of Vranov's candidate J. Mihalčín Are we going to let our town become another East Slovakia settlement??? belong to the category of formulations with implied negative evaluating expression strengthened by the formal depiction of the slogan – a rhetorical question with an implied answer directly appealing to the recipient. The visual parts of the slogan: three question marks implying a negative answer No!!! and the shape of the writing – big highlighted letters (bold, red) intensify the persuasive effect of the expressive content. The background is completed with a dilapidated building as a synecdochical depiction of Roma citizens. Compositionally, the poster is based on dichotomic contrast of good vs. evil impersonated by opposing verbal and visual entities: good – the green-white combination of colours with words or phrases with positive evaluating components (not afraid, brave changes, beautiful, safe) and the candidate's as well as the party's names versus evil – red colour with an adherent expressive

phrase (settlement in the East). Communication-wise, the candidate was very active and creative, strategically taking advantage of the populist approach to gain election success by employing common, everyday problems of voters (traffic jams, unemployment or liquidation of domestic economic sources). Slogans with a negative content are contrasted with associating promotional catchwords with a positive content (I'm not afraid to take on bold changes that are going to turn our town into a beautiful and safe home). Taking credit for future actions is done through the verb *be afraid* in the present tense in its negative meaning in connection with the verb *take on*, which (by being repeated in all four slogans) unifies the author's statements. No doubt, such anaphoric grouping of four repeating sentences bears a strong suggestive force focused on the addressee's emotions. The candidate's slogans boost the populist objective via the possessive pronoun *our* in its various grammatical forms, which is intentionally repeated 6 times, and the personal pronoun *us* functioning as a connector and referring to common interests of L'S Naše Slovensko representatives.

The formulations *real* and the *only one* became an intentional medium of L'S Naše Slovensko's pre-election campaign. The lexicon becomes expressive in connection with repeating numerals in the anaphoric position *the only one* and the echoing (absolute) synonyms *true* and *real* (see Pic. 19 and 20). The colours used on the promotional material match the party's colour palette – green and white, and to increase the efficiency of the words, the author employed formal means of emphasis: large lettering, exclamation marks, bold letters or a change in the type of letters, highlighted green outline of the bottom part which bears the party's leader's name, an expressive photograph inducing feelings of disgust towards Roma people, migrants.

The pleonasm - accumulation of synonyms – is the most frequent rhetoric tool used mainly in agitation-promotional materials (Mistrík, 1997, p. 150). Often, these quantitative absolute adjectives are supported by other effective means of expression – in the case of M. Kotleba's presidential candidacy, it is the phrase *not to turn your coat* connected with the delimiting adverbial pronoun *never*. To increase the slogan's effect, M. Kotleba's portrait is depicted along with the parliament building where his promises can be fulfilled, and in contrast with that is a depiction of a Roma settlement.

The Kotleba's implied their negative attitude towards migrants through their presidential anti-campaign aimed at Z. Čaputová – although the slogan *Together we will, occupy Europe!* (See Pic. 21) contains a grammatical mistake (a redundant comma), the photograph of a large number of migrants must have

impressed Kotleba's supporters. In his presidential campaign, M. Kotleba stayed true to his eastward orientation and in his logo, he demonstrates his affiliation to traditionalism based on Slavic roots - a dichotomic pair contrasting the criticised liberalism of his strong opponents.

Picture 19



Picture 20



Picture 21



Sources: Picture 19: [online]. [accessed on 05.03.2019]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Kotleba-%C4%BDudov%C3%A1-Strana-Na%C5%A1e-Slovensko-okres-Myjava-620817511406666/posts/>. Picture 20: [online]. [accessed on 18.03.2019]. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ing.milan.uhrik/photos/a.193582427661544/809329192753528/?type=3> Picture 21: [online]. [accessed on 15.03.2019]. Available at: (<https://blog.hlavespravny.sk/6559/marian-kotleba-za-prezidenta-a-preco-nie/>).

Conclusions

In the 2017 regional elections, L'S Naše Slovensko's rhetoric aimed mainly at the government system of that time and internal as well as external enemies. Slogans such as '*Resistance to corruption and financial groups*' or '*With courage against the system!*' clearly point to moral distancing or differentiating from the system and, at the same time, imply the process of activation against that system.

In the 2020 presidential elections, M. Kotleba maintained his strategy of negative promotion built on the criticism of the contemporary political establishment. The results of the first round of the presidential elections in the 2020 brought substantial success for M. Kotleba and a serious problem for Slovakia. In fact, they benefited from all scandals staining the coalition as well as from the opposition's incoherence. As a result of the elections, the position of the party's leader further strengthened.

Verbalization of authors preparing texts for the right-wing populists is characterized by hidden (adherent) expressivity as well as by visible (inherent) expressivity which is contained in a word itself and is quite prominent, easily detectable, in the text. The emotional-expressive lexicon with a negative evaluating tone in these texts reveals an emotional evaluating component with an affective evaluating lexical meaning. The lexicon is expressive is presented mainly by swear-words and vulgarisms. These lexemes are characterized mainly by crude words reflecting on a actual social topic. The language of promotion used by the party in the last elections wasn't nearly as expressive as before the breakthrough year of 2013 when the party made significant gains in the regional elections. Lately, the party's slogans have been oriented towards people, a common man, and that might be the reason why potential voters overlook the party's extremist ideology, which it hides behind simple, absurd and radical solutions of our problems.

In connection with fascist symbolism, we need to mention the 2017 scandalous event of handing charity cheques to families with handicapped children in sums that represented fascist symbols while the party's representatives claimed that it was accidental. Equally blatant is the symbolic greeting 'On guard!' which was used by the Kotlebas even in the parliament – there is no doubt that this symbol was borrowed from the fascist Hlinka guard. In the meantime, the party tried to distance itself from being associated with the fascist HSĽS (Hlinka's fascist party) by changing its logo from the original equilateral double-cross to the Cyril-Methodius cross that is also used in the Slovak national emblem – this was the reason why this change in the party's logo had not been granted. In the end, distancing themselves from all affiliations with fascism, Nazism, did not cover up ĽS Naše Slovensko's orientation towards right-wing extremism which stems from their own political communication, thinking and acting, the party has the same members and the same ideology. In April 2022, Marián Kotleba was sentenced by the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic to six-month probation with a year and a half deferment for a deliberate crime of

sympathising with neo-Nazism and for consciously spreading extremism in connection with handing over checks with neo-Nazi symbolism. The website of ĽS Naše Slovensko (People's Party Our Slovakia) has not been available since M. Kotleba was tried for spreading extremist content.

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