Nomination Strategies in the Language of Right-Wing Populists: The Discursive Construction of Migrant Identity in the Political Discourse of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany

Ute K. Boonen
University of Duisburg-Essen
ute.boonen@uni-due.de

Derya Gür-Şeker
University of Duisburg-Essen
derya.guer@uni-due.de

Michael Wentker
University of Duisburg-Essen
michael.wentker@uni-due.de

Abstract

This paper investi gates the discursive constructi on of migrant identi ty in public politi cal discourse in three European countries, i.e. the Netherlands, Belgium/Flanders, and Germany. The contrasti ve analysis presented here focuses on a corpus of politi cal speeches and interviews of right-wing populists that were uploaded onto social media channels such as YouTube and Facebook between 2010 and 2017. Following a discourse-analyti c approach, the paper examines what nominati on strategies politi cians use to refer to migrants and to conceptualize them. The politi cians' strategic use of negati vely connotated lexemes and various ▢▢▢▢▢ and ▢▢▢ metaphors are shown to depict migrants (i.e. the outgroup) as a threat to their own people (i.e. the ingroup), thus construing a dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'.
Furthermore, this pilot study indicates that, in the speeches of the three rightwing populists observed, immigrants are commonly equated with Muslims, who are att ributed negati ve qualiti es and intenti ons, and whose religion i constantly denigrated. By discussing the similariti es and diff erences in the language use of Dutch, Flemish and German right-wing populists, this paperì contributes to an understanding of how right-wing ideologies and atti tudes are expressed in European politi cal discourse, and to illustrate in what ways language can serve as a vehicle to convey subconscious mindsets.