Chapter 3 When populists call populists populists – 'Populism' and 'Populist' as Political keywords in German and British political discourse/ Michael Kranert (University of Southampton)

Introduction: "Populism" as a key term in political discourse

In 2017, 'populism' was announced as the Cambridge Dictionary word of the year, arguing that it 'represents a phenomenon that's both truly local and truly global, as populations and their leaders across the world wrestle with issues of immigration and trade, resurgent nationalism, and economic discontent' (Cambridge Dictionary 2017). The choice was not uncontested: in a Guardian article, political scientist Cas Mudde argued that not 'populism' but 'nativism' should be declared the word of the year as this is what is really the core of the current public discourse on populism (Mudde, December 07, 2017). Mudde also took issue with the analysis that 'populism' is mainly used with reference to 'the implied lack of critical thinking on the part of the populace, and the implied cynicism on the part of the leaders who exploit it' (Cambridge Dictionary 2017), as this implies an opposition of 'populism' and genuine politics which he finds unhelpful, elitist and self-serving. As a solution, he offers a theoretical explanation of 'populism' and demonstrates how modern right-wing nativists adopt populist elements.

Of course, the theoretical debates about populism are not straightforward either: Canovan (1999, 3) and others have argued that the meaning of 'populism' is unclear due to the slipperiness of the concept. Without repeating the theoretical debates outlined in the introduction (Kranert, Introduction in this volume), we can say that most theoretical approaches to populism share two elements: the distinction of 'the people' versus 'the elite' and 'our people' versus 'them'. Within the theoretical debates, three main strands can be distinguished:

- Populism as a type of political ideology (e.g. Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013);
- Populism as a political style of politicians (Moffitt 2016);
- Populism as a type of political discourse (Stavrakakis 2017).

The complexity, range and diversity of meanings of both 'populism' and 'populist' suggest that both terms can now be seen as cultural or socio-political keywords (Jeffries and Walker 2017) that are indicative of the major discourses at any one time. This chapter aims to empirically analyse the public use of these terms in Germany and the UK between 2012 and 2017 – in the run-up to the term becoming Cambridge Dictionary word of the year. I will ask what the discursive functions of the terms are in political discourse captured in a 14-million-word corpus of German and British newspaper articles containing the term. I will first develop my theoretical framework, discuss previous studies and define my corpus. I will then discuss the results of the corpus assisted analysis, describing the changing semantic prosody of the terms and their discursive functions in utterances by journalists and politicians.

Theoretical approach and previous research

Socio-political keywords are words that reflect significant cultural, social or political discourses (Jeffries and Walker 2017) – they capture 'discourse in a nutshell' (Schröter 2008). Lexicographical research on keywords has a long tradition in German politico-linguistics, which has developed a large body of literature on political lexis, specifically *Schlagwörter*, their semantics and their discursive function. In order to distinguish them from statistical keywords, I suggest translating the German

'Schlagwort' as 'catch term' (Kranert 2019, 101). Burkhardt (2003) suggests distinguishing groups of ideological catch terms in the way captured in Figure 3.1:
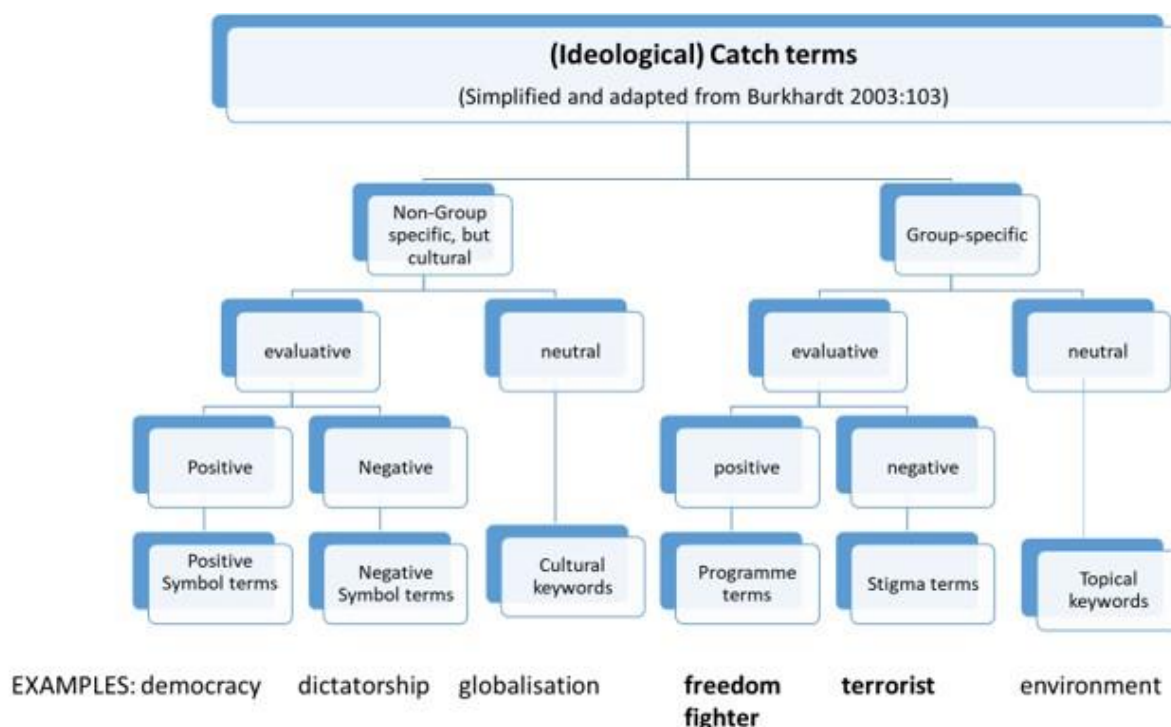

Figure 3.1 Ideological Catch terms - Simplified and adapted from Burkhardt 2003:103

The main distinction is between non-group specific and group specific lexis. In both cases, these can be subdivided into evaluative terms and neutral terms. In fact, being evaluative is one of the core properties of political lexis: using political catch terms means performing not only a reference act, but also a predication.

Girnth (2015, 66) argues that every reference act is also an act of predication and evaluation. This is particularly exploited in politics where the meaning of group specific evaluative lexis has a cognitive, affective and voluntative component. The stigma term 'extremist', for example, contains the evaluation of the person it refers to as somebody who takes extreme political positions and possibly acts violently to fulfil their aims. Girnth (2015, 66) therefore suggests that the meaning potential of this stigma term can be rephrased as follows:

(1) This person is dangerous (=cognitive component).
(2) This person takes a position that must be rejected and disdained (=affective component).
(3) This person should be excluded by law (= voluntative component).

However, these meaning elements are not fixed, but part of a semantic struggle that strategically chooses programme terms to signify the group's own position or stigma terms to describe and devalue the position of the political opponent. The semantic struggle and therefore the reinterpretation of the semantics of a term happens through processes of contextualisation and through metalinguistic comments.

The contextualisation of a term forms part of its textual meaning. Girnth (2015, 77) distinguishes between denotative contextualisation, which influences the reference of a term, evaluative contextualisation, which influences the evaluation of a concept, and deontic contextualisation,

which changes the voluntative implications, i.e. what a term asks the hearer to do. The following examples from my corpus should help explain the types of contextualisation:

(4) right-wing populism (denotative contextualisation)

(5) forces of division, intolerance, populism, nationalism and cynicism (evaluative contextualisation)

(6) It is worth fighting populism (deontic contextualisation)

While (4) restricts the reference of 'populism' to a particular group or ideology, (5) connects 'populism' with other negative connotations, and (6) makes the voluntative component of the use overt – a repeated use of this pattern will strengthen this component.

Another way to recognise the complex semantics and pragmatics of political lexis is to analyse samples of open contestation – a process that has been named 'meta-linguistic comments' (Schröter 2008, 51). Meta-linguistic comments focus on the meaning of language used and can be understood as part of meta-discourse. Political catch terms are often surrounded by metalinguistic comments and demonstrate public awareness of the contestation of the concept or issue in question (Schröter 2008, 51). As they are used to reinterpret core terminology, they give the analyst an insight into strategic use of political language and the contestation of meaning, as well as provide an emic perspective on meaning from language users themselves.

Three major studies on the discourse of populism in newspapers have been conducted to date. Bale et al. (2011) analyse a corpus of British broadsheets from October to December 2007 and July to September 2008. In their study, they apply a type of content analysis to understand what they call the vernacular use of 'populism' and its connection to the academic use. In this corpus from 2007/8, 'populism' is never central to the text, which indicates that it was not a socio-political keyword at that time. Furthermore,the term is mainly used pejoratively. The authors also find that 'the almost random use of the term in vernacular language still poses a problem' (Bale et. al. 2011, 128), a conclusion that is possibly reached through a lack of a linguistic perspective on the pragmatic function of the term.

Herkman (2016) analyses the meaning of 'populism' in the Nordic press (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark) between 2010 and 2013, arguing that these four countries all belong to the democratic-corporatist model of media systems which are defined by an external pluralism of the press, strong professionalisation and strong state intervention (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Using quantitative frame analysis, Herkman (2016) finds that the focus on the various frames (nationalism, nativism, empty rhetoric, political movement and voice of people) differs slightly between the polities under analysis.

Hamo et al. (2019) is currently the only discourse-linguistic study on the use of 'populism' in political discourse. Their study is based on a small corpus of Israeli press articles between 2012-2017 as well as media interviews. The authors stress the importance of an emic perspective to demonstrate how 'the meanings of populism are negotiated, constructed and strategically employed by actual participants in public discourse'. (Hamo, et al. 2019, 1)

In their analysis, they find that in the corpus the meaning attributed to 'populism' by political actors themselves is mainly motivational-intentional and the term used as a device to manage face. They also find a reversal of evaluative load, i.e. instead of claiming authenticity in populist discourse, when explicitly discussed by political actors populism 'is associated with cynicism and inauthenticity' and therefore used as 'an accusatory (or defensive) device, which sometimes involves the attribution of insincerity, superficiality and irresponsibility' (Hamo et al. 2019, 7).

Methodology and Corpus

This chapter employs a corpus assisted analysis of catch terms, in order to apply the lexicographical methodology from politico-linguistics outlined above to a press corpus from Germany and the UK between 2012 and 2017. Using the software system *sketch engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) to run a collocation analysis, I aim to analyse the changing semantic prosody (Louw 2000:60) of both 'populism' and 'populist' at a time when the terms developed into socio-political keywords. Semantic prosody is the part of lexical meaning produced through consistent collocation patterns with evaluative expressions. The description of collocation patterns can therefore add an understanding of the semantics of the terms in the press by allowing an analysis of the contextual meaning on a denotational, evaluative and voluntative level.

In order to investigate the use by journalists and politicians quoted in the press in more detail, I will employ a combination of a quantitative corpus driven analysis and qualitative concordance line analysis: The qualitative part of the analysis will be based on a set of 100 random concordance lines for each newspaper and each term, selected automatically through a function in *sketch engine* and examined manually by annotating them, forming categories inductively.

Using a press corpus for research on political lexis is an established methodology: the press is one of the discursive spheres of political discourse. It both reports political utterances and interprets policy and rhetoric. Therefore, press texts are a good source for documenting language use of a variety of political actors: politicians and experts who are quoted, but most centrally journalists who are highly influential in the discursive formation of public opinion.

The software package *sketch engine* offers a function that supports the analysis of semantic prosody: the *word sketch* function produces an overview of the collocations of a word distinguished by grammatical relations. This method was previously successfully used, for example to explore representations of MUSLIM in a press corpus (Baker, P., Gabrielatos et. al 2013). Statistically, word sketch is based on a logDice measure to describe the strength of a collocation, because it is not affected by the corpus size (Rychlý 2008). The score has a theoretical maximum of 14, but usually scores for collocations are expected to be around 10.

The British and German press systems have many similarities: despite the German press being categorized as democratic corporatist and the British as liberal (Hallin and Mancini 2004), both have a high level of professionalism in journalism as well as a similar level of external pluralism, i.e. a wide range of media outlets linked to different political groups. However, the party and the electoral systems, as well as the history of political discourse in Germany and the UK, show significant differences (Kranert 2019).

To ensure comparability but also to keep the corpus manageable, a centre left and a centre right quality newspaperwere chosen for each country: for Germany, *Die Welt* was chosen as a centre right publication, while *Die Tageszeitung* (TAZ) represents centre-left publications. In the UK, *The Times* was chosen as a centre-right newspaper and *The Guardian* as a centre-left. In order to have tabloid newspapers represented, the *Daily Mail* and *Die Bildzeitung* were included in the corpus, as they are amongst the most widely read papers as well as accessible through the data base LexisNexis Academic ("Lexis Nexis Academic Database" 2018). Unfortunately, the database only contains *Die Bildzeitung* from 2017 onwards and a realistic agreement could not be reached with the publisher Axel Springer Verlag, so that the analysis only contains the data from 2017.

To form the corpus, LexisNexis was searched for articles from the German newspapers using the search phrase "populis! OR !populis!" in order to capture compounds. For the British press, the

search term was '(populis!)'. The German corpus consists of 8,057 documents with 5,949,175 words while the British corpus comprises 7,756 documents counting 8,222,421 words. There is a clear rise in search results from 2012 (9% of the corpus) to 2017 (31%). Overall, there are substantially more hits in the quality newspapers than in the tabloids. Table 1 shows the representation of the search terms 'populism' and 'populist' (noun) in the corpus:

	British Corpus	German Corpus
Populism/Populismus	2495	1852
Populist (n)	1606	1809

Table 3.1: Search term representation in the corpus

In the following analysis, I aim to demonstrate the discursive function of the terms 'populism' and 'populist' used in the German and British press between 2012 and 2017, which I subdivided in 5 research questions:

RQ 1: Overall, how has the semantic prosody of the terms changed?

RQ 2: What is their function in the reported use by politicians?

RQ 3: What is their function in the use by journalists?

RQ 4: Which elements of meaning are contested in metalinguistic comments?

RQ 5: Are there significant differences between the terms' use in the German and in the British corpus?

The semantic prosody of the nouns 'populist' and 'populism' in German and English

Looking at the modifiers of 'populism' and 'populist' in Table 3.2, we can see that half of the terms concern the left-right spectrum, the other half are negative terms such as 'authoritarian' or 'cheap'.

POPULISMUS GERMAN PRESS			POPULISM BRITISH PRESS		
modifier	Freq.	Coll. Score (logDice)	Modifier	Freq.	Coll. Score (logDice)
pur [pure]	28	10.30	rightwing	116	10.52
rein [pure]	31	9.94	right-wing	34	9.26
billig [cheap]	24	9.88	crass	21	8.91
rechts [right]	59	9.41	leftwing	23	8.63
links [left]	46	9.13	anti-establishment	20	8.6
blank [bare]	10	8.93	Authoritarian	18	8.48
antieuropäisch [anti-european]	19	8.73	Xenophobic	16	8.35
populist (-n) German press			populist (-n) British press		
rechts [right]	92	10.13	rightwing	114	10.81
mild [mild]	5	8.37	right-wing	50	10.3
gefährlich [dangerous]	9	8.3	leftwing	19	8.79
böse [evil]	6	8.22	far-right	22	8.64
sogenannt [so-called]	10	7.98	anti-eu	10	8.19
link [left]	17	7.78	reactionary	8	8.05

Table 3.2: Modifier Collocations

Figures 2 and 3 show that the collocation strength with left-wing/right-wing is less strong in 2012/2013 and rises in 2016. This analysis was made difficult by the fact that the spelling conventions in English are not consistent: While *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* mainly use 'right-wing' and 'left-wing', *The Guardian* uses both the hyphenated and non-hyphenated spelling.
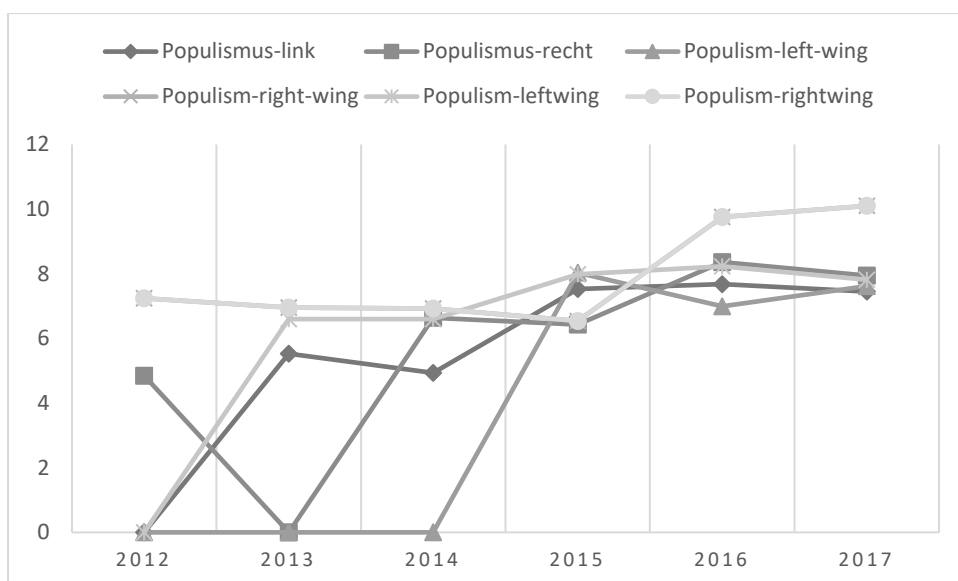
Figure 3.2: Change in Collocation Strength (logDice) for Populism-left-right
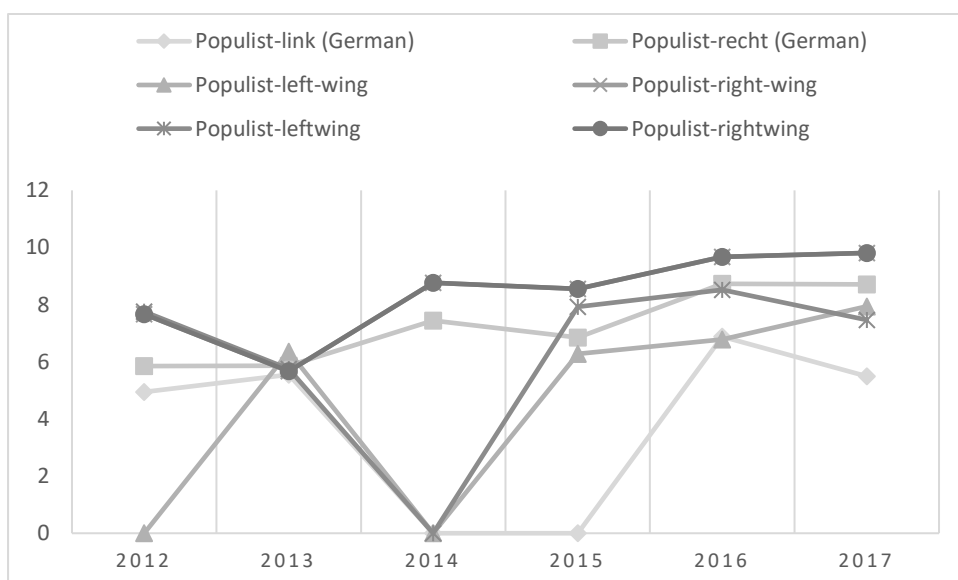

Figure 3.3: Change in Collocation Strength (logDice) for Populist-left-right

This indicates that the function of the term was changing at that time toward a term that structures the political landscape: there is left and right, the classical metaphor for structuring the political space since the French revolution, which is often modified as centre-left, centre-right, far or radical left/right etc., and 'populism' seems to become an additional element in this structuring vocabulary.

An analysis of the left-right modification of 'populism' in the centre-left and centre-right newspapers shows that 'right' is a stronger collocation in the centre left newspapers *The Guardian* (10.75) than in *The Times* (9.19) and stronger in *Die Tageszeitung* (9.3) than in *Die Welt* (6.91)*.* Looking at all concordances of the left-right modification from the whole corpus, it seems the left of centre newspapers insist on the distinction much more: 10.45% of all uses of 'populism' in *The Guardian*, and 8.21 % in *Die Tageszeitung* are modified with either 'left'/'links', or 'right' – in comparison to just 4.5% in *The Times* and 2% in *Die Welt*. One explanation here could be found in quite a few articles in both *The Guardian* (11) and *Die Tageszeitung* (19) which discuss whether left-wing populism could be a positive alternative to right-wing nationalist and xenophobic populism:

(1) Was ist etwa Populismus, was kann linker rechtem Populismus entgegensetzen, und was ist ehrlicher Populismus? (Hofmann, September 06, 2016)
What is populism and what can left-wing populism put up against right-wing populism, and what is honest populism?
(2) The left needs a new populism fast (Jones, November 10, 2016)

Particularly revealing are the, albeit few, examples in which 'populism' as a negative phenomenon is seen on the left and on the right, a chain of equivalence that can be found in the centre-right newspapers. They show a function of the term 'populism' first described by Knobloch (2007, 116–17): in cases where the term is not used to devalue a policy or a rhetorical move, 'populism' is used as a term to order the political landscape. It locates political organisations and ideologies in the political spectrum and threatens them with exclusion. Knobloch found that populists are located in a grey zone between the acceptable political centre and political extremists.

(3) Linksfraktionschefin Sahra Wagenknecht hat Merkels Flüchtlings- und Sicherheitspolitik mitverantwortlich für den Berliner Anschlag gemacht. Tauber: 'Damit wird wieder mal deutlich, dass die Linkspartei eine rote AfD ist. Sahra Wagenknecht und Frauke Petry sind das doppelte Lottchen des Populismus in Deutschland. Deshalb schließt die CDU auch mit beiden Parteien eine Zusammenarbeit aus. So eine klare Abgrenzung nach beiden Seiten erwarte ich auch von SPD und Grünen. (*Bild*, January 07, 2017)

The Left Party's parliamentary leader Sahra Wagenknecht partially blamed Merkel's migration and security policies for the attack in Berlin. Tauber: 'This illustrates that the Left Party is a red AfD. Sahra Wagenknecht und Frauke Petry are the twins of populism in Germany. The CDU therefore rules out a collaboration with either party. I expect similarly clear boundaries to both sides from the SPD and Greens. (Translation MK)

Example (3) illustrates that the term is not exclusive to right-wing parties and is here used to force other centre ground parties to accept that. This quotation, possibly because of its sexist salience and the literary allusion[i], was widely quoted in many newspapers. Of course, the debate here is about criticising the migration policy of the Merkel government and many on the left also accused Wagenknecht of using xenophobic topoi. However, Tauber, a CDU politician, generalises here from one member of the front bench to the whole party.

But there are other examples not linked to the migration discourse where left- and right-wing populists are construed as comparable. Joachim Pfeiffer, another conservative politician, for example, talks about 'left-green and right wing populists' being allowed to exploit the open debate about the trade agreement TTIP (Tauber and Doll, October 31, 2016). This supports Knobloch's (2007, 115) observation that 'populism' has also become a stigma term against groups who strategically act against the hegemonic idea of globalisation as progress.

A further part of the semantic prosody of the terms under analysis is their connection to other political terms through lists such as 'nationalist, populist and' in

Populismus und …	Freq	Coll. Score (logdice)	Populist und …	Freq.	Coll. Score (logdice)
Nationalismus	27	10.58	Nationalist	26	11.04
Extremismus	10	9.63	Demagoge	12	10.25
Protektionismus	8	9.26	Extremist	23	20.23
Fremdenfeindlichkeit	4	8.15	Autokrat	8	9.74
Rassismus	6	8.03	Diktator	5	9.04

Populism and …	Freq	Coll. Score (logDice)	Populist and …	Freq.	Coll. Score (logDice)
Nationalism	52	11.06	Demagogue	14	9.75
Xenophobia	16	9.56	[Le] Pen	23	9.44
Protectionism	13	9.37	Nationalist	13	9.37
Demagoguery	8	8.83	Wilders	12	9.20
Euroscepticism	7	8.65	Extremists	8	8.89

Table 3.3. The algorithm for this part of the word sketch looks for collocations of the node with coordinated phrases using 'and'/'or' or a comma. They contribute to the meaning of the term through evaluative and denotative contextualisation.

Populismus und …	Freq	Coll. Score (logdice)	Populist und …	Freq.	Coll. Score (logdice)
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Table 3.3: Evaluative Contextualisation of Populism/Populist

If we search for collocations diachronically, the collocation with 'nationalism' becomes stronger from 2015 onwards. The difference is particularly strong against pre-2011 corpora: the British National corpus (BNC Consortium 2007) for English, collected in the 1990s, and the DeTenTen (see Jakubíček et.al. 2013) for German, collected in 2010.

	Pre-2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
populism + nationalism	7.83	9.04	9.11	0	0	10.87	10.51
populist + nationalist	0	0	0	0	7.12	9.42	8.46
Populismus + Nationalismus (German)	1.84	0	0	0	8.09	10.14	10.22
populist + Nationalist (German)	3.36	9.4	0	9.31	0	10.19	10.61

Table 3.4: Changes of populism/nationalism collocation, logDice value

Looking at the 52 concordance lines for the collocation nationalism and populism, and sorting them for context as well as for year, I found that in British newspapers it can often be seen in negative lists such as 'division, intolerance, populism, nationalism and cynicism' or 'nationalism, populism, xenophobia'. These lists exist mainly in 2016-2017 and can not be found in the corpora *EngTenTen 2015* and the *BNC* either.

These results indicate that the use of the terms 'populism' and 'populist' in both German and British English is changing: the denotative contextualisation points towards a use as a stigmatising term for more nationalist ideologies, and even extreme right-wing political ideologies that include elements of nativism and xenophobia.

Despite the fact that the right-wing leaders Geert Wilders (Netherlands) and Marine Le Pen (France) appear in the overall collocation list, the results indicate that the concept 'populist' has a decreasing focus on leaders and is increasingly construed as a political group following a certain ideology, which is also indicated by a big increase in the number of plural uses of 'populists' in both corpora:
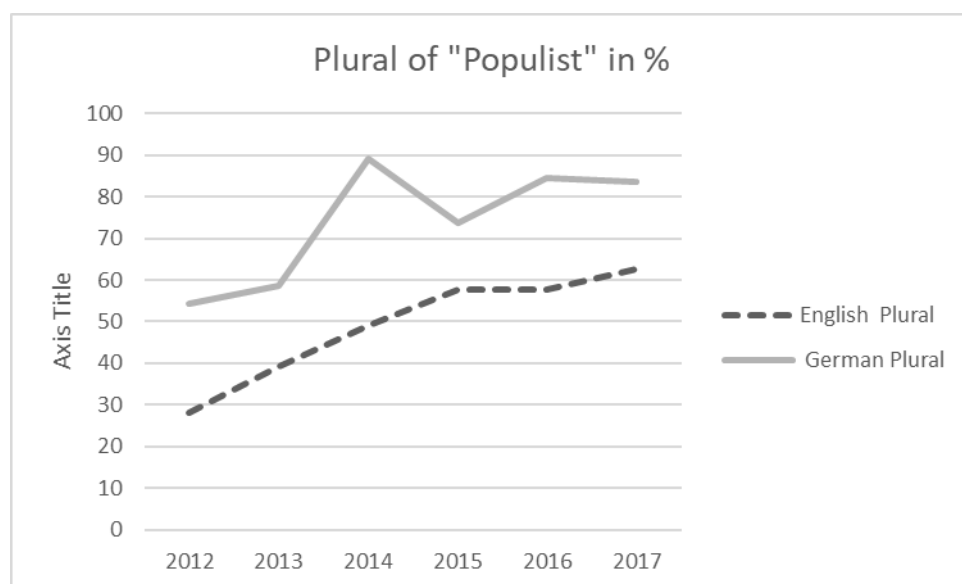
Figure 3.4: Plural of 'Populist" in the German and English press corpus

The singular use was in the majority in the English data before 2014 – a result that is confirmed through the British National Corpus, which indicates 46% plural use in the 1990's. While in English there are a few examples of 'nationalist and populist' in the singular, all examples in German are in the plural. The stronger use of the plural in German could of course have its origin in the major referent of 'Populisten': the party *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)*, which is, in great contrast to *UKIP* or the *Brexit Party*, not focused on a single person as the leader.

In summary, I argue that one major emerging meaning of the terms 'populism' and 'populist' in both German and English is their growing reference to ideological groups that have nationalism and nativism at the core of their world view, which supports Mudde's (December 07, 2017) argument that actually nativism should be the focus of the debate.

The verb collocations for 'populism'/'Populismus' and 'populist' as calculated in the word sketch strengthen its semantic prosody as a stigma term:

Populismus	Freq	Coll. Score (logdice)	Populist (German)	Freq.	Coll. Score (logdice)
vorwerfen [accuse]	21	9.5	überlassen [cede]	15	10
nähren [approach]	5	9.03	hinterherlaufen [run after]	5	9.26
funktionieren [function]	9	9.05	verhelfen [help/ empower]	5	9.13
um sich greifen [run rampant]	7	8.69	nutzen [use]	7	8.65
betreiben [operate]	7	8.37	helfen [help]	6	8.6
definieren [define]	4	8.3	gewinnen [win]	10	8.54
bedeuten [mean]	4	7.24	profitieren [profit]	5	8.48
brauchen [need]	9	6.98	stärken [strengthen]	7	8.43
stellen [put]	4	6.16	in die Hände spielen [play into somebody's hands]	10	7.99
			wählen [elect]	10	7.76

Populism	Freq	Coll. Score (logDice)	Populist (English)	Feq.	Coll. Score (logDice)
sweep	11	9	grandstand	5	8.49
gallop	7	8.93	thrive	5	8.29
fight	17	8.83	exploit	4	7.92
fuel	11	8.83	oppose	5	7.32
trump	7	8.58	promise	5	7.18
feed	7	8.33	stop	4	6.85
influence	6	8.27	use	6	6.96
prefigure	5	8.21	offer	4	6.77
seduce	5	8.17	allow	6	6.69
unleash	5	8.02	make	12	6.5

Table 3.5: Verb collocations of populism and populist

Firstly, 'populists' is found as the subject of 'nutzen'/'use' in the sense of 'abuse' and 'exploit', and 'populism' regularly appears in the object position of 'vorwerfen'/ 'accuse'. Other verbs that contribute to the negative semantic prosody are 'stop', 'exploit', 'überlassen' / 'cede' and 'betreiben' / 'operate'.

Secondly, it is possible to argue that some of the verb collocations of 'populism' and 'populist' construe an overarching metaphorical scenario (Musolff 2006) of POPULISM as DISASTER:

- POPULISM AS PLANTS/WEEDS (um sich greifen, nähren, feed, flourish, thrive)
- POPULISM AS STORM (rise, sweep)
- POPULISM AS FIRE (fuel)
- POPULISM AS A BEAST (unleash)
- POLITICS AS WAR/ POPULISM AS ENEMY (fight, combat, win, in eine Lücke stoßen, Terrain/Thema/ Räume überlassen, in die Hände spielen)

Again, these patterns cannot be found in the BNC from the 1990 and DeTenTen, which was collected before 2010. This metaphorical scenario suggests a weakening of the denotative meaning of 'populism', as within this frame the focus is no longer on the meaning 'policies or principles of any various political parties which seek to represent the interest of ordinary people' (OED Oxford English Dictionary online 2019), but on the connotation of threat: it is the affective component of meaning that takes over in this context.

'This is pure populism': Politicians' use of the terms 'populism' and 'populist' in the corpus

In order to analyse the use of 'populism' and 'populist' as a political catch term in more detail, I will now present a qualitative analysis of a sample of concordance lines. Through the random sample function in the sketch engine, a random sample of 100 concordance lines for each term was chosen to make an in-depth analysis possible. As I could only obtain articles from Die Bildzeitung from 2017, all hits from that newspaper were included in the concordance analysis.

	N in corpus	N in random sample	% of hits in random sample	The Guardian	The Times	The Daily Mail
Populist (English)	1606	300	18.7%	100	100	100
Populism (English)	2495	300	12%	100	100	100
	N in corpus	N in random sample	% of hits in random sample	Die TAZ	Die Welt	Die Bild-zeitung
Populist (German)	1852	285	15.8%	300	300	85
Populismus (German)	1809	263	14.2%	300	300	63

Table 3.6 demonstrates the proportion of each term:

	N in corpus	N in random sample	% of hits in random sample	The Guardian	The Times	The Daily Mail
Populist (English)	1606	300	18.7%	100	100	100
Populism (English)	2495	300	12%	100	100	100
	N in corpus	N in random sample	% of hits in random sample	Die TAZ	Die Welt	Die Bild-zeitung
Populist (German)	1852	285	15.8%	300	300	85
Populismus (German)	1809	263	14.2%	300	300	63

Table 3.6: Random Sample for concordance analysis

All concordance lines of the random sample were annotated inductively, i.e. while reading through the concordance lines, functions of the term were identified and grouped. During that process, the following categories were developed:

- the political spectrum named (left-right);
- the person or party called populist;
- whether it includes a metalinguistic comment;
- topic of the article;
- if stigma term what the stigma is against;
- use by journalist or quotation/reported use by politician, expert or member of the public.

All concordance lines in the corpus were annotated for whether they are speech of the journalist, or whether they are quoting or reporting somebody else's utterances. If this could not be ascertained by the context of the concordance line, the text itself was checked.

Looking only at the quotations of politicians, three types of uses of 'populism' and 'populist' were identified:

- Stigmatisation of a policy;
- Stigmatisation of rhetoric;
- Naming of a (party-)political ideology or movement.

There are many examples of politicians of all sides whose policies have been named 'populism' in both German and English because they are seen as symbolic policies aiming at popularity – these policies are, often implicitly, stigmatised as not effective but popular. The term 'populism' is here used as an interactional resource to discredit policies and rhetoric.

> (4) Die Fraktion von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen nannten die Forderung nach Senkung der Stromsteuer jedoch „reinen Populismus". […] Es gehe nicht an, dass durch eine Senkung der Stromsteuer auf der anderen Seite die Rentenkasse belastet werde, hieß es. (Kaiser, January 30, 2013)

> *However, the parliamentary group Bündnis 90/Die Grünen called the demand for lowering taxes on electricity 'pure populism', saying […]that a lowering of energy taxes should not burden the state pension fund.* (Translation MK)

> (5) Murphy says Labour must avoid the 'populism' of opposing every spending cut: It is important to be both credible and popular when it comes to defence investment and the economics of defence. There is a difference between populism and popularity. Credibility is the bridge away from populism and towards popularity. (Watt, January 05, 2012)

In example (4) from *Die Welt* we find one of the strong collocations in the corpus: 'reiner Populismus'. This can be found in all three German newspapers in all years: this is used for both stigmatisation of a policy and of rhetoric, which are, of course, sometimes difficult to distinguish. Is a demand just rhetoric or for an actual policy to be implemented? Here, it seems to be an argument about policy as it is countered with possible consequences of the policy. But politicians also warn their own parties not to suggest policies that are not credible. The metalinguistic comment about the meaning of 'populism' and 'popular' in (5) illustrates that well.

The category of countering rhetorical suggestions that are purely for the purpose of attracting voters often follows the pattern of 'that is populism' or, in indirect speech, 'is accused of populism' and 'bemoan populism'. The first two categories of quotations constitute between 2-11 % of all

concordance lines of the random sample: *The Times* with only 2% and *Die Welt* with 11 %. I found no significant difference in quotations from the left or the right. These examples are almost evenly spread through the years of the sample.

Throughout the sample, the use of 'populism' to name a political or ideological movement in quotations of politicians clearly increases between 2015 and 2017, and mostly refers to xenophobic and nationalist right-wing parties outside the established political centre. Although this could just be an effect of the random sample, it is in line with the semantic prosody demonstrated above.

'Populism' and 'populist' used by journalists

Not surprisingly, the use by journalists reflects the use by politicians, with a few exceptions: non-political and non-negative uses. The non-political use of the words is fairly widespread in the UK and amounts to about 10% of the random sample. The topics it is connected to vary between tabloids, where the main topic is sports, and broadsheets, where it is art, cinema and literature. In both cases, the noun 'populist' is almost exclusively used in the singular referring to a sportsperson or artist, and mainly carries positive or neutral connotations, as in (6).

> (6) Olivia Chaney: celebrating Henry Purcell, the bawdy baroque populist (*The Guardian*, May 11, 2016)

The exclusive singular use indicates that a 'populist' here is clearly a type of personality or style of an individual. As its meaning is related to popularity, and some high-brow culture comments of course see popular culture as less valuable, this is a rare exception. This type of use is far less frequent in the German press, where it exists mainly in sports reporting.

Obvious non-negative uses in political discourse are rare; more commonly, the naming of an ideology as populist is evaluatively ambiguous. Sometimes, 'populism' is construed as a personal skill of being popular and evaluated positively, parallel to the non-political use, and is applied to various politicians from the British Prime Minister Cameron (Conservative) to the German Chancellor Merkel (Christian Democrat). In the two left-of-centre newspapers there are also a few examples where 'populism' itself is seen as positive, because it politicises an otherwise depoliticised and restricted debate.

The interactional resource against policies and rhetoric we saw in utterances of politicians are also employed by journalists and amount to between 5 and 10% of the concordance lines. The politicians or parties attacked cover the whole political spectrum, even in *The Daily Mail* the terms are used against the former British Prime Minister and centrist Labour leader Blair (3) and the left-wing Labour Leader Corbyn (2), as well as the Dutch populist Wilders (2) and the US presendential candidate Hillary Clinton (2).

The noun 'populist' is regularly used in the singular, referring to a broad spectrum of popular and rhetorically skilled politicians from Thatcher to MacronThe use is mostly, but by no means always, defined by negative connotations, often of an over-reliance on popular rhetoric and a lack of credibility.

The increase of the plural 'populists' over time is also reflected in the sample. The plural 'populists' here often collocates with terms that indicate negative evaluation, such as 'fighting populists', 'angry' and 'defeat'. This use was marked as a reference to an ideological or political group, and increasingly we find the bold unmodified '(the) populists'/ '(die) Populisten' – both with and without article -, which mostly refers to right-wing nativist and authoritarian parties in Europe. The increased plural usage therefore mirrors the increased visibility and success of right-wing parties which are

termed populist. And despite the fact that not all uses have a clear negative evaluation in the context, the semantic prosody of the term is strong enough for it to be read as a stigma term that, in Knobloch's (2007) thinking, orders the political space. In some cases, mainly in the centre right press, I also found a parallel exclusion of left-wing and right-wing populists.

A similar function becomes dominant for the term 'populism': it is regularly employed as a name for a political group or ideology. The majority of cases are again bare uses without any definition or discussion and mostly referring to right-wing parties, which draw their stigmatising meaning either from the semantic prosody analysed above or from metaphorical constructions as the POPULISM IS AN ARMY metaphor in (7):

> (7) Gerade in einer Zeit, in der die Welt neu geordnet wird und der Populismus auf dem Vormarsch ist, kommt es mehr denn je auf ein starkes Europa an. (Ettel and Zschäpitz, November 23, 2016)
>
> *Especially at a time in which the world order is changing and populism is gaining ground, a strong Europe is needed more than ever before.*

Although the vast majority of analysed cases where the meaning of 'populism' is not reflected in the context does not include elements of meaning proposed by political theory, there are some cases in which the elite-people distinction that unites most political theory on populism shines through despite the term being used as a stigma term: in a 2013 article in the *Daily Mail* a European Union referendum in 2014 is suggested as a 'proper response to populism' 'Populism' here refers to UKIP, as the chain of reference in the text shows, and at the heart of it lies 'a legitimate concern unacknowledged by the political establishment' (Afriyie, October 06, 2013). Thus, while the headline suggests 'populism' as a problem, the text picks up a core topic of populist political thought: the issue of a political elite not listening to a legitimate concern of the people. This is, however, by no means the general use of 'populism' in the *Daily Mail* – in other places, left-wing politicians Ed Miliband (Labour), Nicola Sturgeon (Scottish National Party), Leanne Wood (Plaid Cymru) and Natalie Bennett (Green Party) are all brought together under the umbrella term 'left-wing populism' (*Daily Mail*, April 18, 2015).

'What you call populism, we call democracy' – Metalinguistic contestations of a political term

The analysis of the semantic prosody and the functions of 'populism' and 'populist' in context showed that in the majority of, although certainly not all, cases the terms are used as stigma terms. To add a further layer of analysis, which will allow us to triangulate the results so far, I will now explore how the meaning of the terms is contested in metalinguistic discourse, i.e. when politicians or journalists openly address and reflect on the meaning of the terms. The analysis is based on those concordance lines from the random sample that contained metalinguistic comments.

Metalinguistic comments on 'populism' in the *Daily Mail* mainly occur in the context of discourses on Euroscepticism and Brexit, core topics of the version of Eurosceptic conservatism supported by that newspaper. The metalinguistic reflections focus on the function of 'populism' as a stigma term. There are comments that produce a competition in nomination suggesting a different term to be used to foreground certain discursive elements (Klein 1991, 55): in 2014 two articles report comments by the then vice-president of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, criticising the anti-immigrant sentiments of the British government as populist (*Daily Mail*, January 10, 2014; *Daily Mail*, January 11, 2014). In the articles, Eurosceptic conservatives Daniel Hannan and Peter Bone argue that what is called 'populism' by Reding should actually be called 'democracy':

(8) Conservative MEP Daniel Hannan said: When Mrs Reding says 'populism', what she means is politicians doing what their constituents want, or as we call it in English, democracy'. (*Daily Mail*, January 11, 2014)

Here, the writer activates a part of what Brubaker (2017) calls the populist repertoire - a discursive repertoire of politicians that can be described as populists in the academic sense. Its core element is the reference to an understanding of democracy as direct democracy, which constitutes a case of re-democratisation and antagonistic re-politicisation. Antagonistic re-politicisation is a strategy that aims to re-open political discourses that are supposedly suppressed by an elite, and therefore bring it back under control by the people: here, it is the discourse on regulating immigration. Therefore, the repudiation of the stigma term 'populism' here is linked to elements of populist discourses itself.

A further metalinguistic comment is the reflection on 'populism' as 'a sneering term of the political class' (Murray, December 08, 2016). Again, the semantic battle here starts with the insight that 'populism' as a stigma term should be avoided. The reflection itself also draws on a populist repertoire, here the distinction between the elite and the people. The argument reflects what Hamo et. al. (2019, 7) call a reversal of evaluative load in the use of the stigma term 'populism': while populist discourse claims authenticity, the term itself 'is associated with cynicism and inauthenticity'. This is exactly what Murray claims: the state broadcaster BBC and politicians are construed as the elite that uses 'populist' as a stigma term against the people who fight the corruption of the elite. The term stigmatises as it supposedly implies that Brexit voters are vulgar and un-educated. This constitutes a politics of re-democratisation that mixes speaking on behalf of the people as plebs and defending the ordinary voter as the sovereign people. Of course, repudiations of the use of 'populism' in articles of the *Daily Mail* do not stop the newspaper from using the stigma term continuously, particularly against the policies of the left, as we saw in the discussion above.

That 'populism' is a term that structures the political landscape and has an exclusionary character is picked up in articles in both *Die Tageszeitung* and *Die Welt:* the left-of-centre *Die Tageszeitung* reflects on its function to discredit positions that 'criticise the liberal ideological consensus, question the liberal-conservative and social-democratic two party system in Europe, or call out and criticise deficits in the parliamentary democracy' (Camus, March 14, 2014; translation MK). The right of centre *Die Welt* quotes the 5-star Movement politician Luigi Di Maio saying that the term is used for new political movements that cannot be classified in the old political spectrum (Reuscher, July 12, 2017).

Another core topic in *Die Welt* is the argument that accusing political parties of 'populism' is problematic as all political parties want to be popular and elected – so we have 'populists that call populists populists' (Sprenger, September 08, 2016). The semantic element 'popularity' is picked up in numerous metalinguistic comments – some of which want to draw a clear line between popularity and populism: both *The Guardian* and *The Times* quote Jim Murphy, who in 2012 warned his Labour colleagues not to oppose spending cuts 'out of populist intentions' – by which he means out of the intention to be popular, as in his view policies only lead to popularity if they are credible.

A final group of metalinguistic comments concerns the conceptual level of discussion of populism by political scientists. While in terms of understanding right-wing politics it is often Cas Mudde who is used as an expert, there are quite a few examples of debates on Ernesto Laclau in both left-of-centre newspapers in a debate on whether there is a credible possibility of a left wing populist movement in Europe.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to analyse the functions of the terms 'populist' and 'populism' in political discourse in Germany and the UK by employing a combination of computer assisted critical discourse studies and lexicological reflections from German politico-linguistics to describe these terms as political catch terms. The semantic prosody, concordance lines from the sample and metalinguistic comments all point to a use as a stigma term with two different functions: to discredit policies and rhetoric of political actors, or to name political ideologies and groups that are not part of the established political centre ground.

The delegitimisation of policies and rhetoric mainly happens through the semantic element of 'aiming at popularity', which is also the core meaning as a non-political term. As a political stigma term, 'populism' seems to include an opposition of 'popularity' and 'credibility'.

 The quantitative changes in the semantic prosody between 2012 and 2017 and the increased use as a naming device for right-wing political groups means the terms have become synonymous with nativism and xenophobia. Mudde (December 07, 2017) points out the problem of the conflation of the radical right and populism in the definition of the Cambridge dictionary and the announcement that 'populism' was the word of the year 2017. He argues from the point of view of political theory that this conflation is problematic. However, the analysis given in the announcement of the word of the year reflects what seems to happen with the term 'populism': while it used to be more a device for discrediting a certain type of policy or rhetoric of any part of the political spectrum, it seems to have become synonymous with right-wing ideologies. The question that political theorists have to answer is whether it is still a useful term to use in academic analysis. A critical awareness of its function as a political stigma term would certainly help.

Linguistically, the new meaning is often implied when the terms 'populism' or the plural 'populists' are used in a structure that Jeffries and Walker (2017, 78) call bald unmodified: the use of the term without pre- or post modification, which seems to indicate 'the end point of the process […] of a specialized sense of a lexical item developing that becomes a kind of shorthand for a complex set of ideas.' The stigmatising function of the bald unmodified use is supported by a metaphorical emptying of denotative meaning when populism 'sweeps', is 'unleashed' and ' fuelled'. These metaphorical frames strengthen the affective component of meaning.

In order to triangulate the functions suggested in the corpus analysis, I analysed metalinguistic comments on the use of our catch terms in the random sample. This analysis revealed that while the use of 'populism' and 'populist' in the majority of cases is not linked to the semantics of 'populism' suggested by political theory, these elements become relevant in metalinguistic strategies by right-wing Eurosceptics: they reject the use of 'populism' as a stigma term for their policies and suggest replacing it with 'democracy'. This justification of a competition in nomination draws on the populist repertoires suggested by Brubaker (2017). It also contests the reversal of evaluative load (Hamoet. al. 2019) in the stigma term.

This last point also addresses the comparative element of the research presented: there is generally no indication that the use of 'populism' and 'populist' differs widely between German and British press systems, despite their different media and political systems. However, in the corpus there is no German newspaper actively using populist topoi in reflection and repudiation of the term 'populism'. This seems to be quite specific to the role of the *Daily Mail* in British political discourse, as Euroscepticism and populist repertoire seem to be central elements of its political stance.

Finally, we need to reflect on the complexity of different functions, and the indication that the usage is changing: the changes between 2012 and 2017 seem to be subtle. They seem to be a case of 'layered simultaneity' (Blommaert 2005, 126) in discourse history: changes in discourse semantics are often not visible in short spaces of time. I used some comparison with older corpora to gain a clearer picture and saw that the emerging use of 'populist' synonymous with 'right-wing' is a more recent phenomenon, but for a more detailed diachronic picture a longer timescale of the corpus seems necessary to capture that change.

Acknowledgements

Author Biography

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[i] 'Das doppelte Lottchen' is a well-known children's novel of separated twins who found each other. It has been repeatedly adapted for the screen.