Political Contagion and Electoral Populism

Content Analysis of Campaign Speeches in United Kingdom and United States

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Introduction

In recent years, populist parties have developed into a relatively stable institution and a long-term feature of world politics. Populist movements have been active, not just in Western Europe but across many other countries like USA. According to Alvares and Dahlgren (2016), populists have profited from a variety of issues which they have managed to use for their benefit. The economic and financial crisis besides the security and immigration issues have been crucial matters resonated by right-wing populist parties for their own interests. Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Stromback, and De Vreese (2016) stated that populism is not an ideology but rather a political attitude, rhetoric, or even a strategy.

Greven (2016) explained the post-communist transition of political systems in Eastern Europe, where populism gained influence through favoring direct democratic means and that is in particular why radical right-wing and extremist parties find populism an effective concept to reach to their goals. Populist parties present themselves as anti-elitist, have the tendency to break taboos, and have central charismatic leader figures. Moreover, by targeting clear antagonist images, they play on creating an in-group identity. These parties glorify the direct connection between the people and the government, and efficiently focus their campaigning on a central theme in a highly performed manner in the media.

Over the last decades, right-wing populist parties have seen an increasing electoral support across Europe and United States. Several studies support the notion that mass media coverage might add to their success. They started to enjoy popularity among anti-modernization, anti-globalization, and middle classes whom concerns related to social decline. Hence, several constituencies back up populist parties' campaigns against immigrants who enter their countries, and thus, according to their arguments, take their job opportunities and might increase crime rates (Greven, 2016).

This dissertation aims to tackle the concept and definition of populism as a political communication style. It intends to investigate how to measure the populist style of political communication. This study carried out a quantitative content analysis of Hilary Clinton's campaign speeches comparing 2008 to 2016 US Presidential Elections and comparing David Cameron's campaign speeches in 2010 General Elections to 2016 Brexit referendum. The comparison are to examine if both of the candidates were rhetorically affected by the populist language and was there any adoption of some of the elements of the populist style of communication in their latest campaign discourses specifically after the rise of the populist zeitgeist. The study found that mainstream politicians did begin to emulate some of this style's communicative elements for its ostensible effectiveness in electoral campaigning.

Research Importance

Populism as a style of communication proved to be successful form employed by many political candidates in their campaigns strategies regardless to their political ideologies, political positions or party affiliations (Aalberg et al., 2016). In the recent time, mainstream politicians tend to adopt populist style of communication in their electoral campaign discourses for its valid effective persuasiveness in political communication. Populist style is a very competitive communication form in which the politician focuses on building a direct link with the people influencing their minds and emotions into mobilizing them for their political purposes. Norris and Grömping (2017) argue that in three main distinct ways populism as a style heightens the risk of electoral malpractice; by undermining

international standards of electoral integrity, by damaging public trust in democracy, and by increasing the potential for collusion with foreign governments.

Literature Review

According to Cas Mudde (2004), the most widely formulated definition of Populism in the past decade is "it's a thin-centered ideology which considers society to be separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the pure honest people versus the corrupt elites". It argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. It is thin-centered due to the fact that it can be adapted for the use on the left and the right populist parties. Since it is limited in scope and has its own complexity, there are no traces of ideological coherence that can be found across different cases of populism which has deemed it to be difficult to measure; therefore, it can be combined with other full ideologies in any scientific analysis.

Populism has always been present in mixed recapitulations with other ideologies. Its limited ideational elements expose it to lose its conceptual validity. Hence, seeking to thicken its ideational density can be done through conceptualizing it more likely as a strategy but far from being defined as an ideology and most appropriately to be explained as a political discourse or style (Canovan, 2002).

Emergence of Populism and the Rise of Right Wing

A wave of right-wing populism had swept across several democracies. Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (2014) stated that the (PRRPS) populist radical right is the most successful party family in Western Europe. Populist parties became influential political force across the right–left political spectrum; from the populist radical right such as the National Front in France or One Nation in Australia, to neoliberal populists like Berlusconi in Italy and Fujimori in Peru, to left-wing populists such as Chávez in Venezuela, and The Left in Germany. They have proved to be powerful leaders where in Europe populism it is right-wing, identity-based and exclusionary, while in Latin America it is left-wing, economic, and inclusive. They emphasized a substantial point that populism as a concept is context-sensitive that has the ability to attach itself across various geographical regions and across the

ideological spectrum. Context has a significant role in determining the populist actor's ideological position as well as it has an impact on the issues the populist actors press on or highlight in their communication; for example, globalization or immigration.

If the establishment is perceived as neoliberal, capitalist, pro-American and anti-interventionist, then populism appears as anti-capitalist, radical socialist and anti-American, as in the case of Chavismo in Venezuela in the 2000s. Meanwhile, if the establishment is perceived as authoritarian and statist, then populism appears as radical neoliberal individualism, as the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties in the 1970s, Peru's Fujimori in the 1990s and Le Pen's Front National in France recently (Hawkins, 2009).

The rise of populism was parallel to the historical development of some opportunity structures related to politics and media. Additionally, socio-economic status and the changing social structures both played pertinent roles that supported the rise of populism.

Mainstream's Response and Adoption of Populist Style

The rise and challenge of the far right wing on the party system has led to different responses of the mainstream parties on the left specifically social democrats. Social democrats face a triple challenge by fringe parties. Populist parties appeal to working class who initially supports the centre-left. Populist parties contribute in increasing issue salience of political right and also help in establishing centre-right governments. PRRPs pursue policies that harm the egalitarian and liberal progressive principles that most social democrats advocate and promote for.

According to Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther and Sitter (2010) in electoral competition, traditional party has three options of responses to its own disadvantaged positon in dealing with a new political issue or party. First option is not to change its strategy and hold on to its own principles to competitively win arguments by reinforcing party's policy positon and mobilize the party's core electorate. Traditional parties' default setting is inertia, albeit, parties do adjust their policies from time to time accommodating to the changing social and electoral conditions.

Second option is focusing and increasing the impact of other issues

that they own parallel to the issues of the populist radical right parties. This can be done by resetting the political agenda by decreasing the relevance of the new political issue and defusing the debate by not engaging into discussing it and choosing to focus on another issue in the hope that other parties get attracted to focus on the same issue seeking a broad consensus.

Third option is changing its position on the new issue. It is mainly about adopting competitor's position. The means is to change their policy positions to achieve the end of maximizing parties' votes. If policy is not important as much as winning the election then following the concept of "if you can't beat them, join them" is the ideal strategy. The problems of this strategy are that it may result in making the party to suffer from internal dissent and opposition, losing credibility, and face difficulty in persuading voters. With a greater level of challenge, the adopt strategy become more likely plausible to take on. The choice of strategy is dependent on its type and reactions of the left and liberal parties with which they compete; furthermore, it is dependent on the behavior of the mainstream right and if social democratic party struggle from an internal disunity. However, a mix and match of these three typical strategies can be a good option in which each on its own offers the assistance needed to stay competitive in electoral campaigning (Bale et al., 2010).

Maintaining a central position in a minority cabinet system allows a mainstream party to follow a course close to its core values. The success of populist parties contributes into changing the political alliances that underlie the welfare state. Populist parties collaborate with the mainstream right in reducing welfare for immigrants and ally with the mainstream or even with the radical left in maintaining generous welfare programmes for insiders. Finally, *accommodation* is deemed to be the best winning electoral strategy. Mainstream parties accommodate populist parties by adjusting their policy positions away from their traditional stance (Schumacher & Van Kersbergen, 2016).

This could be seen positively and negatively. It requires mainstream to stay in touch and aware of changes in public opinion. Undesirably, it can be disturbing to the mainstream to compromise their own ideas by following populist's agenda and sentiments just not to lose votes and have a better electoral performance.

Theoretical Framework

After populist parties have proven their success in gaining electoral votes, some other political actors chose to apply the populist style by including it in their communication while at the same time excluding the populist actors on electoral stage. In established democracies, like UK and US, mainstream politicians turned to the populist style in campaign discourses to be able to overcome the populist challenge that was shockingly rising in these two nations and to attempt to achieve victory in elections. The following theories and models explain the motive behind mainstream's response to populist challengers.

Referring to Anthony Downs's economic thesis of **rational choice theory** applied to democracy theory, from an economic point of view, he studies the rationality concept about political rational behavior which describes how political actors apply a behavioral rule in behaving rationally by deciding what tools or techniques are used to reach to specific goals and purposes such as winning votes in elections (Moloney, 2008).

The **theory of behavioral contagion** is another theory which can explain why politicians would act in a populistic style consciously or even unconsciously. As defined by Wheeler (1966), "behavioral contagion is an event in which a recipient's behavior has changed to become more like that of the actor or initiator." He explained this interaction through the process of imitation. When the observer becomes an imitator intentionally or unintentially, he is contagiously affected by the initiator's behavior that he begins copying it. Wheeler argued that behavioral contagion usually occurs when there is an internal conflict within the imitator and that depends on whether the outcome of this behavior will result in a reward or punishment as experienced by the recipient. This can be applied on politicians as they observe each other and get into the contagion process of imitating each other's behavior by copying the most successful political style.

Research Problem

Canovan (2002) argued that populism is a crucial and destabilizing feature of political reality in contemporary democracies. There had been several attempts to explain each type of populism as an ideology, a strategy, and a style. Meanwhile, this study focuses

on the communicative style of populism which could be utilized in different degrees that in itself creates a range of thin and thick populist communicators who merely seek to achieve their purposes of popularity and winning elections by adopting this communication style.

Nowadays focal dilemma lies in that several mainstream politicians adopt the populist style's rhetorical appeals, themes, and elements. Mainstream politicians use populist actors' weapon; their communicative form for its persuasive influence and this is exactly what brought about the current populist zeitgeist (Mudde, 2004).

Alvares and Dahlgren (2016) stated that populism in the past had always been equated to radicals and extremism. In the present time, when mainstream politicians adopt the populist style, this paves the way for radical beliefs and fanaticism to gain validity, popularity, and audience's support since people will mainly notice how these different politicians are simply speaking in the same language or/and manner. People won't tell the difference between a mainstream and populist right politicians ideologically as they both adopt same rhetorical style.

Populism has been tackled in a pejorative manner in many of the political literature. Populism employed as a communication style was not a very familiar notion few years ago. It is necessary and adequate not to negatively connote populism to demagoguery and to merely describe it as a derogatory concept.

Gidron and Bonikowski (2013) evenly argued that now as many of the mainstream politicians adopt the populist language, the traditional cordon sanitaire of preventing the expansion of any undesirable influences by the right-wing extremists has been broken and a populist contagion is spreading and no longer restricted to radical right wing parties. They explained the term "*Populist Contagion*" as how populist discourse is no longer restricted only to right-wing radicals or/and extremists. But, now, several mainstream politicians adopt the populist language and style which made the populist zeitgeist more salient and apparent in the core of the political spectrum.

Research objectives

This dissertation aims to tackle the concept and definition of populism as a political communication style. It intends to investigate

how to measure the populist style of political communication. This study carried out a quantitative content analysis of Hilary Clinton's campaign speeches comparing 2008 to 2016 US Presidential Elections and comparing David Cameron's campaign speeches in 2010 General Elections to 2016 Brexit referendum. The comparison are to examine if both of the candidates were rhetorically affected by the populist language and was there any adoption of some of the elements of the populist style of communication in their latest campaign discourses specifically after the rise of the populist zeitgeist. The study found that mainstream politicians did begin to emulate some of this style's communicative elements for its ostensible effectiveness in electoral campaigning.

Research Hypothesis

The more successful the electoral performance of populist actors, the more the populist style becomes infective and populist stylistic elements are adopted by mainstream politicians in their campaign discourses.

H1: Hillary Clinton was more inclined to adopt populist communication style when competed against Trump as a successful populist actor in the 2016 US presidential elections.

H2: David Cameron was more inclined to adopt populist communication style when competed against Leave campaigners as successful populist actors in the 2016 Brexit referendum elections.

Independent Variable: Successful electoral performance of populist actors.

Dependent Variable: The adoption of the populist style of communication by mainstream politicians to win their electoral campaigns.

The populist style had achieved validity and became preferable as a persuasive and effective way in developing key messages and in its delivery. This in return had encouraged mainstream politician's emulation or adoption of the populist style of communication. Yet, that doesn't mean that this style had always proven its efficiency in ensuring candidates increased chances of winning more votes or even the election itself. However, the belief of adopting this style derived from the idea of maximizing the utility of their actions and decisions

to achieve their goals of winning. Besides the successful innovative campaign techniques and behavioral contagion theories that elucidate the motive behind the imitation process of candidates' styles, themes and strategies in the pursuit of seeking victory in electoral competition.

Research Questions
Did the successful electoral performance of populist actors in Western democracies affect subsequent campaign discourses of mainstream politicians?
• Did Clinton and Cameron were influenced into adopting the populist rhetoric in their campaign discourses in 2016 while competing against prominent populist actors?
• What are the contextual factors that had led both candidates to begin adopting the populist style in their campaign speeches?

Populist rhetoric has been recently noticeably present in many important elections and its threat on democracy is becoming more apparent in which its influence had caused violence to take place in different nations between different political factions. Nonetheless, the traditional parties began to adopt the populist style as a way to regain power against the populists themselves by speaking in their language.

Electoral populism became a means to face the populist challenge by excluding populist actors but including their rhetoric style to win them over in electoral campaigning. This research is investigating to what extent this style was adopted by Hilary Clinton and David Cameron in their latest campaign discourses in 2016 and is comparing their speeches before and after the rise of the populist zeitgeist.

With Brexit and Trump's presidency, the United Kingdom and the United States seem as they are the forerunner of change. With no longer a coherent expression of political philosophy through ideology, conservatism becomes a populist articulation of anger and despairs toward the modern world. Populism is a manifestation of a democratic deficit in liberal or representative democracy (Todorov, 2007).

A problematic crisis is that populism had affected new democracies in central and eastern democracies but what is most provoking is how it affected old democracies as UK and US. The fact that left wing and right wing come together to reach a political and socio-economic consensus associated with neo-liberalism has brought these two nations to their

dead end where the situation has been most traumatic. The failing of political representation is causing a democratic frustration among the different and new divisions in societies.

Hence, both UK and US are interesting cases to study how the populist zeitgeist had effectively affected candidates as well as electorates to adopt populist style, attitudes, and themes.

Research Methodology

Research design is to investigate Hilary Clinton and David Cameron's communication style in their latest campaigns and determine the similarities that exist among their discourses and populist parties' discursive discourses, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to explore how infectious the populist style of communication is in terms of claim-making appeals and rhetorical stylistic tools utilized by both leaders in their campaigns.

Quantitative content analysis was selected to measure the intensity of populist communication style in Clinton and Cameron's campaign discourses by encoding the dimensional substance of speech context through detecting populist appeals. Substance is function based. It is what is manifestly stated in the text. Macnamara (2005) explained five main purposes of content analysis; two of which are describing the aim of using the method of content analysis. One purpose states that it defines substance characteristics of message content and the other describes form characteristics of message content.

A blend of conducting both quantitative and qualitative content analysis is a suitable method of investigation. Quantitative analysis that provide numerical data is enlarged and extended further than presenting explicit classifications by qualitative analysis that examine meanings of text (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Methods of data will be collected as follows; five speeches of Hilary Clinton, the Democratic candidate in the 2016 Presidential election, were selected and another five speeches from her campaign in US Presidential election in 2008. Five speeches of David Cameron, the ex-Prime Minister, former leader of Conservative Party, and the head of the Remain campaign in the UK-EU membership referendum in 2016, were selected and another five speeches selected from the General Elections in 2010. The speech sample was selected five months before
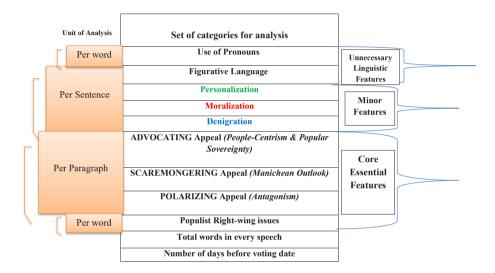
the voting day; one speech per month and upon the topics that speeches have tackled and discussed for the sake of covering a diversity of issues and themes that are of people's concerns.

The 2008 US election voting day was on Tuesday, November 4 and 2016 election was on Tuesday November 8. The 2010 UK's General Election was on Thursday May 6 and the 2016 Brexit referendum was on Tuesday June 23. David Cameron's speeches selected from January till May in 2010 and from February till June in 2016. Hilary Clinton's speech sample selected from March till August in 2008 and from July till November in 2016. Even though the US presidential election in 2008 was on the 4th of November, Clinton didn't make any speeches in July and her last speech was in August because Clinton had to suspend her campaign as her campaign debt reached $22 million.

Purposive sampling was applied selecting the speeches that mainly tackle the most controversial topics and themes and convenient speeches that were held only 5 months before the election that were available online from the candidate's websites' speech archive or campaign documents. In total, twenty speeches were analyzed; ten were selected for each candidate. Speeches were selected before and after the populist zeitgeist. Speeches selected from 2008 and 2010 campaign elections because these two periods of time were before the rise of the populist sentiments and the increasing emergence of populist right wing parties. It was before the populists had any popular support or even a significant electoral success. The purpose is to compare and evaluate Clinton and Cameron's communication styles were quite the same before and after the populist zeitgeist or they had differed. A comparison between these two periods of time (2008-2010) and (2016) will reveal if mainstream politicians had been contagiously affected whether Clinton, a candidate from the Democratic party which's political position is Centre-left, and Cameron, from the Conservatives a Centre-right party, have been influenced into adopting the populist style in their campaign speeches.

Coding Sheet

Below is the coding scheme used for the content analysis of both candidates; Hillary Clinton's speeches in US Presidential Elections in 2008 and 2016 as well as David Cameron speeches in UK General

Elections in 2010 and UK's Brexit Referendum in 2016. It is important to note that these units are not mutually exclusive; in which a paragraph that could be coded as polarizing for antagonizing opponents, it could also include scaremongering appeals. However, it is fair to say that this was few to occur in the findings.

Unit of Analysis	Set of categories for analysis	
Per word	Use of Pronouns	Unnecessary Linguistic Features
	Figurative Language	
Per Sentence	**Personalization**	Minor Features
	Moralization	
	Denigration	
Per Paragraph	ADVOCATING Appeal *(People-Centrism & Popular Sovereignty)*	Core Essential Features
	SCAREMONGERING Appeal *(Manichean Outlook)*	
	POLARIZING Appeal *(Antagonism)*	
Per word	Populist Right-wing issues	
	Total words in every speech	
	Number of days before voting date	

In an attempt to examine the prevalence of populism in UK and US's political discourses, this thesis measured the fluctuating occurrence and variance of populist style in Clinton and Cameron's political campaign speeches. This research identifies certain linguistic and rhetorical features by measuring the frequency of them; there must be a consideration of interpreting the broader context of the text to be able to code the core populistic elements and themes by counting the frequency of their utilization and so determine which populist appeals are more manifested in their speech discourses.

Hence, as shown above in the coding scheme, **pronouns are counted as words. Figurative language, personalization, moralization, and denigration are counted per sentence.** In order to examine populist dimensional substance, paragraphs contained core elements of populist style requires inspecting appeals and themes which are in fact can be spread over more than one sentence and are difficult to extract from

text. That is why in this part **paragraphs are selected to be the unit of measurement instead of sentences to count populist rhetorical appeals. Right wing issues are counted per words**; the frequency of those issues every time they were mentioned and tackled in speech text. Those issues were deliberately selected as they are known to be the most salient and argumentative topics tackled primarily by right wing populist parties.

Indications to any of the three rhetorical appeals are operationalized by looking for specific terms, keywords, or a combination of words listed below in the operational definitions section as a shortcut way to help in coding any reference to any of the three dimensions of populist style appeals. At the communication level, there are differences and variations in the intensity of populist communication adopted by both candidates in their campaign speeches. Therefore, a detected reference to advocating appeal alone is classified as thin or empty populism. Every speech that has combined the three dimensions of populist appeals is classified to have adopted a higher degree of populism. The more populist references, the more the candidate has adopted elements of the populist style and their discourse can be labelled as populistic.

Results

The below tables present data collected from the coding sheets analysis.

The first and the second tables demonstrate percentages of each category of analysis in Hillary Clinton's campaign speeches in 2008 and 2016.

Table 1- Percentages of each category per month in Clinton's 2008 campaign speeches

Set of categories for analysis	March Speech	April Speech	May Speech	June Speech	August Speech	Total
Advocating Appeal	63%	48%	66.6%	75%	54%	306.6
Scaremongering	21%	9.6%	3.7%	4%	8%	46
Polarizing	15.7%	41.9%	29.6%	20.8%	37.5%	145.5
Personalization	80%	74.8%	74.7%	76.5%	60%	366
Moralization	5%	6%	10.9%	1%	2.7%	25.6

Denigration	4%	9.8%	1%	1%	8%	23.8
Figurative Language	10.6%	9%	13%	21%	28.8%	82
Pronouns	92%	96%	98.8%	96%	92%	474.8
Right wing Issues	7.9%	3.9%	1%	3.6	7.5	23.9

This table demonstrates advocating appeal to be the most employed in 2008's campaign speeches and personalization is the highest among the minor stylistic elements. The total percentage of all categories is higher than 2016 with 3%.

Table 2- Percentages of each category per month in Clinton's 2016 campaign speeches

Set of categories for analysis	July Speech	August Speech	September Speech	October Speech	November Speech	Total
Advocating Appeal	58%	13.7%	55%	52.6%	54.5%	233.8
Scaremongering	10%	23.5%	3%	2.6%	6%	45
Polarizing	31.6%	62.7%	41%	44.7%	39%	219
Personalization	61%	47.9%	49.5%	70%	77%	305
Moralization	1%	0.4%	1.9%	2.5%	0.6%	6.4
Denigration	13%	37%	15.8%	13%	6%	84.8
Figurative Language	24%	14%	32.6%	13.9%	15%	99.5
Pronouns	95%	96.7%	94%	95.5%	94.5%	475.7
Right wing Issues	4.5%	3%	6%	4%	5%	22.5
						1,491.7

The table shows advocating appeal is also the most employed appeal in 2016 campaign speeches but polarizing has increased with almost 75%. As for the minor stylistic elements personalization is still the highest but denigration is strikingly way higher than it was in 2008. Right wing issues can be considered the same except only a difference of 1% lower in 2016 campaign speeches. The total percentage of all categories went down to 1,491.7 from 1,494.2 in 2008.

The below tables demonstrate percentages of each category of analysis in David Cameron's campaign speeches in 2010 and 2016.

Table 3- Percentages of each category per month in Cameron's 2010 campaign speeches

Set of categories for analysis	January Speech	February Speech	March Speech	April Speech	May Speech	Total
Advocating Appeal	31.5%	52%	31.8%	46%	38%	199
Scaremongering	21%	13.6%	9%	7.6%	15%	66
Polarizing	47%	34%	59%	46%	46%	232
Personalization	67%	62.9%	44.9%	47.7%	42.8%	265
Moralization	4.6%	1.6%	12%	6.6%	2%	26.8
Denigration	0	5%	16.8%	16.6%	16.6%	55
Figurative Language	27.9%	30%	25.8%	28.8%	38%	150.5
Pronouns	97.6%	95%	96%	91.7%	90.8%	471
Right wing Issues	2%	4.5%	3.8%	8%	9%	27
						1,492.3

The table demonstrates the polarizing appeal as the highest in adoption in 2010 campaign speeches then comes advocating and later scaremongering. Personalization is the most adopted stylistic element.

Table 4- Percentages of each category per month in Cameron's 2016 campaign speeches

Set of categories for analysis	February Speech	March Speech	April Speech	May Speech	June Speech	Total
Advocating Appeal	37.8%	31%	20%	18%	33%	139.8
Scaremongering	10.8%	11%	30%	26.6%	46.6%	125
Polarizing	51%	57%	50%	55%	20%	233
Personalization	58%	64.5%	74%	45%	64.8%	306.6
Moralization	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denigration	5%	4%	0	12.6%	0%	21.6
Figurative Language	36.7%	31%	25.7%	42%	35%	170

Pronouns	91.6%	91%	95.7%	94%	94.6%	467
Right wing Issues	8%	8.9%	4%	5.7%	5%	31.6

1,494.6

Polarizing is still the highest in adoption in 2016 campaign speeches but scaremongering had prominently increased by 59%. Also, personalization is still the highest stylistic element adopted. Figurative language's use increased by 20% and more right wing issues was tackled in 2016 campaign speeches. The total percentage of all categories increased from 1,492.3 in 2010 to 1,494.6 in 2016 speeches which indicate how Cameron had adopted more elements of the populist style than Clinton in their campaign discourses.

Speech Analyses and Discussion

Both candidates, Clinton and Cameron, have been influenced into adopting the populist communication style. The core essential elements of the populist style which are the rhetorical appeals, particularly the scaremongering and the polarizing appeals, were common among Clinton and Cameron. But the minor stylistic elements were not all prominently employed assuming that was for the sake of preserving their public image and for not to be labelled as populist or perceived as incredible or/and inauthentic in their claims.

H1: Hillary Clinton was more inclined to adopt populist communication style when competed against Trump as a successful populist actor in the 2016 US presidential elections.

Hilary Clinton's speeches in 2016 show a high degree in the adoption of the **polarizing** rhetorical appeal. The **advocating** rhetorical appeal was nearly the same but a bit lower in adoption in comparison to her speeches in 2008. The **scaremongering** appeal was increasingly adopted specifically in the first and the second speeches in 2016, but, later, its adoption went lower. The stylistic element of **denigration** was strikingly high, also, **figurative language** was higher in 2016. **Moralization** appeared with an average of one percent in 2008 speeches but was not relevantly present in 2016 speeches. In terms of **use of pronouns**, their usage was noticeably present and higher in 2016. However and considerably, Clinton was inclusive in her rhetoric using plural pronouns (we, our, and us) in 2016. As for

personalization, it constituted lower occurrence in 2016 than it was in 2008, yet personalized communication was immensely present in Clinton's rhetoric with a greater (ICV) which stands for concentrated visibility. It is the attention given on party leaders where she had spoken frequently about herself, her upbringing, and her family. While in 2008, personalization was more (IGV) general visibility which is the shifted focus to number of individual politicians and parties.

As regards to the right wing themes, Clinton's adoption was almost the same except in 2016; priority was given to topics that caused popular disputes. Health care scored the highest, and then comes employment, and lastly taxes were the most tackled issues in 2008. Conversely, Clinton had focused more on two of the most crucial populist themes; *employment* which was first, *immigration* came second, and *debt* was the third topic to be the three most discussed issues in 2016 campaign discourse.

So, on a discourse level, Clinton exhibited a significant increase in the adoption of polarizing appeals and denigration elements employed in her 2016 campaign speeches compared to her speeches in 2008. Clinton's reference to the people and demonstrating closeness to them was present infused with personalized communication in her 2016 campaign discourse.

H2: David Cameron was more inclined to adopt populist communication style when competed against Leave campaigners as successful populist actors in the 2016 Brexit referendum elections.

As for David Cameron's speeches both **scaremongering** and **polarizing** rhetorical appeals were markedly adopted in 2016. The adoption of the **advocating** rhetorical dimension appeal was higher in 2010 but was still noticeably present in 2016. **Personalization** notched higher in 2016 than it was in 2010. In 2010, personalized communication was mainly focused on general visibility (IGV), but, in 2016, concentrated visibility (ICV) was significantly present and higher. **Moralization** constituted only an average of one percent in 2010 speeches, and, in 2016, it wasn't considerably utilized at all. There were less **denigrating** observations in 2016 assuming that Cameron was careful not to be compared to Nigel Farage's vulgarness and offensiveness in speech. **Figurative language** was employed more in 2016. Cameron's **use of pronouns** was prominently present in 2016 and was approximately the same

with a very little decrease in 2016 than it was in 2010.

Regarding right wing issues, Cameron had noticeably adopted populist themes with a greater percentage in 2016. Cameron had tackled the issue of taxes the most in his 2010 speeches. Employment comes in the second rank then deficit and health care themes were undertaken in a similar percent. While, in 2016, *employment* was the first to be the mostly tackled issue, second comes *immigration* and *security* with same percentage, and *sovereignty* is the third problematic topic discussed.

Conspicuously, Cameron has considered the adoption of scaremongering and polarizing appeals in his 2016 campaign speeches especially that both appeals have demonstrated a fair increase in the last two months before the voting day. In contrast to his speeches in 2010, advocating appeal was more in charge, yet personalization was significantly employed in 2016. Ostensibly the populist zeitgeist has affected his communicative style in his latest campaign.

As a result, the two hypotheses H1 and H2 can be proven right that there is a positive correlation between the successful electoral performance of populist actors and the adoption of the populist style of communication by mainstream politicians in their campaign discourses. The successful electoral performance of populist actors in a number of substantial elections in Western democracies has affected the spread of some of the populist communicative style elements among mainstream politicians to adopt and embrace in their campaign discourses for the purpose of achieving electoral triumph.

In this context, the result of this research replicates and extends the findings of the previous studies. Although, the findings weren't very strong in Clinton's campaign speeches, but in Cameron's speeches, significant adoption of the populist style was present. Selecting the best strategy or mixing and combining strategies for the sake of remaining competitive determines the response of the mainstream parties in facing the populist challenge. The investigation confirmed and verified both candidates' main adoption was of the rhetorical appeals of scaremongering and polarizing. Notably, it is important to mention that Clinton specifically had been affected by replicating the denigration stylistic element of belittling and mocking her opponent, Trump, whom she had copied this stylistic feature from as the findings state that denigration had significantly been present in her 2016

campaign speeches. Cameron on the other hand has been influenced by adopting the stylistic element of personalization more than the other minor elements. And surprisingly Cameron was more affected than Clinton in which the total frequencies of the utilized populist elements in 2016 were higher by two percent; it increased from 1,492 to 1,494. The data exhibits that Cameron dependent mainly in his communication on adopting scaremongering rhetorical appeal and personalization while Clinton was more inclined into adopting the polarizing rhetorical appeal and denigration.

According to Alexandre-Collier (2016), populist democracy is relevantly considerable to be applied on Cameron's party management and governing practice. Through observation, David Cameron has combined populism absorbing rhetoric. Cameron had triangulating strategies in which he had taken further Tony Blair's initiative of forming democratic governance operating without putting any emphasis on party. He states that Cameron himself said he would shift power to be relocated in the hands of the people and away from parliament, parties, or any other intermediary institutions. This was amplified by his known message of the big society employed to reconstruct a direct relationship with and about the people only.

Remarkably, it is vital how both candidates have adopted some of the populist right wing issues and have made similar stances on others. Both have focused and discussed employment and immigration as their main themes; two of the most prominent populist concerns and disputes. Cameron in particular took harsh measures towards immigrants making a similar position as right-wing populists on this matter.

Legitimatization of extreme right wing's radical ideas and pledges took place when extremist parties started to make their way into the government as coalition partners by gaining more support and votes than traditional parties, Mudde (2014) explained. As politicians from centre and far right began to use the same themes and rhetoric of extreme radical right parties, this had approached them closer together. Hence, center-right parties' respectability and prominence made extreme right parties' issues like immigration, crime, and welfare perceived as respectable topics that are taken seriously by citizens as well by traditional mainstream parties.

When reputable mainstream politicians embrace these issues, they

become significant themes that turned out to be vote-bringing topics to regain votes lost to the extreme right. This has made the mainstream parties to go through a process of radicalization. The extreme right parties' rhetoric became acceptable, and their parties are no longer seen as outsider exogenous groups. This proves how infectious extreme right or populist parties' rhetoric style and issues are; they became salient across the entire political spectrum.

Bale, Green Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, and Sitter (2010) clarified that however populist parties may force mainstream parties to remain alerted with changes in public opinion and societal changes, it may also push mainstream to compromise their own ideas by matching their themes to populist's most salient issues only for electoral reasons. There is a scholar consensus that populist style is used strategically to achieve an electoral breakthrough. At the end, politicians may be classified as more or less of a populist communicators depending on the degree and the intensity of populist style deployed in their campaign discourses.

Interestingly, both Clinton and Cameron has failed in their campaigns even though they did employed populist communication strategies, and this can be interpreted that populist style is not always a winning formula. The undesirable outcome of losing elections goes back to the fact that mainstream politicians may be evaluated negatively when they act in a populistic style because they will not seem credible or authentic as voters are not expecting them to speak and perform like absolute populist leaders.

Bos, Van Der Brug, and De Vreese (2013) concluded that when mainstream party leaders adopt the populist style they can get negatively evaluated and criticized whereas right wing populist are not punished for it. Consequently, when a mainstream politician gets to act in a populist manner he/she will not seem credible or perceived positively especially by those voters who are higher in education and less politically cynical since electorate are not expecting him/her to use the populist style. This leads to address an important point that a repeated and a consistent use of populist communication strategies can have stronger effects on the long term on particular groups of voters.

In this current populist zeitgeist, it is correct and adequate not to negatively connote populism to derogatory and demagoguery. Conversely, it's also worthy to mention, in this likewise increasing wave

of populist right-wing parties rising across many countries, how did La République En Marche, as a center mainstream French party, won in front of right-wing defy National Front leaded by Marie Le Pen. She was defeated by Emmanuel Macron who was able to encounter her successfully as a strong populist candidate happened to confirm the significance of socio-cultural and political context that might influence populism to emerge, grow, and prevail. Though it is difficult to convince constituencies with a pro-EU stance when a lot of reforms need to be undertaken, yet Macron was successful to do so by appealing to France's worth and unique position at the heart of the EU through adopting soft populism (Bordignon, 2017).

As discussed earlier populist discourse is built on simplifications and strong emotional appeals. Both campaigns were distinctively spotted similar in number of issues regarding their discourse; their tactics are the same of scapegoating and "otherizing" enemies. Similar themes were utilized like idealizing a sense of historical nation. Speaking about sovereign nations both campaigns praised sovereignty and "the people" who are the true holders of it; the powers of the nation-state, and there isn't any economic alliance or outside forces that can diminish or tie down their supremacies and ability to control their own affairs.

Substantially the matching rhetorical strategies of both campaigns having almost similar sloganeering was a manifested attempt in imitating the populist style; "Stronger Together" and "Fighting for Us" in Clinton's campaign and "Britain Stronger in Europe" and "Let us Fight our Corner" in Cameron's campaign. Repeating these slogans is about restoring solidarity and reinforcing strength in unity. Clinton's "stronger together" is a repeated tagline in the mid of Trump's divisive rhetoric pitting people against one another and weakening the fabric of the nation; Clinton's slogan promises to bring people together to build on the nation's collective strength and assert the nation's reigning values and ideals. While in Britain, Cameron repeating "UK is stronger and safer together in EU" to fortify the cohesion and unanimity within and among European nations. When Clinton and Cameron use pronouns like "we" several times and refer to themselves as part of the people, it implies their closeness to the people, yet it infers that we are all in it together with no overt indication about leading people and not carrying a thorough responsibility for any misfortunes or uncertainty might lead.

This could show us their attempts to strategically imitate the populist style by adopting slogans that can be described as populistic.

Conclusion

In contemporary politics, populism appears across the whole political spectrum, and this research aims the prevention to conflate populism with radical right wing politics only. The results demonstrate that populist style is a strategic tool in campaign discourses. The degree to which mainstream politicians rely on populism depends on structural and contextual factors. Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) stated that political culture, electoral and party system, the economy, European integration, immigration, and issues of identity and religion are among structural factors that impact either the promotion of populism or the prevention of it. Also, the development of populist protest movements can rely on the availability of opportunity structures such as configuration of resources.

A politician employing the populist style does not make him/her an absolute populist. Populism can be a feature in political claims-making and rhetorical appeals. Populist politics can be found across dissimilar countries, political systems, and ideological positions. Thus, findings depict that populism utilization varies in its intensity; populist style is adopted in several degrees.

Populist style is a range of semiotic resources mobilized into producing socio-cultural meanings in concrete communication contexts (Ekström, Patrona, & Thornborrow, 2018). In an attempt to analyze mediated political performances of politicians adopting the populist style, it is correct to assume that linguistic devices, discursive strategies, and interactional behaviors are communicative resources deployed into creating a populist rhetorical set of repertoires that offers social and cultural resonance within specific political context. Political figures aim to adopt this style to construct a social identity that appeal to certain constituencies of voters.

McGrath (2013) noted that politics of cultural resentment is what modern populism is mainly about at the present time separated from basic political or economic reform programs. Nonetheless, Mudde (2013) explained that the impotence of PRRPs in governments goes back to reducing the scope of their impact by their concentration on socio-

cultural issues only. He added that populist rhetoric will be absurd pointless slogans, unless an authentic and credible political strategy based on a grassroots movement comes to maintain stability and reflect a truthful meaningful democratic system.

In sum, populism can be depicted as causing democracy to be disruptive. Populism is fundamentally a political representation problem. With the decline of party democracy comes a rise in populism. According to Mǔller (2014), citizens have opted for Trump or promoted for Brexit proves the correctness of populist's argument that liberal elites have been for a while disconnected and not in contact with ordinary people. He also expound in the inner logic of populism by stating that the limitations of representative democracy has led to unfortunate consequences that brought about populism.

Competition for political power is a vital obligation required by the structure of constitutional democracies. This means that since power is constantly contested, modern democracy is inherently indeterminate, Mǔller (2014) added. Populism comes in to represent the real pure people and antagonize the political elites for the corruption the people are suffering from. However, within the political framework of modern liberal democracy, populism is a perpetual political problem that cannot be resolved it can only be pacified at times.

All the same, Salgado and Stavrakakis (2019) explained that as long as there will be demagogues appealing to cultural, racial, and religious antagonism, no economic solution would be enough to calm down populism and media will always be receptive to political populism as media does demand the populist style of spectacle, personalization, and dramatization to serve the commercialization of media coverage.

Finally, a recommended scope of study is how the populist style can serve particular political agendas in different socio-cultural contexts and how an interdisciplinary study of socio-linguistic discourse analysis can enrich our understanding and provide a disclosed perspective on conceptualizing mediated populism. A further research suggested in investigating the role of media in the mediation of discursive constructions and its functions. Also, most of the studies focused on the impact of PRRPs and neglected the radical left wing populist parties that for instance have gained pertinent representation in Germany.

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