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**Communicating With Voters By Blogs? Campaigning For The European
Parliament Elections 2009**

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Abstract

Following the raise of use of online communication in electoral campaigns throughout the world, this article deals with the use of blogs by politicians in Europe. Through the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis, it analyzes blog posts written by the European Parliament incumbents running for the European Parliament elections in 2009, from four different EU states and ideological backgrounds, and at the same time the four largest political groups in the European Parliament. The purpose of the study is to reveal the campaign strategy and dominant discourses through the analysis of the formal, style and appeals. The findings reveal the differences in discourses between four political blogs, which results from the different use of language and appeals.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, political blogs, political communication, European Parliament elections, Internet

Short bionote:

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Introduction

Following the expansion of the Internet, first web 1.0 during the 1990s and then web 2.0 during the 2000s, political parties in the United States and consequently in Europe, started to integrate the online component, as a part of the wide spectrum of mass media, in their overall communication and campaign strategies. That phenomenon led to the development of the Internet strategies in electoral campaigning (Anstead and Chadwick, 2009), although just seven years ago, a deficit of the planned approach in using the Internet was observed (Vedel, 2003:49) because political actors did not have clear online strategies and goals. The campaign for the 2009 European Parliament elections represents the first European elections campaign where so many different online applications, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, were used in such a systematic way (e.g. Vesnic-Alujevic and Van Bauwel, 2010; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2010). One of them is also a blog, which can be seen either as a web 1.0 or web 2.0 application.

Scholars mostly agree that the Internet could be a powerful tool in political communication (Anstead and Chadwick, 2009), but it is still unclear whether it will bring new possibilities for political participation or it is just a reproduction of traditional politics (Vedel, 2003). Scholars are mostly divided between cyber-optimists and cyber-pessimists, with the growing number of later ones. Vedel (2003) states that the information and communication technologies (ICTs) could lead to the disappearance of mediators between citizens and politicians, which would provide a sort of direct communication and consequently more participation. Similarly some scholars also assert possibilities for the raise of political participation and engagement through the use of internet (Weber et al., 2003; Lupia and Philpot, 2005). Coleman mentions the intention of reconnecting with the public in general, because of its generally low political participation (Coleman, 2005: 273). We agree that the

possibility for more inclusion exists, but it should be approached cautiously because it still sounds too idealistic. One of the main arguments against greater political participation is that people naturally avoid ideas with which they disagree (e.g. Sunstein, 2007) and that people who are not interested in participating in politics do not want more direct forms of democracy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). In line with claims that the Internet cannot contribute to the mobilization of new voters (e.g. Norris, 2001; Bimber and Davis, 2003), goes the suggestion of Hindman to focus more on what the Internet can do, and that is, according to him, an additional motivation for those who are “likely to become core supporters” (Hindman, 2005: 124). Nevertheless, there are still some opinions that the significance of the Internet is not known. That is how Wright (2009) assumes that the Internet can be considered as either a tool, which can contribute to the representation, or a “marketing tool with limited appeal” (Wright, 2009: 155).

In regards to political marketing, an online campaign has advantages both in terms of control and expenses. It provides an unlimited amount of uncontrolled material that can be uploaded without any costs compared to other more expensive and usually controlled media (Sweetser Trammell, 2007). Also, the marketing on “traditional” media needs to obey to institutional rules and public laws in regards to the limited (paid) advertising, especially in Europe. Therefore, the Internet has a huge potential, as Sweetser Trammell (2007) states, “limitless”, to become a powerful source of political information, in particular among youth, but it is still arguable if the potential is used enough.

Although blogs are considered to be a significant means of political communication (e.g. Truetzschler, 1998; Coleman and Moss, 2008), there are not many Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who use them. We should however stress that there is limited research done on European politicians’ blogs, especially on the EU level.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the strategy of campaigning through blogs, used by politicians who were running for the European parliament elections. Through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, our intention was to unveil the used rhetoric, style, tactics and issues discussed through this online medium.

Political Discourse, Persuasive Communication and Appeals

Contemporary political discourse is mostly mediatized, because its genres are at the same time genres of politics and media (Fairclough, 1995). The same can be said for blogs, as a sort of relatively new genre, which can be considered as both political and media discourse genre.

Bourdieu considers professional politicians' discourse as a field of struggle for establishing and supporting a coherent discourse which determined both internally by positioning itself in the field of politics and externally by relating itself with the world outside politics to represent citizens whose voice needs to be won (as cited in Fairclough, 1995: 182-184). These discourses and positions are not constant but they change – as an answer to changes in the political field in order to keep the same distance in relation to other groups and individuals (Fairclough, 1995).

The aim of messages incorporated in political discourse is to persuade the audiences and to have an impact on their attitudes and beliefs (Galita, 2009). Galita (2009) argues that persuasion has four elements: the speaker, the audience, the message and how it is transmitted. These four elements are mutually dependent.

The first goal of persuasive communication is the establishment of understanding between the communicator and his interpretation and a message receiver. This usually requires a considerable simplification of political discourse, that needs to be largely socially

understandable (Huet and Lagenieux-Villard, 1982), or as Bobin (1988) suggests, a politician needs to adjust and frame their ideas in order to better reach the electorate.

Apart from the ideological and program content of messages, language and rhetoric, defined as use of language with persuasive aim, are important tools of political communication and advertising. That means that linguistic and semiotic approaches have a considerable role in the pragmatics of success (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2009). Aristotle differentiate three types of rhetorical verification: *ethos*, based on the credibility of speaker, *pathos* as the use of emotional appeals, and *logos*, as the use of logical arguments, which corresponds to the modern classification of source credibility (to convince the voter about trustworthiness and credibility of a candidate), emotional (to evoke certain feelings) and logical (to evidence and prove something) appeals, used in political marketing strategies (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2006).

Trent and Friedenber (2003) have further identified the following sub-categories: statistical support, attack opponent's record, candidate as expert authority, expert support, candidate as voice for people, emphasize optimism for future, traditional values, call for change, invite participation, candidate as philosophical centre of political party, identify with experiences, emphasize political accomplishments, attack opponent's personal qualities.

The appeal that is mostly used in electoral campaigns is the emotional appeal, in political advertising defined as a communication which can provoke a feeling "while delivering a political message" (Brader, 2006: 4). Emotions, which can be helpful or unhelpful in a particular context, the emotional intelligence, which can be seen as a capacity to generate feelings that motivate cognitive activities, as well as the emotional appeals, play an important role in deciding for whom to vote. There is much research that stressed its role in political campaigning and advertising (e.g., Greenstein, 2004; Brader, 2006; Gross and John, 2003). As Brader (2006) stresses, "contemporary political advertising is saturated with

emotional appeals, and the consultants who make the ads believe these appeals matter” (Brader, 2006: 2).

Following Brader’s approach (2006) in studying the way politicians use ads to provoke certain emotions, we focused on the intention of the emotion the text was appealing, using seven categories proposed by Brader (2006: 151), which are: fear defined as anxiety or worry; enthusiasm as hope or joy; anger as outrage or disgust; pride associated usually with (national) identities; sadness as disappointment; and amusement, which is an effective rhetorical appeal.

Political Blogs

One of the Internet’s products is a blog. A blog is usually defined as a webpage that is frequently updated with articles published in reverse chronological order (newest on top) (Herring et al., 2004). At the beginning of their existence, blogs were linked to the field of journalism and compared either to journals or personal diaries, but they are now mostly defined as a form of citizen journalism (Dean, 2010). Changing the focus from genre (e.g. Herring et al., 2004) to medium, boyd (2006) argues that blogs should be conceptualized “as both medium and a bi-product of expression”. Using the same concept, Dean (2010) describes blogs as different both from the mass media (because its target group is not everyone), and also from one-to-one or one-to-list communication. According to her (Dean, 2010), it is a medium which “enables the production of content potentially accessible to anyone who happens to find it” (Dean, 2010: 46).

At the same time, blogs are positioned in “communicative capitalism’s flows of information and entertainment” (Dean, 2010: 29), because of its initial intention to be read, commented or shared. Since a blog post is “posted” and not “narrativized”, it is seen as a sort of oral communication recorder or a link between oral and literal expression (boyd, 2006;

Dean, 2010). If the blog is defined as a “culture-driven medium”, then the diversity in structure and content can be understood (boyd, 2006). It can represent an alternative way of expression of opinion and communication with citizens.

Any blog that comments on the institutional politics can be considered as a political blog. It is usually subjective and contains a political bias. Coleman refers to them as “listening posts of modern democracy” (Coleman, 2005: 274). Although there are many different subtypes of blogs, we will focus on blogs produced by politicians, in particular those who were running for the European Parliament elections held in June 2009. Therefore, these blogs are used as a tool of self-presentation (Coleman, 2005), i.e. political advertisement. They represent an attractive way of expressing political messages (Trammell et al., 2006).

Although blogs appeared in 1997, they gained their popularity in the field of political communication in the campaign for primaries before the US elections in 2004. They were then broadly used by Howard Dean, a candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. Later, all major candidates started to use blogs, as they realized their relevance (Sweetser Trammell, 2007). With the possibilities to act as a forum of public debate (Farrell and Drezner, 2008) and also as an interactive communicative platform, it is often said that they could contribute to a more direct form of representation. However, Wright (2009) suggests the general lack of visible interaction, which is the precondition for influencing the blogosphere and public opinion.

In time, (political) blogs became so popular as a sort of alternative information providers that a term “blogosphere” has been created in order to designate a new and alternative kind of public sphere. The existence of the blogosphere is explained through the use of hyperlinks between blogs, which makes them connected among each other through the network (Farrell and Drezner, 2008). Many scholars assert its possibilities for becoming a public sphere (e.g. Coleman, 2005). For instance, Trammell et al. (2006) consider the

blogosphere as a modern expression of the Habermasian concept of a public sphere. Boyd (2006) understands this possibility through the blurring boundaries between “corporeality” and “spatiality”, that is, between private and public. On the contrary, Dean (2010) argues that blogosphere does not exist, because despite the existence of the affective attachments to media, they “are not in themselves sufficient to produce actual communities” (Dean, 2010: 96). For Wright (2009), the most significant question is, if there should be, according to Habermasian model, a distinction between political sphere of politicians and public sphere of citizens, what would be the role of politicians in the blogosphere.

A blog gives an opportunity of presenting the image of oneself to citizens even if they are not physically present (Coleman and Moss, 2008). According to Coleman and Moss (2008), while doing so, politicians try to make a compromise between the image they try to present and the expectation of the public, despite the disconnection between politicians and citizens, that might be reduced through the blogosphere. This could lead to a ‘a democratizing reconfiguration of the traditional relationship between message-sender and receiver’ (Coleman and Moss, 2008: 9).

Blogs might be interactive, either as an invitation to readers for action (which can be either online or offline) or to encourage comments or reading further texts on that topic through hyperlinks (Trammell et al., 2006) and consequently they could make a contribution to (deliberative) democracy (Coleman, 2005). According to McMillan (2002), there are different forms of interactivity represented as: (1) user-to-system interactivity with the use of hyperlinks, (2) user-to-user interactivity with an example of a forum, and (3) user-to-document interactivity, which is realized through comments (Trammell et al. 2006).

Like in every offline campaign, where each medium is used in a different manner, in an online campaign the same pattern is followed (Trammel et al., 2006). In blogs, according to Trammel et al. (2006), readers are addressed as peers and bloggers usually use emotional

appeal, identify with the experience of others, call for change or ask for the support. Therefore, they seem to have a more personalized approach to their voters.

There are optimistic and pessimistic predictions and statements about the rising number of political blogs. For some, it will positively influence the representation while for the others it is just a marketing tool “with limited appeal” (Wright, 2009: 155). As a political marketing tool, it can be suitable, because messages through blogs can be aimed directly to a target group (Trammel, 2007). Also, as it is not an “official” mass medium and the only editor is a blogger himself, he can use particular discursive strategies to classify different events and statements, to give them importance, to justify themselves and their acts in front of the audiences. But, despite the big number of political blogs in certain countries outside the USA, their impact on political communication and campaigning is questionable, especially if compared to USA blogs, where their role is significant (Campbell, 2009)

Wright (2009) believes that there is a tendency that every politician should have a blog. But, according to the Fleishmann-Hillard survey, only 24% of MEPs are bloggers, mostly from France and the UK, and from the *Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats* (SandD) group, followed by the *European People's Party* (EPP), and *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe* (ALDE) (Fleishman-Hillard, 2009). Many of these blogs are outdated, i.e. not updated for more than a year (sometimes even several years). As a result, it is difficult to assume the political blogs' popularity in the EU and especially its quantity of use during the electoral campaign in 2009. Nevertheless, according to the survey made by Fleischman and Hillard (2009), 51% of MEPs consider blogging or micro-blogging to be effective in communicating with voters.

Data Collection and Approach

In this paper, through Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), we analyze four blogs of former members of the European Parliament (MEPs)/political parties/candidates who decided to run in the elections for the European Parliament in 2009:

- Stephane Le Foll from *Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats* (SandD) group and French *Parti socialiste* [Socialist Party];
- Alojz Peterle from the *European People's Party* (EPP) group and Slovenian *Nova Slovenija- Krscanska ljudska stranka* [New Slovenia – Christian People's Party];
- Marco Cappato from the *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe* (ALDE) group and Italian *Partito radicale - Lista Bonino-Pannella* [Radical Party- List Bonino-Pannella];
- Roger Helmer from *European Conservatives and Reformists Group* (ECR) and British *Conservative party*.

The choice of bloggers and countries was made on the basis of different styles of political marketing and political communication in these four countries.

Although Coleman (2005) believes that blogs are mostly updated daily, that is not the case with blogs of MEPs. Therefore, we could have chosen only three dates during the electoral campaign for the purpose of analysis: May 14, May 25 and June 2, because those were the days when (almost) all candidates posted their blog articles. Alternatively, for those who did not post on the specified date, the closest dates were taken into account.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has always been interested in political discourse, because of its multidimensionality (Fairclough, 1995) and a connection between a discourse and power (Van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2002). Therefore, we assume that Critical Discourse Analysis is a suitable and relevant for a 'critically oriented' research of political communication and political marketing (Moufahim, 2005).

Here CDA is used for studying text presented in blogs, in order to reveal blog genre, style characteristics, language layers, main persuasive elements and wider significance. Our goal is to explore what and how the candidates present themselves as well as what their strategies are. Critical Discourse Analysis is appropriate for it, because it embraces the wider context and is interested in the production and reception of a text and its societal distribution (Fairclough, 1995). It tries to establish linkage of discourse with societal structures by focusing on the role discourses play in the society (Van Dijk, 2001).

Wider Context and Positioning of Politicians, Their Political Parties and Groups in the 2009 EP Election Campaign

Context, as a critical foundation of a discourse, is defined by social, political, cultural and historical structures and influences the discourse (Van Dijk, 2001). CDA sees it as a necessary and clarifying element in order to understand better what the analyzed blogs articulate, how and with which intention (Fairclough, 1995).

The European Parliament elections were held in 2009 in 27 member states and embraced the electoral body of 375 million voters, which classifies them as the biggest transnational elections (European Parliament, 2009). For the purpose of analysis, we have chosen four bloggers from four EU countries, with different political positions and orientations towards the European Union. During the electoral campaign in 2009, their political parties were all in opposition in their respective countries. However, the political groups whose members they are, are among the strongest in the European Parliament.

Roger Helmer is a Conservative party member, elected in the European Parliament for the first time in 1994, reelected in 2004 and then in 2009. The Conservative party left the EPP group in 2009, because of its strong support to the European integration (EurActiv, 2009) and formed a new group in the European Parliament, European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), together with some other European parties in July 2009. The ECR group

declares itself to be a non-federalist center/center-right group in the European Parliament (European Conservatives and Reformists Group, 2011).

In regards to the European Union, conservatives are defined as eurosceptics. Their goal is to stop further transfer of power to the European Parliament, which would influence the sovereignty and diminish the authority of the national parliament and to continue to be active participants in the European Union politics. The campaign for the 2009 EP election was an introduction to the campaign for a general election in the UK, thus it was based on national issues, such as recession, debt crisis and political crisis (The Conservative Party, 2009). Helmer's own goal, which he presents on the homepage of his website, is "to defend the national sovereignty of the UK and work for an EU of nation states, as opposed to federal model".

Alojz Peterle is a member of Slovenian party Nova Slovenija- Krščanska ljudska stranka (NSi) and vice-president of the European People's Party (EPP) in the European Parliament. He was elected for the first time in 2004 and subsequently in 2009. In the "about us" section of the EPP website, it can be read that the EPP group gather center and center-right pro-European political parties in the European Parliament.

For the NSi, European Union is represented in its moto "United in diversity", because the party supports the maintenance and development of the own nations' identities, culture, langues etc. The program of NSi assumes the Christian Democrat political tradition as its basis and advocated for a free, democratic Europe (Nova Slovenija, 2009). Peterle stresses the importance of preserving the interest of Slovenia in his political EPP group as well as in Europe (Kusar, 2009).

Marco Cappato is a member of Radicali Italiani and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). He was elected for the first time as a member of the List Bonino in 1999; he was not reelected in 2004, but he became a member of the European

parliament in 2006 by replacing a colleague from his party. Despite his own intensive online campaign as well as his party's, he did not succeed to get elected in 2009. The ALDE group is a group of liberal and democrat parties across Europe that promote "open-minded and forward-looking approach to European Union politics" (ALDE, 2009).

For the 2009 European elections, Radicali Italiani, lista Bonino-Pannella created the campaign program under the name "La Peste Italiana" (Italian pest), oriented towards the national politics and democracy in Italy, and in particular the issue of secularity and role of religion in Italy. The official website suggested to its readers to find more information on campaign themes on the blogs of Marco Cappato and Mario Staderini. The issue of secularity plays a big role Cappato's political standings.

Stephane Le Foll is a member of Parti socialiste and Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (SandD) elected in the European Parliament in 2004 and then in 2009. The SandD group gathers center-left parties in the European parliament.

In its "Declaration of Principles", *Parti socialiste* declares itself as a "European party". The main goal is to reinforce the SandD group in its structure in order to "spread the socialist message throughout Europe" (Parti socialiste, 2009). The 2009 EP campaign was oriented towards national issues and against Nicolas Sarkozy¹, but also towards a "useful" vote and a "useful" Europe, represented by socialists. Le Foll's campaign was mostly oriented towards the agricultural issues (Toute l'Europe, 2009).

Results

While analyzing the collected data and in order to present the results in a more structured way, we have identified four categories, according to which we proceeded with the analysis. These categories are:

¹ Both as French president but also leader of their main rival, Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP)- Union for a populist movement, which is a centre-right party and an EPP member

1. Format, as a general outline of blog posts;
2. Style, as a personal characteristic of bloggers;
3. Appeal, as a way of approaching the potential voters;

1. Format

The format of all the analyzed blog posts is the same, except for Marco Cappato's blog, which has pictures next to every blog entry. The format is typical for blog posts and similar to newspaper articles' format, with a title and several paragraphs of text. But there are considerable differences in length, as Le Foll's, Cappato's and Helmer's blog posts are between 213 and 356 words long, while Peterle's blog posts contain only 70 to 156 words. In order to reveal the significance of their length we need to compare them to a classical (political) blog format. It is often assumed that blog posts should be prevalingly short because of the relatively short attention span of an average blog reader, that is, Internet user. Internet is known as a medium that encourages speed (Suddath, 2009) and "subsecond response" and therefore the audience attention is easily lost (Smith, 2000). Due to the abundance of information, while "surfing" on the Internet, an average user spends less than 60 seconds per webpage (BBC news, 2002). In that sense, although there are no studies about the average length of blogs, an overall opinion of bloggers themselves is that the length should be between 250 and 600 words long (Black, 2008). Based on that, we see that all analyzed blogs fit into that category; Peterle's blogs are even shorter, which is good for the attention span. Still, it should be noticed that shorter blog posts also signify less information for readers. As far as we could conclude, only Le Foll's blog posts are not written by himself – the author is an assistant, whose name is clearly indicated although the text is written as it was Le Foll himself who is writing. The use of first person in blogs is further explained in the next section.

The only blogger out of these four who used pictures in the chosen blogs was Marco Cappato. The choice of images, which are full-colored, is remarkable and illustrates well the written text, but gives a slightly negative connotation (imprisoned person behind bars while writing about the law on pardon, TV test card while writing about the (im)possibility to present his party's program on the public broadcast). The importance of the application of pictures in political marketing in the last 50 years (since the raise of television as a visual mass media) is undeniable. The role of pictures in political marketing has been described more in detail by Simons (2006) and Iris (1996), but also in the work of Debray (2000), who insists on the fact that we are living in the society of image and visual. The role of pictures here is to backup the text and to attract the attention of a reader or to provoke a stronger feeling (as an emotional appeal).

A particularity of the format is the possibility of interaction with the readers, through the use of either a hyperlink, which can be considered as an important tool which encourages interaction (Trammell, 2006) or a comment. There are two kinds of posting a hyperlink on a blog: those provided on the web page of a blog itself (created by either the blogger or the webmaster) and those provided in the text of the analyzed blogs (undoubtedly provided by the blogger). All four bloggers have similar links posted on their blog: to their official website (if different), to their political party website, to their EP political group website and also to their social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) profile. In an electoral campaign, it is significant to create online networks of similar discourses, beliefs and positions. From the analysis of text, only one Helmer's blog post provides a hyperlink where more information about a certain topic can be found. This can be considered as a considerable omission in electoral tactics, as hyperlinks can be a valuable way in engaging the audience and providing them more information.

It is also noteworthy to see which websites posted a hyperlink to the selected blogs. As all but one blogs are parts of the official candidate's website (only Le Foll's was completely separate), the majority had links on their party's websites. By inspection of Google search engine, we have found out that, besides the official party and/or political groups websites, hyperlinks to these blogs could have been found on different civic blogs or social media, such as MySpace and YouTube. The use of hyperlinks confirms the possibilities for the creation of a blogosphere, proposed by Farrell and Drezner (2007). However, the rather small audiences that read those blogs give lots of doubts about the possibilities of the existence of a blogosphere.

Another possibility of interaction is given by posting comments under blog posts, but this possibility was rarely used. It is obvious that European bloggers still do not receive many comments. A possible reason for that is the appearance of social media sites, such as Facebook, where a better interaction can be realized. Although from the text itself, it is not possible to be seen how many times blogs were read, we can assume that the number of readers is quite small. Along with that, the reason for non-commenting could be that readers are not interested in participating and expressing their opinions, as either an agreement or disagreement.

2. Style

Style can be observed as well through the choice of themes and the type of discourse. Topics of all analyzed blog posts are connected to the electoral campaign and embrace the events where politicians took part, such as public meetings, recently published studies or comments on the campaign and national political opponents. For instance, in Peterle's blog posts there is a populist line. The themes of his blog posts are linked to the campaign and visits to the different households in several villages in Slovenia. He tries to justify his acts by

using a contrast between a poor patriotic girl and a rich man who attacks him “unjustifiably”. Through this dualistic black and white picture, he personally assumes a positive side, in order to show that his opponents are wrong. He uses his blog posts for praising himself and his nation, which is an articulation of populism and/or moderate nationalism – typical for moderate right-wing parties. However, the characteristic of discourses are better seen through the analysis of its smaller constitutive parts.

There is a noticeable difference in the format of sentences used in blog posts. Much longer sentences were used by Le Foll (approximately 50 words per sentence), while very short ones were used by Cappato (approximately 10 words/sentence). Although an argument can be that they are not using the same language and that there is a difference between French and Italian, both languages have very similar sentences’ constructions, therefore it is just the personal preference that is different. Longer sentences are a sign of a discourse whose aim is addressing a more educated, but also an older public, while Cappato’s choice of using shorter sentences could be interpreted as being closer to younger generations. For instance, in the literature where the length of sentences is mentioned (usually linked with oral speeches, which is different from blogs, but at the same time similar as it has a similar style and level of personalization), the length of both Regan’s sentences in 1988 and Clinton’s sentences in 1998 during the electoral campaign was between 20 and 22 words in their speeches (Halmari, 2005). Albouy argues that politicians are using “simple sentences” in order to be understandable to larger audiences (Albouy, 1994). Moniere (2007) suggests that the use of long sentences represents a sort of hesitation or a difficult message that should be transmitted while short sentences represent a candidate surer in himself.

The sentences are mostly declarative in all blog posts, which makes them firm and categorical, without signs or words of possible hesitation. Direct questions that appear at the end of certain paragraphs in the majority of blog posts, but are specifically accentuated in

Cappato's blog posts, are seen as a sort of rhetorical and attention grabbing features (Fairclough, 1995).

There could be made a distinction between a formal and informal blogs, where the formal would signify the use of formal written style language and official discourses, while the informal would stand for a kind of oral style blogs and colloquial discourses, with the use of shorter sentences, more repetition, less complex messages and "more colloquial, incomplete, even ungrammatical expressions than a written style (Benoit and Benoit, 2008, p.117). The choice of the language is different with different bloggers, i.e. Cappato's language is informal, while Le Foll's is rather formal, and it can be linked to the length of sentences as well, because longer sentences contribute to the formal language register, while shorter are more appropriate for the informal (as we have already noticed).

All analyzed blogs are written in the first person: the majority use the first person of singular, while some blog posts (like Cappato's) are in the first person of plural. The common element for the use of the first person of either singular or plural is the insistence on the personalization of a campaign. Through it, readers should feel closer to the writer and have the impression that a blogger talks directly to them. There are a lot of personal/possessive pronouns, such as "I", "me", "mine". The first person is widely used in political discourse of a party's leaders and in different political marketing techniques. It makes the producer of the content "the principal actor of a discourse" (Moniere, 2007). Yet, it is also a characteristic of blogs, as a genre, because they are envisaged as a sort of personal diary. At the same time, the use of the first person of plural usually signifies a more collegial decision. The 'we' pronoun should represent not only the blogger and his decision, but everyone who surrounds him (Moniere, 2007). However, it is often not clear whether the use of 'we' is exclusive (in the sense that 'we' represents a certain group of people, such as a political party), inclusive (when it includes audiences as well) or ambivalent (not clear) (Myers, 2010). According to

Fairclough (1995), the vagueness of the ‘we’ pronoun represents an important resource for political discourse, as it symbolizes at the same time solidarity with everyone, but also authority, in the sense of speaking *for* people.

Conversational and paralinguistic features are often used in blog posts (Myers, 2010). In Cappato’s blog posts, also a lot of different markers (such as sentences in bold font) can be noticed to attract the attention of readers. Also his text is full of exclamation marks and question marks. He also uses the capital “r”, when talking about the “regime” in order to put additional weight on the word. Similar is Helmer’s attitude when he uses the word “referendum”, in bold font and upper case (upper case in computer-mediated communication is understood as shouting) and also many exclamation and question marks.

When it comes to spelling, Cappato’s spelling, where “c” is replaced with “k” (e.g., repubbliKa” instead of “repubblica”, “okkupazione” instead of “occupazione”, etc.), is an example of hyper-characterized orthography (Rodriguez-Gonzales, 2006). It is used in other languages, such as Spanish, French or English as well, but it is more noticeable in languages where the letter “k” does not exist orthographically but only phonetically. It is a part of informal internet writing but it can also have a political connotation in opposing to the status quo, therefore it can be seen as an articulation of elements of liberal discourse. At the same time, it is used by young adults, a specific age-group, in the context of rebellion and non-conformity with the hegemonic discourses.

3. Appeal strategies

Based on the categorization of appeals done by Trent and Friedenberg (2003) and emotional appeals by Brader (2006), we obtained six different leading appeals used by the bloggers: attack opponent, call for change, voice for people, enthusiasm, pride and credibility source. We will focus on emotional appeals that were predominantly present in analysed blogs.

The “attack opponent” appeal, which can be classified as emotional, was used by all four bloggers, but it was mostly visible in Cappato’s blog posts. He used expressions such as “vergogna nazionale” [national shame], “scandalo indicibile” [indescribable scandal], “parlamento di mafiosi e criminali” [parliament of mafia and criminals], “banda di ladri e complici della partitocrazia” [gang of thieves and accomplices of partitocracy], etc. in order to attack the opponents. Similarly, Helmer states in a blog post for an opponent that he “must be in need of medicine”. This is a characteristic of political discourse in general, but especially of politicians in the opposition and consequently it is connected with the following one.

The “call for change” appeal was used by Le Foll in the post where he asks for more socialists in the European Parliament: “dans la crise que nous traversons [...] les socialistes doivent etre nombreux et majoritaires” [in the crisis that we are going through [...] socialists need to be numerous and in majority] and continues with the expressions in next sentences, such as “c’est la condition necessaire” [it’s a necessary condition], “c’est aussi la solution” [it’s also a solution], “seuls les socialistes [...] pourront le faire” [only socialists can do it]. As a principal goal of a political party is to win the elections, while in the opposition, “call for change” is a logical choice of emotional appeal.

Pride, enthusiasm and “voice for people” appeals as emotional appeals in our analysis represent elements of populist discourse and patriotic discourse, largely used by right-wing parties. In Helmer’s blog post it appears as being proud on party certain decisions or acts, such as: “So there you have it – all of the top five are sound euro-sceptics, and four of them are Conservatives. I’m delighted...”, or: “I concluded by saying that I was proud of that decision. And I am.” National pride, related to national identity is present in Peterle’s blog posts when he mentions that a girl he met during the campaign told him: “Tu je lepo in trdo, vendar ne bom stokala in tudi nikamor drugam ne bom šla” [It is nice but difficult here, however I will not cry and I will not go anywhere else] and also when he speaks about

traditional Slovenian food: “Koliko čudotvornih kruhov, potic i slaščic smo videli! Da o vinu ne govorimo posebej.[...] praznik slovenske ustvarjalnosti”[how many miraculous breads, rolls and cakes we have seen! And I will not mention wine separately.[...] it’s a holiday of Slovenian creativity”. Enthusiasm is seen in a Peterle’s blog while answering a question if he is tired: “Od Slovenije ne morem biti nikoli utrujen.” [I can never be tired of Slovenia]. “Voice for people” appeal was present in a Helmer’s blog post: “The people don’t want [...] they just want [...]. The people don’t want [...]. They don’t want [...]. They want...”.

Another appeal that was also broadly used is credibility source appeal, through which a politician puts an emphasis on his expertise and accomplishment. This was visible in a Le Foll’s blog post: “Le rapport presente [...] est un travail de qualité qui marque une étape importante...” [the presented report [...] is a quality work that marks an important stage...] and also in a Cappato’s post: “Ho quindi chiesto al Consiglio Europeo...” [So I asked to the European Council], “In particolare ho proposto di” [I particularly proposed to], etc.

Discussion

Many politicians nowadays use blogs as a means of communicating with voters in order to place their interest on public agenda to win the support for their position (Kriesi, 2004). Still it might be questionable whether politicians should be equal participants in the process of deliberation through the participation on the internet or just observers and listeners.

In our study, through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis we have tried to reveal how political blogs were used in the 2009 European Parliament electoral campaign. We chose politicians who blogged during their electoral campaign from four different countries and with different political and ideological background. We were interested in discovering similarities and differences among them through the format they have used, as well as their particular styles, rhetoric, language and appeal.

The format of blogs was different: some were longer, others shorter, some used pictures, others were without pictures, which could have made a difference in the attractiveness of blogs and readability. But the most significant particularity of a blog format is the possibility to connect to other blogs through the use of hyperlinks. The linkages among blogs of similar beliefs, stands and discourses create an opportunity for a blogosphere to be established.

Topics that were used were all framed through the electoral campaign these politicians were leading in their respective countries. Particularities of the style was discovered through the differences between formal and informal blogs through the use of official versus colloquial discourses. Sentences that were used were mostly declarative, which made them firmer. They were rather short and words were chosen in order to contribute to the clarity of the message which is a characteristic of persuasive discourse (Benoit and Benoit, 2008). Different markers, rhetorical questions and hyper-characterized orthography were used as attention grabbers. Also, we noticed that bloggers coming from centre-right oriented parties used the populist discourses, while a centre-left liberal blogger used liberal discourses.

We have seen several appeals that were used by blogs, mostly emotional. The most used appeal in the blog posts was a personal attack on the opponent, which is a characteristic of political blogs (Trammell et al., 2006). Some emotional appeal such as pride, enthusiasm, “voice for people” were used to praise national identity and traditional values and were parts of populist discourse. Praises are also often present in political persuasion, because they “emphasize a candidate’s pros, advantages, strengths” (Benoit and Benoit, 2008).

Overall, we can assert that blogs are texts between oral and written expression. Bloggers address readers as equal to them and use different kind of emotional appeal in order to influence readers in a more personalized way. Every blogger had his own specific style,

which was in many cases related to the political ideology and party standings. The persuasive role of text helped to maintain and reproduce dominant ideological representation.

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