

## The Economic Framing of Populism: A Linguistic Overview of US and UK Newspaper Headlines

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### Abstract

*The study explores the headlines of some British and American highcirculation broadsheet newspapers collected during the four months leading up to the nationwide vote regarding two major political populist events, namely the UK Brexit referendum and the US presidential elections (Inglehart/ Norris 2016). The aim of this study is to investigate how core areas of populist discourse linked to the above events were covered by the press, reputed as one the main channels of information dissemination (Watoson 2007), and how these issues were voiced to inform readers regarding the impact of their electoral choices on the future economic well-being of their respective countries. To this purpose, the headlines were analyzed at a more general level by using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC), a corpus-assisted software tool (Tausczick/Pennebaker 2010; Pennebaker et al. 2015) to assess the overall tone of the messages. At a more granular level, they were analyzed by using the qualitative tools afforded by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 1995), the Social Actors Network (van Leeuwen 1996) and Appraisal Theory (Martin/White 2005; Ellsworth 2013) in order to reveal instantiations of populist political discourse strategies deployed by the UK Government and the US presidential candidate in their campaign documents. Central to this study's theoretical framework are the concepts of newsworthiness and framing (De Nies et al. 2012) as they shape the kind of reality that the political and media establishments co-jointly strive to portray. The results of this analysis lead to the preliminary conclusion that the press coverage of these events was markedly polarized and highly reliant on the strategies of populist discourse to reinforce views, engaging in a sort of press competition where some broadsheets were more successful than others in leading readers towards a partisanship-related vote.*

### Keywords

*newsworthiness, framing, sentiment analysis, social actors network, appraisal theory*