

“Fachleute” vs. members of the ordinary people: how German and Italian right-wing populists linguistically represent themselves in non-institutional speeches. An empirical study.

This empirical study is a contrastive analysis of German and Italian right-wing populist speeches. It focuses on linguistic characteristics that allow to differentiate the representation that representatives of this political movement give of themselves in the two different countries. If non-institutional speeches are considered, German and Italian right-wing populists seem to convey a very different image of themselves. In this sort of speeches, the contact with audience composed of potential voters must be created and maintained. The aim of this contribution is to delve into the differences and, in case, to investigate their nature. For instance, whether the differences could be motivated by the representatives' country of origin. As a matter of fact, the German right-wing populists analysed for this study do want to project themselves as “Fachleute” (experts), pointing to their professional competences in front of the audience. On the contrary, the Italian representatives seem to focus on being depicted as part of the ordinary people (“Volk” vs. “Eliten”). It may be no coincidence that the German political representatives in this *corpus* both hold academic titles, while the Italian ones have made their lack of higher education a boast. Eight speeches from four political representatives were collected, namely Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia) and Matteo Salvini (Lega) for Italy, and Beatrix von Storch (Alternative für Deutschland) and Jörg Meuthen (former representative of Alternative für Deutschland, who left the party at the beginning of 2022) for Germany. The speeches were held between 2017 and 2019 and they were transcribed with the software *Exmaralda*. For this study, male and female representatives were chosen on a balanced scheme: one male and one female representative for each country. This choice was made to exclude that gender differences —and the different expectations related to conservative and traditional gender roles that right-wing populists share— may influence the Germany-Italy comparison which, on the contrary, is investigated on the basis of culture. The categories of analysis used for this study are pertinent to politolinguistics, and the work is organized delving into contrastive linguistic aspects. Some differences in their speeches are already evident in the German and Italian right-wing populists' approach to the audience. In fact, their attitude, and the level of confidence they use towards the audience are extremely divergent. Although some results have already been achieved, the aim is to conduct further research on this topic. This work represents a case study based on a limited amount of data (the *corpus* consists of a small number of tokens, namely 43163). In the future, further studies can be conducted with a bigger number of specimens to deepen the contrastive perspective. Moreover, other German and Italian political representatives of different parties or political movements can be included. Hopefully, this kind of comparative research could also be extended to (right-wing populist) political representatives of other countries, not only within Europe.

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