The Language of Political Slogans in 2016 Slovak Parliamentary Elections

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ABSTRACT:
This research focuses on the investigation of political slogans produced during the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary Elections. Slogans were collected from street advertisements, such as billboards and posters, in the town of Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. The pool of slogans was processed through several linguistic methods, such as semantic, morphemic, stylistic, and axiological analyses, which helped to reveal the linguistic design of political slogans on the one hand, and some of the features of regional political environment on the other. In terms of their semantic content, the largest share of slogans contains a promise to create more jobs and improve social welfare. Theaxiological vector of slogans aims at patriotism, honesty, and justice, whereas politics is dismissed as something primarily harmful. Grammatically, most slogans employ 1st person plural (e.g. we do smth, let's do smth) as their predominant choice of verb form, which signals that the candidates in the election tend to speak as a group and inspire people to join in a certain activity rather than address the electorate through more direct verb forms (1st person singular). Conducted synchronically on a small scale, this research presents a local perspective on the elections in question. If conducted on a continuous basis in several Slovak regions, however, this investigation may serve as a sensitive indicator of any changes in the social and political environment nation-wide.

KEYWORDS:
Linguistic analysis, political discourse, slogan, Slovakia, values

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 5, 2016, the people of the Slovak Republic voted to elect the members of their national Parliament. According to the Ministry of Interior (Ministerstvo vnútra Slovenskej Republiky)[1], representatives of 24 parties competed against each other to be elected into the 150 seats in the Parliament. The campaign was widely covered by the local media, on social networks, as well as in the streets through the use of posters and billboards.

The parliamentary election is a moment of particular importance for a civilized society, because people are brought to think about their future and the outcome of the choices they make. Not only is it a promise of future development, but also a reference to the political background and a reflection of the current situation. The pre-election period is a time for people and institutions to speak up and voice their concerns, as well as being a time for shaping the ideas about long-term national development. This outstanding civic moment in present-day Slovakia was the motivation for this research.

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1   Retrieved from the official web-site of the Ministry of Interior (Ministerstvo vnútra Slovenskej Republiky) at http://www.minv.sk/?nr16_kandidati1.

This paper concentrates on the verbal means of political promotion (slogans) through street advertisement (posters, billboards) with an effort to present a local appeal of political campaigning within the national elections. The material for the research was collected from the streets of Banská Bystrica, a town in the center of Slovakia. Hence, the aim of this research is to analyze the language of the slogans produced by the candidates of 2016 Slovak Parliamentary Elections and used on the outdoor advertisements, such as billboards and posters, in the town of Banská Bystrica, Slovakia.

Slogans were chosen for this research because they are potentially sensitive indicators of political environments. There are several reasons why they reflect what politicians and people think about the current social and political needs. First of all, parties and their representatives are supported by a particular portion of the population. Otherwise it is impossible for a party or politician to exist. Hence, the produced slogans resonate with the audience. Secondly, a healthy portion of candidates in the 2016 elections were not professional politicians. Thirdly, in order to win as many votes as possible, political parties and their representatives try to support the most popular ideas and meet the most pressing demands of the population. We may therefore believe in a certain correlation between the political milieu and the slogans used for election campaigning. Based on this premise, we proceed with the research, aware of the said connection.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of slogans is an important part of understanding national policies, as well as social and cultural development trends. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word "slogan" means "a word or phrase that is easy to remember and is used by a group or business to attract attention"[2]. Historically, it stems from the time of clan wars in Scotland, where slogans were used as "war cries"[3] as well as heraldic mottos. Indeed, there is nothing new about slogans: "Slogans can be found in sacred texts such as the Bible and the Quran as a means of moral persuasion; they are used as a powerful means of disseminating propaganda during times of war" (Xing, 1999, p. 492).

In the long history of slogans, they have been used for persuasion and the promotion of ideas and ideologies. At the same time, slogans not only persuade, but also reflect the current social concerns and "have a direct link to social or individual action" (Effi, 2013, p. 700). They have the power to "unite, divide, and even convert people" (ibid). Slogans can inform about the cultural and historical background of the nations in question. In *Media and Information: the Case of Iran*, Geneive Abdo reflects on

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2   Retrieved from Merriam-Webster Dictionary at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slogan.
3   Retrieved from The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology at http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192830982.001.0001/acref-9780192830982-e-14077?rskey=Q8xAN9&result=5

the social perception of the slogans produced by Mohammad Khatami in 1997 and on how they resonated with the nation: "The slogans and themes that emerged from the Khatami election campaign — and came to dominate his presidency — reflected many years of discreet discussion in reading circles, on the boards of small specialty journals, and in the halls of the religious seminaries" (Abdo, 2003, p. 877). This is an example of a a political leader uncovering the discussions across the nation and framing them in the simple words of his slogans.

Slogans can also reflect the historical development of the whole nation. In Effi Gazi's *'Fatherland, Religion, Family': Exploring the History of a Slogan in Greece, 1880–1930*, slogans are labeled as "social symbols" (2013, p. 700). The author explores one of the most influential and well-known slogans of contemporary Greece "Fatherland, Religion, Family," its connection with the popular sayings and catchwords of the 19th Century, as well as its evolution in the 20th Century. He points out that slogans are "of particular importance for a deeper understanding of the politics and culture of particular epochs and contexts" (ibid, p. 700). This opinion is shared by James S. Guseh in *Slogans and mottos on commercial vehicles: a reflection of Liberian philosophy and culture.* He investigates slogans on commercial vehicles and claims that they are "an important source of information and education on Liberian philosophy, culture, and history" (2008, p. 159). Moreover, the author suggests that the government could use this resource to change social trends. Nowadays, the Liberian government is using billboards for this purpose, some of which read *Rape is a crime. Stop rape, Stop violence against women* etc. Thus, James S. Guseh believes that not only does the slogan reflect attitudes, but it also has the potential to make a certain impact. In a similar study, Olatunde Bayo Lawuyi (1988) interprets slogans on motor vehicles in southwestern Nigeria as a means of social interaction and a sign of social stratification.

Research carried out by El Mustapha Lahlali shows how political slogans reflect dramatic social change in Egypt over a very short period of time from January to March 2011. Within just several months, local political discourse had "shifted from a discourse of complete allegiance to the regime into a discourse of total defiance and accountability; from a discourse of 'long live sir' to 'down with the dictator'" (Lahlali, 2014, p. 1). It is even more valuable that these slogans register a certain cultural change. In the Arab world, people are used to the discourse of politeness and respect to superiors. The social change in 2011 led to a hostile attitude, which is clearly demonstrated through slogans labeling the President a "tyrant," "thief," "corrupt" and so on (ibid, p. 5).

In another large-scale study, the author looks into how political slogans have changed the cultural environment in China. The researcher claims that political slogans in Communist China helped to transform Chinese ideology from Confucianism to Maoism and to Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism, which "altered the face of Chinese culture and affected the Chinese thought pattern" (Xing, 1999, p. 487). The analysis of political slogans in a representative journal, *Red Flag*, provides a number of illustrative examples on how the impact of these catchphrases became prominent in China. In this respect, it is hard to disagree that "order-words or slogans do not simply represent or re-produce the social-political world, they can also function to reshape it and reconstitute it in an expressly material way" (Porter, 2010, p. 233).

Slogans are often investigated in connection with corporate advertisement. Indeed, some researchers define slogans primarily as a means of business development. Geoffrey Leech (1966) referred to a slogan as a short, laconic phrasethat a company uses over and over in its advertisement, which might be useful to reinforce the product identity. It is usually catchy and pretty straightforward, as well as holding "an essential connection with its advertising product" (Baidullayeva, 2015, p. 270).

Researchers point out a close proximity between the slogans for advertising purposes and for political gains. According to Ayo Ojebode and Wole Oladapo, "sloganeering is as common in commercial activities as it is in politics" (2014, p. 42). Political candidates rely on slogans to promote themselves. However, slogans in politics are far from being mere marketing tools. Colberg argues that "the slogan becomes vital to the politician because it is his or her beliefs, platform, and legacy" (2012, p. 311). A slogan summarizes the program of a politician in one catchy word or phrase and effectively communicates it to the general public.

We may conclude then, that the effectiveness of slogans provided for their long journey through history from the Celtic battlefield into the today's advertisements, TV-shows, and political campaigns. In the words of George W. Ball, "someone is always devising a slogan or aphorism to dispose of an idea that is too complex for facile solution" (1969, p. 623). Indeed, a slogan is also a way of simplifying a complex idea. However, no matter how simplified this idea might be, the overall impact of a slogan cannot be underestimated.

3. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIAL

The material of this research comprises the political slogans from the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary election campaign as found on billboards and posters in the streets of Banská Bystrica, a town in central Slovakia. The main criterion for the selection was, therefore, the specific location, which was chosen as a representative Slovak region. Because of the local character of the research, the sample was limited to 37 examples and could not be complemented by any other units which might have been found in other parts of the country. The 37 examples collected in Banská Bystrica were produced by 17 parties out of the 24 who were competing for parliamentary seats. Fully aware of the fact that we are analyzing only a portion all the political slogans used in the elections nationwide, we focus on the local appeal of the campaign and do not extrapolate the results of this investigation to the country as a whole.

The slogans were recorded from street advertisements (billboards and posters) because of the greater impact of such forms of political promotion in comparison to other types of political texts. According to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, Inc in (Bulletins, 2015), billboards are among the most powerful forms of advertisement. Besides, because of the limited space on street advertisement, the choice of the texts (slogans) encapsulates the effort to make the message concise on the one hand and meaningful on the other. Both considerations make the slogans on streets advertisements the most visible and the most representative ones of the respective political associations.

Two of the collected items represent blocks of identical slogans, e.g. SOM ZMENA pre Bystricu (I AM A CHANGE for Bystrica), SOM ZMENA pre podnikateľov (I AM A CHANGE for entrepreneurs), SOM ZMENA pre mladé rodiny (I AM A CHANGE for young families), etc. Thus, in terms of structure, it is one and the same slogan. In terms of their semantic components, however, they are all different, because the second part contains different lexical units, promotes different values, and gives different promises. For this reason, the structural analysis will consider these units as identical, whereas in sections dealing with axiological and semantic components, they will be considered separately.

The collected pool of slogans has been subjected to a semantic analysis in order to reveal the slogans' meanings based on the dictionary as well as the contextual or modified (e.g. metaphorical) meanings of their components. Amorphemic analysis of the word forms in the slogans gave us an idea of the typical morphemic (word form) patterns used in the slogans. The axiological analysis was based on an estimation of the values promoted through the lexical components in slogans. The stylistic analysis aimed to demonstrate the stylistic devices used in the slogans as well as the implications of such usages. It is obvious that from a linguistic point of view slogans can be analyzed using other methods as well, however, we strived to describe the selected pool of slogans with the methods most relevant to the research questions below.

Thus, this research was designed with the aim to use the linguistic analysis of political slogans in order to uncover on a local scale some of the features of the political environment in Slovakia before the 2016 Parliamentary elections. At the same time, however, it was an opportunity to find out the most common linguistic means used by the candidates when creating their slogans in the selected region (Banská Bystrica). It should be stressed that the research does not intend to provide any evaluations of particular political parties. Instead, it demonstrates the use of language in political slogans indiscriminately, regardless of which political association employs it, because the linguistic means of slogan production do not correlate with the ideology in the slogans. Therefore, the paper has two research questions:

Research question 1: What are the typical linguistic means used in political slogans taken from the street advertisements in Banská Bystrica during the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary elections?

Research question 2: What do these political slogans convey about the political environment in Banská Bystrica in the period prior to the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary elections?

Procedurally, the research was limited to the investigation of only four major properties of the slogans, which we considered the most relevant to the research questions. These properties are dealt with in the four subdivisions in the *Results* section of this paper. The section *Axiological component of slogans* uncovers which of the values coded in the slogans turned out to be more important than the others. *Promises and foes* deals with the promises made by the slogan creators as well as the anti-values denied in the slogans. *Verb forms and their function in slogans* discusses how the verb forms used in slogans influence the meaning and function of the whole slogan. *Stylistic devices in the slogans* is the final subsection, which contains an analysis of how stylistic devices help to modify or bring forward certain meanings coded in the slogans.

4. RESULTS

4.1. AXIOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF SLOGANS

The analyzed political slogans uncover certain values which their creators claim to stand for. Values in this context are understood as generalized aims and means of attaining them, which serve as fundamental norms and ideal attainments (Serebrennikova, 2011). According to Pavlov (2011), values emerge around the fundamental needs and cultural fulfillments of human nature — religious, ethical, social-political (ideological), intellectual, aesthetic emotional, physiological etc. No doubt, references to relevant values are an effective way of political promotion, because these values are supposed to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people whose support the candidate seeks. It is, therefore, important to know which of the values were chosen to be incorporated into the slogans in order to see which ones are considered the most important.

Statistically, one of the top values coded in the slogans is patriotism towards Slovakia. This value is found in six out of 37 slogans, including the following:

(1) Chranime Slovensko — We protect Slovakia (Smer)

(2) Slovensko bude silný štát! — Slovakia will be a strong country! (SNS)

The given examples demonstrate that for the creators of these slogans, Slovakia is the highest value to be preserved and strengthened. This attitude is manifested with the use of straightforward linguistic markers.

Honesty and justice are also popular values, which, according to Slovak politicians, can be attractive to the general public:

(3) Mojím cieľom je spravodlivé Slovensko — My aim is a just Slovakia (SAS)

(4) Spojme sa proti korupcii! — Let's unite against corruption! (TIP)

(5) Môžete mi veriť. Nie som politik — You can trust me. I'm not a politician (SME Rodina)

The first example above states in a very explicit manner that the aim of the politician is to establish justice in Slovakia. The second one, being less explicit, does not refer to justice per se, but instead addresses something that is completely dishonest (corruption) and denies this (anti-)value. The last example of the three also works through opposite relations. A healthy portion of Slovak discourse is based on the assumption that politicians are corrupt and dishonest. Contrasting oneself with such politicians is supposed to produce a positive promotional effect, attained through the opposition of values and anti-values. On the whole, eight out of 37 slogans put honesty and justice on top of their list of values.

People as a value per se are mentioned in three slogans. In the first example below, the slogan implies that the candidate behind it works for people, whereas the other

example is more straightforward — the candidate chooses people as their major asset and aim:

(6) Robíme pre ľudí — (We) work for (the) people (Smer)

(7) Volím lúdí. A ty? — I vote for people. What about you? (Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti)

Equality was also used as one of the values in the campaign, even though it was very implicit and went hand-in-hand with other values, such as socialism and high living standards:

(8) Kapitalizmus slúži vyvoleným, socializmus všetkým — Capitalism serves the few chosen ones, socialism serves everybody (Komunistická strana Slovenska)

(9) Kvalitný život pre mladých aj starých už dnes — Quality life for the young and the old staring from today (Strana moderného Slovenska)

(10) Lepší život pre všetkých — A better life for everybody (Strana moderného Slovenska)

In the first example above, equality is not mentioned, but implied through the service of socialism to everybody (socializmus slúži všetkým). Equality here is linked to socialism as its prerequisite. In the second example, equality is manifested through the promise to provide high living standards for the young and the old (pre mladých aj starých). The next example is very similar, but equality in this case is manifested through lexeme "everybody" (pre všetkých).

The least popular values include house, family, decisiveness (all of them are mentioned in two slogans each), as well as order, courage, hope, and willingness to help the weaker ones (mentioned only once each):

(11) Bezpečný domov // Spokojné rodiny — Safe home // Happy families (KDH)

(12) Teraz je čas rozhodnúť — Now is the time to make a decision (Most-Híd)

(13) Nádej prichádza s odvahou — Hope comes with courage (Odvaha O2H)

The first example simply states the values which its creator deems important — family and household. Both of them contain the attributes of safety and happiness, both of them are promised protection. It is worth mentioning that this slogan can be interpreted as metaphoric in its meaning, because of the importance attributed to the notions of "home" and "family" in Slavic cultures. Both can represent not only the actual objects and people, but also homeland in general. In this respect, the slogan promises much more than the mere protection of a home and family members, but also protection of the nation's inhabitants. Thus, if interpreted metaphorically, it can be considered very patriotic.

Decisiveness is highlighted as a value in the second example through the verb "rozhodnúť" (make a decision). Hope and courage are mentioned in the last example, whereby courage is put as a prerequisite to hope, and both of them being very emotionally-charged.

4.2. PROMISES AND FOES

It is very natural that slogans not only promote values which the candidates stand for, but also make certain promises. Semantic analysis enables us to single out several major promises made through the slogans.

Some candidates relied on work as the highest demand, namely five out of 37 examples contain this element, for instance:

(14) Urobme si dobrý štát. Teraz! — Let's make ourselves a good state. Now! (Sieť)

(15) Makáme! // Za pracovné miesta // nie fleky v politike — We work. We fight for jobs, not places (for ourselves) in politics. (SKOK)

With unemployment rate being a serious issue in Slovakia, a number of candidates put work, workforce, and employment on top of their list of promises. The first example contains lexeme "robiť" which is a direct reference to employment. The next example is fully related to work. Firstly, "makáme" is colloquial of "we work" implying that the candidates behind the slogan are hard-working people. Secondly, the mentioning of "pracovné miesta" (work places, jobs) is a reference to high unemployment rate in Slovakia and an attempt to position themselves as the candidates who will do their best to open up more jobs. Thirdly, "fleky" is a colloquial word for "workers, work places, jobs," though in this context, it is used to deny any connection to official politics.

Entrepreneurship is no less serious as an issue, according to the candidates. Four of the slogans use promises related to entrepreneurship. The examples below contain the lexemes "podnikať" (undertake), "podnikanie" (entrepreneurship), "podnikateľ" (entrepreneur) and indicate the value of entrepreneurship. Moreover, in the first example, work is linked to homeland — you can hardly be a patriot unless you can live, work and do business in your own country. In the second example, the promise of entrepreneurship is associated with fairness — not only will you have an opportunity to work, but also to expect fair attitude. The third example promises a positive change for entrepreneurs:

(16) Pripravení na reformy aby sa doma oplatilo pracovať, podnikať a žiť — We are prepared for reforms to make it worth working, having business, and living in the homeland (SAS)

(17) Mojím cieľom je férové podnikanie — My aim is fair entrepreneurship (SAS)

(18) SOM ZMENA pre podnikateľov — I represent change for entrepreneurs (SDKÚ-DS)

Four slogans out of 37 contain a promise to make Slovakia a strong, powerful, and successful state. It is not a coincidence that such promises exist, because the candidates are competing for the highest offices in the country, and they are expected to take care of the county, for instance:

(19) Chranime Slovensko — We protect Slovakia (Smer)

(20) Slovensko bude silný štát! — Slovakia will be a strong country! (SNS)

In eight examples, the candidates promise various improvements, such as better healthcare and higher living standards, better conditions for young families, lower taxes. Again, it is very natural to see such promises in political slogans. It does, however, demonstrate that these issues are considered serious in Slovakia:

(21) SOM ZMENA pre mladé rodiny — I representchange for young families (SDKÚ-DS)

(22) Mojím cieľom je daň 15% — My aim is 15% tax (SAS)

(23) SOM ZMENA smeru zdravotníctva — I represent change for healthcare (SDKÚ-DS)

(24) Kvalitný život pre mladych aj starých už dnes — Quality life for the young and the old starting from today (Strana moderného Slovenska)

Several candidates claimed that they would bring improvements to particular regions of the country (three examples). Obviously, these candidates hoped to find support in the respective regions of the country. The second example below is particularly interesting because it addresses a specific issue in a specific region of the country. It implies that this issue can be serious for the people who live there:

(25) SOM ZMENA pre Bystricu — I represent change for Bystricá (SDKÚ-DS)

(26) Zachráňme pitnú vodu na žitnom ostrove — Let's save drinking water on Rye Island (KDH)

Some slogans, however, do not contain any promises — instead, they are based on the opposition. Hegelian dialectics suggest that if there is a thesis, someone has to propose an antithesis. In real-world terms, it means that progress is possible only through the confrontation of ideas. The election campaign is usually a period of time when antitheses come forth in the form of opposing political forces and ideas, which are also reflected in the slogans. Moreover, not only the ideas, but also values, antivalues, actions, and even specific people can be contested.

Dialectics is also described in terms of the universal "Friend vs Foe" opposition. By "friend" they usually understand the nation itself or a particular group, which carries

"true" values. It is usually manifested through linguistic markers such as "we," "our," "my fellow citizens," etc. The "foe" ("they") is not necessarily a particular person, but any association (social and political groups, parties, nations, but also any other carriers of alien or uncommon characteristics and values). This opposition is the fundamental basis of any political campaign, because sometimes it is not enough to merely state your own position. It has to be defined through the opposition with another existing idea, group, etc. and its values.

This could explain why the analyzed slogans demonstrate substantial distrust towards politicians, who are considered foes, anti-heroes, and a source of problems. For this reason, in five of the slogans the candidates distanced themselves from politics. These candidates claimed that they are not politicians, and can, therefore, be trusted, or alternatively they claimed that politicians must be substituted with new people. It may be concluded then that politics is considered an anti-value, an obstacle to smooth progress. On the whole, there are five examples where politicians and politics are denounced, including the following:

(27) Ne volím politikov. Volím Borisa — (I) don't vote for politicians. (I) vote for Boris (SME Rodina)

(28) Dá sa to // Ak vymeníme politikov — It can be done // If we change politicians (ŠANCA)

Thieves, corruption, and deceit are also considered foes and anti-values. The examples below show that the slogan creators strive to oppose them, reduce, or remove them entirely:

(29) Kde vláda zlodejov končí, začína socializmus — Where the rule of thieves ends is where socialism begins (Komunistická strana Slovenska)

(30) Sme jednotka v boji proti korupcii — We are number one in the fight against corruption (TIP)

However, it has already been mentioned that in some examples the candidates would name specific people or organizations which need to be removed for better progress. In the first two examples below, for instance, the slogans denounce Fico and Paškov supporters. The former is the country's Prime Minister and head of the ruling party, while the latter is an infamous politician with a track record of scandals. In the last two examples, denunciation is directed against the USA and NATO (in the last but one example) as well as the EU (metonymically presented through Brussels in the last example):

(31) Zachránime Slovensko bez Fica — Let's save Slovakia without Fico (SDKÚ-DS)

(32) Vyženieme paškovcov zo zdravotníctva — Let's remove Paškov supporters from healthcare (Sieť)

(33) Nie! Základniam USA a NATO — NO to the USA and NATO bases (Komunistická strana Slovenska)

(34) Postavíme Slovensko nad diktát Bruselu! — Let's put Slovakia above the dictate of Brussels! (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko)

4.3. VERB FORMS AND THEIR FUNCTION IN SLOGANS

The verb forms used in the slogans are important because of the grammatical meanings conveyed by them. The most frequently used verb form in the slogans is the 1st person plural (in 17 slogans out of 37), for instance:

(35) Postavíme Slovensko nad diktát Bruselu! — Let's put Slovakia above the dictate of Brussels! (Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko)

(36) Dajme šancu južnému slovensku — Let's give a chance to Southern Slovakia (Most-Híd)

The ending "-me" is the morphological marker of the grammatical function mentioned above. It is essentially an imperative to join a certain activity, i.e. it communicates the speaker's desire to persuade the interlocutor to undertake a certain action. This verb form is important because of the functions it performs in the slogans. Firstly, as it has been mentioned, it inspires people to join in a certain activity. Secondly, it performs an integrative function. According to Sheigal (2002), this verb form is aimed at uniting people, integrating them into one community. Thirdly, this verb form helps to distribute responsibility for this action among a larger number of people. This way, the candidate who is using the slogan does not have to promise to do something (e.g. overcome corruption) themselves, but merely inspires everybody else to join him/her in this activity and, hence, share responsibility. Finally, this form implements the "Friend vs Foe" opposition, which has already been discussed above. It helps to define the makers of the slogan as "we" as opposed to "them," the alien elements and their anti-values. The aforesaid functions explain why almost half of the slogans contain this verb form.

However, not all the slogans use 1st person plural; a smaller number slogans employ the 1st person singular (four examples out of 37 collected slogans):

(37) Volím lúdí. A ty? — I vote for people. What about you? (Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti)

(38) Ne volím politikov. Volím Borisa — (I) don't vote for politics. (I) vote for Boris (SME Rodina)

In the examples, the candidates use the verb "voliť" in the 1st person singular to address each person who reads the slogan. This verb form in the first example is complemented with a direct question "a ty?" (and you), which is also addressed to the reader.

It is worth mentioning that as opposed to the English language, where direct address to one person and to a number of people has merged into a universal pronoun "you," in Slovak "ty" is used to address one particular person (often one the speaker knows very well), whereas when addressing a number of people would require a different pronoun ("vy"), which makes "ty" a more effective means of direct address. It is thus surprising that there is only one example which uses the personal pronoun "ty" (2nd person singular). At the same time, there are three more examples where politicians use possessive pronouns, for instance:

(39) Vaš človek — Your man (SME Rodina)

(40) Mojím cieľom je férové podnikanie — My aim is fair entrepreneurship (SAS)

The paucity of the 1st person singular verb forms (e.g. I do), 1st and 2nd person singular (You) and possessive pronouns (Your, My) means that, in general, the candidates tend to avoid addressing the electorate directly and speaking on their own behalf to the readers of the slogans. However, the incentive and motivation to act, as attained through the use of the 1st person plural, can be conveyed or intensified with other parts of speech used in the slogans. Thus, in the example below, motivation and intensification are created through the addition of adverbs "teraz" (now) and "dnes" (today):

(41) Urobme si dobrý štát. Teraz! — Let's make ourselves a good state. Now! (Sieť)

(42) Kvalitný život pre mladych aj starých už dnes — Quality life for the young and the old starting today today (Strana moderného Slovenska)

Sometimes, though, slogans don't contain any verb forms, but merely state the values or promises the politician stands for. Out of 37 examples, there are seven slogans which adhere to this format:

(43) Bezpečný domov // Spokojné rodiny — Safe home // Happy families (KDH)

4.4. STYLISTIC DEVICES IN SLOGANS

Stylistic devices are frequently used in political discourse. According to Komisarova (2008), the use of the arsenal of stylistic emphasis and expressive syntax helps a politician to improve the efficiency of their statement and make it more convincing and informative. This can also be used in political slogans, as it is a substantial part of any political discourse. Slogans are short messages, and very often their meaning is conveyed not only through the lexical units per se, but also through stylistic devices, which help to deliver some connotation, extra meaning, or simply highlight the main idea. The analysis below provides an overview of the stylistic devices used for the production of slogans in the 2016 election campaign.

For this analysis, the slogans were collected from billboards and posters, which is one of the main reasons why most stylistic devices are graphical: capitalization and

bold type. Both of them are used to intensify, highlight, or even give extra meaning to the slogan, for example:

(44) SOM ZMENA... pre podnikateľov — I represent change... for entrepreneurs (SDKÚ-DS)

(45) DÁ SA TO // Ak vymeníme politikov — It can be done // If we change politicians (ŠANCA)

(46) **Za**chránime Slovensko **bez Fica** — Let's save Slovakia without Fico (SDKÚ-DS)

In the first and second examples, capitalization is used to emphasize the most important part of the message. The third example is interesting because the bold type helps to create one more slogan inside of the existing one. If we remove everything except the part in bold type, it reads: "Za... bez Fica," which means "For... without Fico" (where Fico is the name of Slovak politician, leader of the ruling party), or in other words "against Fico." The mentioning of Slovakia in the slogan implies that Slovakia can be saved only if Fico steps down. On the whole, out of the 37 examples there are eight slogans with capitalization and two slogans with bold type, which means that graphic stylistic devices are among the most commonly used ones in the collected pool of examples.

Another means of stylistic embellishment is parallel construction (a syntactic device): "The necessary condition in parallel construction is identical, or similar, syntactical structure in two or more sentences or parts of a sentence in close succession" (Galperin, 1977, p. 191). On the whole, this stylistic device is not too popular (only three examples out of 37 slogans). The example below has two identical parts: Noun + Adjective and Noun + Adjective:

(47) Bezpečný domov // Spokojné rodiny — Safe home // Happy families (KDH)

An even less popular device (two examples out of 37) is rhyme. According to Galperin, "Rhyme is the repetition of identical or similar terminal sound combinations of words" (Galperin 116):

(48) Spravíme poriadok so zlodejmi v kravatách aj s parazitmi v osadách — Let's deal with thieves in ties and parasites in cities

(49) Podnikať musí aj štát, ak sa nechceme chudoby báť — The state also should work, if it does not want to be afraid of being poor

In the given examples, the endings of the clauses rhyme: "kravatách-osadách" in the first example and "štát-báť" in the second one. It makes the whole slogan look like a cohesive unit. Moreover, rhymes tend to stay in memory more often than their non-rhymed counterparts. Hence, rhyming helps to make a slogan more popular and catchy.

Only one example out of 37 contains colloquialisms:

(50) Makáme! // Za pracovné miesta // nie fleky v politike — We work // We support jobs // We fight for jobs, not places (for ourselves) in politics. (SKOK)

In the given example two words ("Makáme" and "fleky") are colloquial. The reason why colloquial speech is used is because of its emotional character: when colloquial lexemes appear in written texts, their expressiveness comes to the foreground because written texts are logically directed unless, of course, there is a deliberate attempt to introduce an expressive element in the utterance (Galperin, 1977, p. 25).

5. DISCUSSION

In earlier days, slogans functioned on Celtic battlefields as "war cries" as well as heraldic mottos in order to mobilize, inspire, and summon a large amount of people using a single utterance. It should be assumed that this utterance must have been very significant for the people. It must have carried a supreme sense of purpose or a primary value. The same properties remain important for political slogans today.

Although slogans can be imposed on the nation or group of people (Xing, 1999), most often they reflect what is currently important for the same. Indeed, it is very helpful to look into the arrangement of the slogans, because being concise messages they help to single out the axiological vectors, which can manifest in lexical as well as in syntactically higher units — word combinations and sentences (Ivanova, 2015). These axiological vectors coded in political slogans tend to point towards the values which the target nation or group of people deem important. In order to succeed, candidates for political offices must try to single out those values and incorporate them into their slogans, and through them attract as many people as possible.

The axiological analysis has demonstrated that the most important values promoted through political slogans in Banská Bystrica during the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary election campaign are patriotism towards Slovakia (six slogans), honesty and justice (eight slogans), the voters themselves (three slogans), equality, home, family, decisiveness (all of them are mentioned in two slogans each), as well as order, courage, hope, and willingness to help the weaker ones (mentioned only once each). The given numbers indicate that honesty and justice are values which are expected of politicians. Patriotic feelings turn out to be essential as well, while people and all other traditional values are considered much less important.

The promises made through political sloganeering point towards the most pressing needs of the population (or at least the way the candidates see it). The promise of jobs and better conditions for entrepreneurship (nine slogans in total) are important because of the high unemployment rate, which hit Slovakia and stifled its economic progress. Various improvements, such as better healthcare and higher living standards, better conditions for young families, lower taxes are also popular promises made by the candidates (eight slogans). Patriotic promises to make Slovakia stronger and more independent are most likely to be connected with the nature of the political

context (Parliamentary elections) and the dominant political rhetoric. Several candidates addressed the special needs of certain Slovak regions, arguably as a strategy for building up electoral support.

At the same time, a significant portion of slogans is based on the opposition towards certain social groups, (anti)-values, or even specific people. Obviously, the candidates behind such slogans expect to attract supporters through their opposition to a common "foe." Politicians as a group appear to have been selected as the major foes of Slovakia. Five slogans clearly convey a negative attitude towards politics and anyone connected with it. Corruption and thieves are considered to be the factors stifling further development. Specific people and organizations (the country's Prime Minister Fico, politician Paškov, USA, NATO, EU) were also mentioned among the common "foes."

The grammatical meaning of the verb forms in the analyzed slogans turned out to be important as well. It revealed that in most slogans (17 examples), the candidates tend to speak as a group and inspire people to join in a certain activity (e.g. combat corruption) through the use of verbs in the 1st person plural (e.g. we do smth, let's do smth). Only four examples feature the 1st person singular verb forms (e.g. I do), and only once a candidate addresses the electorate through the second person singular "ty" (i.e. you). It may be concluded, thus, that the candidates tend to avoid direct address to the electorate and prefer to distribute responsibility associated with the values supported and promises made by them.

Most stylistic devices are graphical (eight cases of capitalization and two bold type examples), because the slogans were written on billboards and posters, where graphical strategies are easy to use in order to highlight relevant elements of the slogan. Parallel constructions, rhymes, and colloquialisms were used in just several examples (five in total).

6. CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that slogans give a rather complete picture of how politicians see the axiological vectors and political needs of the population in Banská Bystrica as a representative central region in Slovakia. The results of the research can be applied to the real-world political context in order to show the relevance of the slogans produced for the political campaign in question. Very much like a pH paper, slogans provide an immediate measure and assessment of the chemistry of social and political relations. Being just concise messages, they highlight the main tenets of political campaigns of individual politicians and parties. Hence, it may be very important to analyze the slogans appearing in a certain political environment (on a local or national level) on a continuous basis. The checkpoints (parliamentary elections) may serve as the indicators of possible changes in the political environment, values, needs, and even political openness manifested through the semantic, morphemic, syntactic, and stylistic markers.

However, it is worth noting that this research has certain limitations, which naturally stem from its objectives. These limitations do not undermine the overall results of the investigation nor do they make them less valid. In a broader research

context, though, there are ways to make the results of this article more detailed and far-reaching.

The first limitation emerged due to the constraints of the research material. It was decided that the research should concentrate on the slogans produced during the 2016 Slovak Parliamentary election campaign and presented through street advertisement. Other political texts, such as programs, public statements, websites, etc were intentionally left out of our scope of research. Even though this decision helped to zoom in on the material in question, it put all the other means of political promotion out of the limelight. It is only natural to assume that further investigation of political texts related to the campaign will complement the current research and add valuable information.

The second limitation stems from the fact that the material is only a regional sample, namely from the town of Banská Bystrica. This region was selected due to its central location in Slovakia. However, aware of the relative inhomogeneity of Slovakia, we cannot use the results obtained on this territory to make inferences about other Slovak regions or the country as a whole. Thus, if we wanted to somehow generalize the results, similar research would have to be carried out in the other regions as well.

The third limitation is also connected with the research objective, but also with one of the aspects of the material itself. The article analyzes the slogans collected from billboards and posters. However, it concentrates only on the verbal content of the slogans and leaves out the extralinguistic features of billboards and posters. For instance, 11 billboards clearly use the colors of the national Slovak flag in order to emphasize the patriotic mindset of the candidate. The other ones use colors associated with certain political parties. Considerations of this kind were intentionally avoided in order to concentrate on the language of slogans. It is beyond doubt, however, that a proper extralinguistic analysis of the same material (color, design, arrangement of elements) as well as the investigation of the connection between the linguistic and extralinguistic elements would enrich the research and our current understanding of how the different means of political promotion function.

Finally, the given research is a synchronic analysis of the current political environment in one of the Slovak regions. More comprehensive results can be obtained by carrying out the analysis continuously and tracking any noticeable changes over the course of time.

ABBREVIATIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Smer (Smer–sociálna demokracia): Direction — Social Democracy
SNS (Slovenská národná strana): Slovak national party
SAS (Strana Sloboda a Solidarita): Freedom and Solidarity
TIP (Tvoríme Inú Politiku): We create different politics
SME Rodina: We Are Family
Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti: Ordinary People and Independent Personalities
Komunistická strana Slovenska: Slovak Communist party
Strana moderného Slovenska: Modern Slovakia party

KDH: Christian Democratic Movement
Most-Híd: Bridge (in Slovak and Hungarian)
Odvaha O2H: Courage
Sieť: Network
SKOK: European Liberal Democrats
SDKÚ-DS (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia — Demokratická strana): Slovak Democratic and Christian Union — Democratic Party
ŠANCA: Chance
Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko: People's Party — Our Slovakia

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