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HOW POPULIST RHETORIC CREATES UNIFORM DRAMMATICAL IMAGES: THE CASE OF LITHUANIAN POLITICAL LEADERS ON FACEBOOK

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Abstract

This paper examines populism as a communication phenomenon, with a particular focus on the convergence of political and media populism. While the academic discourse often emphasizes political populism, the influence of the media on populist communication cannot be overlooked, especially considering the proliferation of new media platforms. This study explores the stylistic features shared by political and media populism, including addressing the 'people', dramatizing reality, and framing conflicts. Today, politicians are being considered to be 'experts of the media' who are able to independently attract the attention of the mass audience with 'interesting messages'. In today's hybrid media system, politicians, as well as journalists and citizens, are competing for popular news/stories. Specifically, it analyzes the rhetoric employed by various political leaders and members of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the Facebook platform to project persuasive images to a mass audience. The empirical study was based on the ideas of the discourse method that "we know other people through texts" and "the discourse itself creates an image of the speaker." Through rhetorical analysis, this study reveals that, regardless of their status as the ruling or opposition parties or their ideologies, political leaders are employing similar strategies on Facebook, such as denigrating one's political opponents, employing abusive rhetoric, and propagating negative narratives.

Biography of the presenter

Dr. GIEDRĖ VAIČEKAUSKIENĖ is an assistant professor at Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication. Giedrė Vaičekauskienė majored in political communication. She has 18 years' experience in television. She worked in the TV newsroom for 13 years. With her extensive experience as a television presenter and program creator, Giedrė Vaičekauskienė is currently using her skills in academia. As a lecturer in higher education, Giedrė Vaičekauskienė is teaching her students the art of creating compelling stories through courses in Rhetoric, Public Speaking, and Audiovisual Media. Her research has been focusing on the role of rhetoric in the news media, with a particular emphasis on the communication strategies of Lithuanian political leaders.