

*The Rhetoric of the Freedom Party of Austria in the 2019 National Council Elections –
Lexicon, Pragmatics, Discourse*

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Abstract

Our study deals with the language of the Freedom Party of Austria in the early elections to the National Council in 2019. It analyzes the party's rhetoric after the corruption scandal that led to early elections. The linguistic analysis takes place in three stages. First, the lexical level of the language is examined - in particular the choice of topics and the associated flag words and stigma words. Then the pragmatic aspect should be discussed - the intentionality and the effect of language, especially the rational and emotional appeals in comparison, are analyzed. Finally, the party's rhetoric is viewed in the context of general political discourse, which is about claims to power and manipulation. The analyzes and discussions should help to better understand the mechanisms of right-wing populist rhetoric.

Keywords: Right-wing Populism, Early Elections, Lexical Analysis, Flag and Stigma Words

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Introduction

Election campaigns provide space for a political party to muster its forces and a wide range of options exist not only for influencing undecided voters as effectively as possible, but also to strengthen their already existing electoral base. Every political party is equally aware that, if a strong bond exists, its constituents can keep a political party in parliament for a longer period of time and the party becomes more resilient in the face of any scandals and attacks upon it. One of the most intrinsic and at the same time most accessible methods for approaching voters is communication, so it is no wonder that language plays a critical role in pre-election campaigning. The way a political party speaks to voters either directly or through intermediaries, how it thematises current issues and verbally puts forward suggestions for resolving them, and how it formulates its promises all have an impact on the voters the party is addressing and its message. Therefore, the language patterns any political party uses in a pre-election campaign will be among its pinnacle efforts, linked to strategic intermediate steps and the targeting it undertakes throughout the entire campaign process.

A stable and responsible electoral base is the prerequisite for any political party to be successful in elections, at the very least at remaining in parliament over several terms. Of course, any political party can be both incredibly successful and yet remain more or less stagnant. The Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) constituency, discussed in this study, formed slowly and in stages like other right-wing populist parties that have evolved in Europe, such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD), People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) and Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) in the Czech Republic. Graph 1 maps out the popularity Austria's political parties have seen over its post-war history and it particularly makes clear the more turbulence these parties have encountered in elections since 1983. Starting in 2002 (see Table 1), the FPÖ's political fortunes were rising, a trend that was cut short in 2019, when the so-called "Ibiza Affair" sparked an early election for the National Council (*Nationalrat*), the lower house of the Austrian Parliament.



Figure 1: National Council Elections in Austria (1945-2017)

(<https://www.vienna.at/die-nationalratswahlen-von-1945-bis-2017-chronologie/6312532>)

Elections to the National Council	2002	2006	2008	2013	2017	2019
FPÖ's share of the vote	10.01%	11.04%	17.5%	20.5%	26%	16.2%

Table 1: Percent of the Votes Won by the FPÖ Won in National Council Elections Held since 2002

(<https://www.bmi.gv.at/412/>)

Examining the percent of the vote the party had received, it is visible that the FPÖ was enjoying extraordinary success in its most recent campaigns prior to the Ibiza Affair. Although the party experienced a significant drop in support in the 2019 parliamentary elections, from a longer-term perspective it was able to retain a permanent base of supporters who still strongly identify with the party, even with the various type scandals that have embroiled the FPÖ.

This study focuses on the campaign period prior to the 2019 elections and the necessity for calling early elections after a video recording was published by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Spiegel Online* on 17 May 2019 that showed then party boss Heinz-Christian Strach and deputy leader Johann Gudenus, an FPÖ Member of Parliament, discussing corrupt activities and illegal financing in the run-up to the 2017 parliamentary election (for more information, see <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/oesterreich-ibiza-video-berlin-101.html>; https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article_193794769/Strache-Affaere-in-Oesterreich-Was-wissen-wir-ueber-das-Ibiza-Video-wissen.html). The conversation between them and a woman posing as the niece of Russian oligarch Igor Makarov, who would have supposedly become a partner in these illegal activities, was captured during a meeting on the island of Ibiza (hence the Ibiza Affair) and the video was released almost two years later. In the wake of the Ibiza affair, the coalition between the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the FPÖ collapsed in May 2019. Nonetheless, there were also questions raised about the further direction of the Freedom Party which were primarily associated with the need for it to respond quickly to the scandal with appropriate changes in its internal structure as it prepared for the early elections announced for 29 September 2019. This analysis stresses the last aspect, which is also reflected in the first. Considering the vigorous inference of consequences to be drawn from the Ibiza Affair on the level of changes in the government's structure and the rhetoric connected therewith, there was anticipation that certain changes in the FPÖ's approach would be taking place during the election campaign. The early elections were marked by a different dominant theme from previous elections. The main issue was now climate change and policies to combat it. (<https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/oesterreich-wahlkampf-105.html>). An analysis of empirical material shows the extent the FPÖ was able to brush aside the refugee issue, removing it from the spotlight.

The objective is to highlight the verbal patterns focusing on content and sub-aspects that somewhat "caught the eye" in the FPÖ's early election campaign. Here, language is either key or, in connection with the visual element, an accompanying but no means less important element in deliberately sharing certain content. The analysis accordingly includes a lexicon concentrating on identifying flag and stigmatising words. Considering how strongly persuasive language can be in an election campaign, the choice of lexicon and the application of other, primarily linguistic elements in correlation with visuals, will point in a similar way to a strategic and intentional process aimed at reinforcing lasting trust in the FPÖ and winning back the confidence of voters it had lost in the scandal.

One device commonly used in the election campaign was campaign posters and leaflets. Sharing them (also) on social networks let the material receive mass coverage and enabled the FPÖ to reach out to their constituents, while also making these flyers and posters easily accessible in relative terms for various types of analysis. This type of empirical material is used in the analysis conducted for the study. Specifically, it concerns campaign posters shared on the FPÖ's official Facebook page between the time when the Ibiza Affair broke and the September 2019 elections (<https://www.facebook.com/fpoe/>). There are a total 144 posters and leaflets from this period covered by the database.

Theoretical Background for Analysis of the Right-wing Populist Language Used by the FPÖ in the 2019 Election Campaign

The FPÖ's Ideological Pillars and Strategy

Populism in general, like right-wing populism, is a favourite topic of discussion even among professionals. Many political parties show elements of populism, especially during the run-up to elections, despite vehement denials of any consideration of them as populist. Yet this is because right-wing populist parties have been particularly successful in recent years. This is why the origin of their success has been and still remains the subject of discussion, not at all perceived in a positive light from the standpoint of all experts.

Given the nature of the study, and also in order to grasp the empirical material more comprehensibly, this analysis will divine at least the FPÖ's ideological direction and the strategies practised by it. At present, a detailed characterisation of right-wing populism can be found in the literature, which makes it not so challenging to identify the political approach taken by the parties identified with it. The following central ideological elements and strategies found in right-wing populist parties have been described by Decker/Lewandowsky, 2017; Prantl, 2017; Priester 2017, 2012; Spier, 2006; Taggart, 2004 and others:

- Appealing to “down-home” values and common sense
- Patriotism derived from religion, ethnicity and culture Emphasising “us/our country/ours” versus “them/foreigners/the enemies out there”
- Fostering anti-establishment (anti-elite, anti-intellectual) attitudes that are aversive to hateful toward supranational institutions)
- Taking the point of view of “us” instead of “me”
- A charismatic leader at the head of the party
- Fairness a key value
- Extraordinary level of social engagement
- Simplification of complex issues, naming them directly and advocating radical solutions
- Emotional appeals to voters
- Use of different kinds of statistics to make points
- Polarisation and moralisation

Persuasiveness of Language and Its Domination in Election Campaigns

Language and its use in politics are characterised by certain functions that reflect a politician's or political party's intentions. They are fulfilled depending on how language is used in the corresponding political reality and characterised by the specific relationship between the political party as either the ruling or representative element with the population as the controlled element. In such an environment, there are corresponding competencies, types of texts and situational contexts. By their nature and the different ideologies along the political spectrum, election campaigns fall into a segment of political reality characterised by political advertising and propaganda (Girnth, 2015, p. 47; Dieckmann, 2005, p. 25). Because advertising's role is generally an attempt to influence its target audience, playing upon their attitudes, judgements and actions so they favour whoever is broadcasting the advertisement (not necessarily the creator), it becomes clear that political advertising is pursuing a similar intention. However, persuading whomever the advertisement seeks to influence and then

influencing them is meant here to be in the sense of how a political party broadcasts its platform. Unlike commercial advertisements, political parties have no desire to sell a product, but rather they are seeking to gain sympathies and win votes. Similarly, language and the frequently expressive nature of its use have to be seen through this prism as a strategic means of consciously persuading and influencing voters and their opinions. The function language fulfils here is informative and persuasive. Even though the function combines two sub-elements and, in certain situational contexts and even on posters the informative component may also stand out, it is precisely the objective of persuasion that the language seeks to realise, albeit often in a very sophisticated way.

In the run-up to an election campaign, political parties have ample scope to consider any effective means of persuasion. Therefore, the choice of how to verbally render shared content also takes place (not only) as election campaign posters and flyers are structured consciously and intentionally. Selecting language units and connecting them with others into more comprehensive units, or in some cases half-sentence and sentence constructions, narrows their potential as expressions. At the level of setting up language units in situational contexts, their specific meaning is updated. Notwithstanding, this step is quite critical and reflects upon the speaker's (and also the broadcaster's and creator's) intentions, too. The use of language in communication, all the more so politically, requires looking not only at how verbally rendered content was broadcast, but always at how the broadcaster had conceived it. As an example, the targeted use of a pejorative expression may reflect the broadcaster's negative attitude (e.g. concern, fear, aversion and loathing) toward something or somebody, although it may accordingly be a signal or an appeal to the target audience also to contemplate their own attitudes toward the broadcaster.

Flag Words, Stigmatising Words and Expressive Language

Taking the above into account in analysing the verbal patterns of content shared in election posters and leaflets, the focus is mainly on those language units falling into the political lexicon category referred to as "ideological vocabulary", namely flag and stigmatizing words (Dieckmann, 2005; Girth, 2015, p. 59-65; Niehr, 2017, p. 150 et seq.). Flag words are positively connotated expressions that reflect either directly or symbolically the values professed by the party on its ideological background (Girth, 2015, p. 63 et seq.). Political parties utilise them to share or defend their positions among the people they are addressing. Standing in opposition to them are negatively connotated stigmatising words. Their job is to cause harm or damage to an enemy (Girth, 2015, p. 64). Like the party's flag words, stigmatising words are expressions that constitute a political party's attitude, but their primary function is to verbally mould the enemy's contradictory position on a certain issue. In both cases, their use is carefully thought out in order to achieve the intended effect.

Besides these units, the study also notes such language units that fall under general vocabulary, but were semantically "charged" during the election campaign and thus acquired a new meaning (expanding the semantic structure) and possibly an evaluative element, although it is often bound only to a specific context.

The prerequisite for successful advertising is for the advertisement to be singular, imaginative and provocative. These are attributes also found in connection with the expressiveness of speech. Expressive speech likewise shows elements that catch the eye or ear, are crisp and lean toward extravagance. Examining the analysed empirical material, not only can certain terms be expressive, such as inherent, adherent, contextual expressiveness (Findra, 2004;

Zima, 1961), but the sentence constructions are also unusually structured. If the analysis identifies expressive words that require attention, a specific example will be used to draw attention to them.

The 2019 National Council Elections – Analysing Election Posters and Leaflets

It is typical for the right-wing populist FPÖ to be extremely active on social networks, intensively spreading and promoting the values it professes. It also responds regularly to complaints from its adversaries from various ranks. In both cases, the party shares its attitudes, albeit through different linguistic means and with different and otherwise partial intents. Due to the nature of these resources and the purpose behind sharing them, only a minimum number of neutral posters and leaflets are ever designed.

The entire database of empirical material can be divided into two groups:

1. Party ideology exclusively represented by the party's verbal and verbal-visual patterns in its posters and brochures, referred to hereafter as contributions). There is no mention of an opposition and the presence of flag words and other positively connotated language draws in this case accordingly a positive connotation;
2. The party's attitude, shared through its verbal and verbal-visual patterns in its posters and brochures and nevertheless against the background of disparaging its opponents, is evident in the presence of stigmatising words and other negatively connotated language.

Both groups can be broken down further by thematisation. The next step is to state their preferences. If they cover the same areas and events, they will be exemplified by comparison.

One of the first pieces of information the FPÖ shared on its official Facebook account, shortly after the Ibiza Affair became a media sensation, was the conclusions the party's highest ranks had drawn therefrom and the lessons they had learned. Heinz-Christian Strach was swiftly replaced in the party's top post by Norbert Hofer. To be the face of the party externally, it was critical for whomever the party chose to be able not only to represent it, but also to defend the interests of "ordinary people". Figure 2 expresses this point in the slogan *Norbert Hofer also neuer FPÖ-Obmann einstimmig designiert!* ('Norbert Hofer unanimously named new FPÖ Chairman!'), making it clear to readers that Norbert Hofer's election had been endorsed by all of the party's members. Simultaneously, it signals cohesion within the party and tells those outside the party that Mr Hofer is a trustworthy person who will not disappoint them. The verbal rendering of the transmitted signal shows no exceptional elements of conspicuousness. Its sentence construction elides the auxiliary verb to make the combination "*einstimmig designiert*" stand out. In the relevant situational context, the intention behind this combination is to give the impression of a positive result, with the party guaranteeing that it will continue to uphold the values it professes.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figures 3 and 4 show other contributions the party shared over the same period, all of which refer to what happened after the Ibiza Affair. The resignations of top coalition leaders, the fall of the government and the naming of a caretaker government understandably brought tensions between the former coalition partners to a boil, at least initially. The behaviour of the ÖVP, the FPÖ's former coalition partner in the government, and its leader Sebastian Kurz was also thematised (Figure 4) and the choice of language evident in both Figures 3 and 4 show much more creativity. In both examples, the word "*Macht*" (in English, 'might' in the meaning of great power or force) appears either alone or as part of composites as a stigmatising expression. The compound word "*Machtbesoffenheit*" ('drunk on power') shown in Figure 3 is in itself a derogatory expression that depicts the ÖVP's own approach to the Ibiza Affair in conjunction with the adjectives "*kalte und nüchterne Machtbesoffenheit*" ('cold and callously drunk with power' – in a sense drunk and sober at the same time) to intensify the power of the word *Machtbesoffenheit*. Figure 4 is similarly directed, where again another stigmatising expression "*Machtrausch*" is used, an untranslatable German word that describes somebody so intoxicated with power that they have absolutely no desire to give it up. Fulfilling the function of dramatising the shared content is the rhetorical question "*Ist das Demokratie?*" ('Is this democracy?'). The ideologically polysemic expression "*Demokratie*" is contrasted to the expression "*Machtrausch*", whose meaning denies governance in the spirit of democracy. The appeal "*Macht Euch selbst ein Bild...*" (Picture this yourself...) and the simultaneously following points of contention call upon the reader not to support such a government.

Other Facebook postings cast both the party's political rivals and supranational institutions as the "enemy". Even while several different thematically and verbally interesting relationships can be singled out, the issue of immigrants still proves to be one of the dominant topics, if not the most dominant. Figures 5-10 are exemplifying contributions, with the FPÖ strategically polarising attitudes, highlighting its own thoughts and those dividing the parties in Figures 5 and 6. Standing on one side is the flag word "*Grenzschützer*" ('border guards' or anybody protecting borders), accompanied by an attribute in the form of an adjective representing the party's traditional colour blue. But it could be very well replaced with the expression "*Heimatschützer*" ('homeland guards' or anybody protecting the homeland) in contrasting opposition to the stigmatising word "*Grenzöffner*" (anybody seeking to open the borders), again accompanied by the colours associated with the ÖVP (black) and the Green Party. This now produces a conflict of opinions about immigration and refugees. While the FPÖ wishes to protect Austria and its borders against "outsiders", the black-green coalition is portrayed as willing to allow immigrants into the country. Figure 6 contrasts the two parties' own political activities, with the FPÖ seeking bills to prevent illegal migration, with the two words becoming a stigmatising expression, while the ÖVP fights against plastic bags (*Plastiksackerl*). Interestingly enough, despite climate policy having become the leitmotif in the early elections, which could have been reflected in the battle against plastic bags, the FPÖ decided here to gamble on the persisting relevance of the refugee issue. Figures 7-10 exhibit verbally the approach taken by the opposing parties toward the refugee issue to the exclusion of everything else. Figure 7 "*Schwarz-Grün oder Schwarz-Rot bedeutet eine Aufweichung der Migrationspolitik!*" ('Black-green or red-green means softening the migration policy!') is a stigmatising expression because the FPÖ is calling for compliance with the current rules governing refugees, if not to tighten them further, while Figure 8's "*Es geht schon los... Grünen-Politiker verlangt Abschiebestopp, Bei der Forderung mit dabei: SPÖ & NEOS*" ('Green politicians demand a stop to deportations, with both SPÖ & NEOS going along with them.') In this case, *Abschiebestopp* becomes the stigmatising code word because the FPÖ is calling for the expulsion of refugees that do not meet the requirements for legal migration.

Meanwhile, the statement “*SCHWARZ-GRÜN steht für Einwanderung und Asylmissbrauch*” (‘Black-green stands for immigration and asylum abuse’- Figure 9) stigmatises both the words “*Einwanderung*” and “*Asylmissbrauch*” because the party is combating immigration and yet accepts asylum if applicable legal conditions are met. Figure 10 points the finger indirectly at the influx of refugees into the country as the main culprit, specifically with the stigmatising word “*Zwangsvorteilung*” (‘forced distribution’). Here, the party formally and verbally expresses its disagreement, demanding “*Schluss mit der Zwangsvorteilung von Migranten!*”



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

The refugee crisis in general and illegal migration in particular is often thematised in the values the FPÖ espouses. Figures 11-17 exemplify the issue’s various partial aspects. The emphasis in Figure 11 is on the word “*Schutz*” (‘shelter’), a flag word relative to one’s own country that embodies a defensive attitude toward it as a homeland, territory, population and culture. Generally, the word has an inherently positive connotation. In this example, however, the word takes on the double meaning of Austria sheltering refugees and sheltering Austria from refugees in the sentence “*Da kommen Menschen nach Österreich und wollen Schutz und dann müssen wir vor ihnen geschützt werden!*” (‘People are flooding into Austria and they want to be sheltered and then we have to shelter ourselves against them!’). There are no pejorative expressions verbally stating the negative consequences of Austria’s migration policy. Only ordinary vocabulary is used. Nonetheless, it puts their position aptly into context. Refugees – THEY WANT TO BE SHELTERED from us, but WE HAVE to be SHELTERED from THEM. The modal verbs “*wollen*” (want) and “*müssen*” (must) emphatically contrast “*desire*” and “*necessity*”, which are themselves two entirely different positions to take.

Figures 12 and 13 have a broadly interpretive framework. On one side, the expressions “*Kriminellen Schlepperbanden muss ihr schmutziges Handwerk konsequent unterbunden werden!*” (‘Criminal human-trafficking gangs must be uncompromisingly kept from carrying out their dirty work!’) in Figure 12 and “*Wir brauchen einen richtigen Grenzzaun, kein Hasengitter!*” (‘We need a true border fence, not chicken wire’) in Figure 13 can be understood as a statement of necessity (something that has to be stopped – *müssen*) as opposed to something that needs to be stopped – *brauchen*), yet on the other hand a statement

in the sense of “We should do this, this is our position respecting your concerns, fears and desires!” likewise can be an appeal to the government, even though nothing or no one has ever been specifically named. Both examples signal the occurrence of explicit expressions with inherently and adherently negative connotations, such as “*kriminelle Schlepperbanden*”, “*ihr schmutziges Handwerk*” in Figure 12 and the contrast between “*Grenzzaun*” and “*Hasengitter*”. The expressions in Figure 13 stigmatise, while “*Grenzzaun*” is a flag word.

Figures 14 and 15 zoom in on the refugees’ religious belief as another thematic aspect. Although the party’s portrayal of its rejection of Islam is relatively peaceful, it nevertheless seeks to add the political perception of the religion. Clearly in the foreground are the expressions “*Kultur*” (culture) and “*Geschichte*” (history), which even minus the frequent association with the possessive pronouns “mine/ours” become flag words that express the party’s patriotic feeling. Islam’s position is defined quite clearly in Figure 14 with “Islam” itself a stigmatising word: “*Der Islam ist kein Teil unserer Kultur, kein Teil unserer Geschichte und wird das auch niemals sein!*” (‘Islam is not part of our culture, nor of our history, and it never will be!’). Figure 15 indeed stigmatises it with the German translation of the Salafist doctrine in Sunni Islam, which the party categorically rejects.

The code word is the burqa, associated with the ideology of political Islam. Like Islam, its features of any nature are rejected by the FPÖ. Special attention is paid to girls and women wearing burqas in schools and school facilities, with the party constantly sharing during the 2019 election campaign the country’s burqa ban and even advocating an extension of its scope in Figure 16: *Kopftuchverbot an Schulen erweitern!* (‘No headscarves in schools!’). The poster advocates banning children above 14 and teachers from wearing them. The expression “*Kopftuchverbot*”, indicating a ban on wearing burqas and headscarves, is the flag word here and expresses the party’s attitude toward eliminating as many elements of political Islam as possible.

Figure 17 illustrates the immigration issue’s relevance and perhaps even indirectly justifies to some extent the dominant sharing of its various aspects. Here, the FPÖ refers to an EU Commission study pointing out that Europeans are more concerned about immigration than climate change. Asking the question “*Du auch?*” (‘You, too?’) seeks to draw reader attention toward the former.



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

In spite of the change in the 2019 election campaign's major issue, which as earlier mentioned had turned toward climate policy, there were relatively few posters or leaflets about it from the FPÖ. But the example below pointing out the position of its political adversaries illustrates the contradiction between the party's values and its actions. From the verbal perspective, it can be characterised as a statement without much hint of expression – “*Grüne sind die Vielflieger im Bundestag...*” (‘The Greens have many frequent fliers in the Federal Council’), but from the point of view of sharing intentions, it adds considerable illocutionary force.



Figure 18

When talking about the Green Party's ideology, Figure 19 transforms the perception of conservation – protecting nature – to protecting the homeland with the slogan “*Naturschutz ist Heimatschutz!*” (‘Protecting nature is protecting the homeland!’). Besides turning “*Naturschutz*” and “*Heimatschutz*” into flag words, they also express the FPÖ's patriotism. Similarly, Figure 20 appeals to everybody's obligation to protect Austria's environment “*Es ist unsere Pflicht, alles dafür zu tun, damit Österreich das Land bleibt, das wir alle kennen und lieben!*” (‘It is our duty to do everything we can to ensure Austria remains the country we all know and love!’). In this example, Austria embodies the homeland, “our own” country and fulfils the role of a flag word.



Figure 19



Figure 20

In order for a political party to present and represent its ideology effectively, it ordinarily opts solely for positively connotated expressions, whether they are flag words or also semantically, positively charged attributes. Figures 21-29 have flag words on their election posters and flyers stating their intentions. These include the words *fair/Fairness* (in the English language meaning of “honest” and “impartial”), *heimatreu/Heimattreue* (in this context, loyalty to one’s home or homeland), *Sicherheit (der Heimat)* (a secure home, a safe country), *Österreich* (Austria), *Zusammenhalt* (cohesion), *zusammenhalten* (closing ranks, sticking together), *Familie* (family), *patriotisches Österreich* (patriotic Austria), *Patriotismus* (patriotism), *Herz* (heart) *Schutz* (shelter or protection), *Werte* (value or worth), *Zukunft* (future), *unser(e)* (our, ours), *Leidenschaft* (passion, zeal). These flag words are found in other posters and leaflets because they form the central elements of the FPÖ’s political and ideological orientation.



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29

Conclusion

This paper discusses verbal patterns found in the FPÖ’s 2019 election campaign, which was held in the backdrop of an early election called in the wake of the so-called “Ibiza Affair”. The parties grappled in the campaign with an altered electoral landscape, one that had become more focused on policies to combat climate change. Based on this development, it was also expected for the FPÖ to focus its campaign more widely on the relevant aspects of climate policy. But an analysis of empirical material showed that, in spite of having accepted that the election would turn on the climate change issue, it was still not the dominant element in the party’s campaign. Like in recent election campaigns, the FPÖ still tended most frequently to thematise aspects of the immigration crisis.

Overall, the election campaign led by the FPÖ's new chairman, Norbert Hofer, could be described as relatively peaceful, especially when compared to the rhetoric experienced in recent elections contested with its former charismatic leader, Heinz-Christian Strach (Fraštková, 2020; 2019). In this quieter campaign environment, the party endeavoured to underscore its feelings and attitudes, define itself against its opponents in opinions and discredit its adversaries in a targeted manner. The choice of language was tailored to these sub-intentions. Its self-presentation was dominated in the empirical material by the presence of flag words highlighting the party's patriotic feeling and its sense of justice, fairness and social sensitivity (*fair, heimatreu, Sicherheit, Österreich, Zusammenhalt, Familie, patriotisches Österreich, Patriotismus, Herz, Schutz, Naturschutz, Werte, Zukunft, unser(e), Leidenschaft, Gerechtigkeit, Grenzzaun, Gerechtigkeit, sozial*), with polarising opinions reflected in flag words such as *Grenzschützer, Grenzzaun* and *Kopftuchverbot* and stigmatising expressions like *Grenzöffner, illegal Migration, Abschiebestopp, Aufweichung der illegalen Migration, (politischer) Islam, Salafismus* and *Zuwanderung*, which were often used to contrast *Grenzschützer* to *Grenzöffner* and extremely imaginative words commonly selected to discredit the opposition (*kalte und nüchterne Machtbesoffenheit, Machtrausch, Kurz-Fest* and more).

Examining both the lexical and syntactic subsystems of the language used, a summary can be made of the tendencies that were visible in the FPÖ's campaign. There was a high degree of single-noun sentences whose base was both verbal (indefinite verbs) and nonverbal (especially nouns). Slogans appeared in the imperative mood or as desires, alongside interrogative sentences, asking of rhetorical questions and deliberately contrastive words.

The choice of language is understandably related to the type of text and resources from the election campaign, with election posters and leaflets being the only, yet most effective means. It remains to be considered whether the minimal focus on content during the campaign may have varied or at last partially deviated had other types of empirical material been taken into account. Compared to previous election campaigns and with respect to the type of empirical material studied, so far there has been evidence of a similar strategy having been chosen.

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