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Means of Creating the Media Image of a Candidate to the Post of Mayor through Contextual Argumentation (on the materials of the texts about the 2018–2019 elections in Moscow, Vilnius and Belgrade)

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Summary. In political cultures of a number of countries, the creation of a politician's media image is based on the fundamental principle of his/her work being formulated as the achievement of the goal of ensuring a nation's well-being and a country's development. The present article demonstrates concrete similarities and differences discernible in the construction of a politician's media image in the Russian, Lithuanian and Serbian media discourses from a rhetorical perspective. The methodological basis of the investigation is provided by the ideas of the new rhetoric and Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's assumption concerning the fact that the speaker's ideas are accepted (or not accepted) by the audience not depending on the degree of the strictness of logical propositions and conclusions, but rather on the fact of whether the hearers have adhered to the grounds given by the speaker. Consequently, a researcher analysing the ways text influences the consciousness of those receiving it may identify shared truths and value judgements. On the basis of the analysis of contextual argumentation used for the creation of the media image of the candidates for the post of mayor in the three media discourses, an attempt to establish shared truths and values as well as certain regularities in the process of media image creation characteristic of the Russian, Lithuanian and Serbian media discourses has been made.

Keywords: media discourse, elections, media image.

Introduction

The problem of the creation of the image of a candidate for a particular political position in pre-election discourse seems attractive to many linguists; however, works comparing certain aspects of pre-election discourses are not numerous. The comparison of discourses is regarded as a crucial issue because of the two reasons. First, comparison allows us to characterise the cultures under discussion in a more thorough way. Second, a researcher aiming at carrying out the comparative analysis faces the task of devising the appropriate methodology intended both for the analysis of the research subjects studied separately and for their comparison.

The present research aims at the comparative analysis of speech cultures formed in the present-day political Russian, Lithuanian and Serbian media discourses. What is meant by a speech culture are the rhetorical peculiarities of a candidate's media image creation in pre-election discourse, i.e., the peculiar way the arguments of universal and contextual argumentation *ad rem* and *ad hominem* are used in media texts about elections. The term "media image" is widely used nowadays; however, its content still varies. Our understanding of the term "media image" corresponds to Malysheva's definition, in which it is referred to as fragments of the reality "constructed" into the media and intended to produce a certain impact on collective consciousness (Малышева 2014).

The term "media discourse" originating from the term "discourse" is also used in the article. Out of many definitions of discourse known to us, Dijk's definition seems to be the most appropriate within the realms of the present research. According to the scholar, discourse is a complex communicative phenomenon embracing both the social context, which reveals who the participants are (what their personalities are) and the message production and reception processes (Dijk 2009). Sociality, as a characteristic is of relevance to many linguists. Thus, for example, according to Fairclough, discourse is the use of language as a social practice; any text is a social space. By discourse, we mean the use of language in a social context. This use characterises the knowledge and opinions both of the discourse agent and the society, to which he/she belongs. Thus, by media discourse, we mean the use of language in a social context, which is being constructed in the media space.

"Converting information into meanings (constructed knowledge), transferring knowledge from one level (e.g., institutional) to another (e.g., general), merging different types of information (e.g., political and entertaining, factual and advertising)" should be considered as a distinctive feature of media discourse. Such a feature of media discourse as merging different types of information allowed us to approach the materials of different authors (third-party authors and the candidates as authors) as a single continuum (Кожемякин 2010).

Media discourses of the three countries, Russia, Lithuania and Serbia, were chosen as the focus of the present investigation because, first, the countries share a lot in terms of their last century's history, the most obvious similarity would be building a socialist society in the past and building a stable democratic society today. Second, in all the three cultures a politician's positive image creation is based on the fundamental principle of

his/her work being formulated as the achievement the goal of ensuring both a country's and a nation's (in our case it is the city and its citizens) stability, well-being, enhancement and development. Special attention was paid to particular similarities and differences in the process of a media image creation within each of the cultures under comparison from the perspective of its rhetorical shaping.

The methodology of research

The following methods were applied in the study: logico-rhetorical method was used to investigate the logical and illogical sides of persuasion; the comparative method was used to compare the results. At the initial stage of the research, each of the methods mentioned above was descriptive, and in the process of interpretation, the methods were critical. Attention was paid to the qualitative characteristics of the subject.

The methodological basis of the investigation is provided by the insights of the new rhetoric and Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's assumptions concerning the fact that the idea that human consciousness is non-contradictory and seeks only to perceive the truth, which was dominant for a long time, is irrelevant for the analysis of the means of persuasion. Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca revived popular ancient ideas concerning the fact that one's ability to persuade (and to be subjected to persuasion) does not merely lie in one's ability to draw logical inferences. The main property of the person (who persuades or is being persuaded) is the ability to be sensible and to employ a wide spectrum of grounds; the audience accepts the speaker's ideas not because of strict logical assumptions and conclusions, but rather due to the fact that they have adhered to the grounds provided by the speaker (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 2000: 1–10).

The audience is considered one of the most important communicative factors in the new rhetoric. Usually, the speaker is exposed not to some abstract audience, however, a concrete community, that is why, when designing a speech the speaker draws on his/her ideas concerning who his/her hearers are and what their values are (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 2000: 17–35). Hence, a researcher investigating into the ways the consciousness of those receiving the text is influenced by it can identify the shared truths and values the speaker is appealing to (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 2000: 63–80).

The analysis procedure consisted of the following steps: first, we analysed universal persuasion structures (logical ways of introducing a thesis and the arguments supporting it) in each text, then we switched to contextual arguments (illogical means of a positive media image creation).

The article presents the results of the analysis of contextual argumentation, which contributed to the creation of a positive media image of a candidate to the position of mayor[1].

Appealing to an authority, appealing to a tradition, the use of rhetorical devices (creating a sense of togetherness between the speaker and the hearer through the use of the inclusive

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[1] The results of the analysis of universal argumentation for the creation of a positive image of the candidates to the position of the mayor are presented in (Макарова 2019).

'we', the use of evaluative lexis and particular grammatical forms) and other arguments traditionally attributed to the *ad hominem* arguments type should be regarded as the means of persuading on the appropriateness of a politician's image created by the media.

The analysis materials

The analysis was carried out on the materials related to the 2018–2019 elections of the mayors of the capitals of Russia, Lithuania, and Serbia, that is, the mayor of Moscow, Vilnius, and Belgrade[2].

Seven sources (texts and video clips) in Russian, seven sources in Lithuanian and seven sources in Serbian containing information about the candidates, i.e., Sergey Sobyanin, who won the Moscow mayoral election, Remigijus Šimašius, who won the Vilnius mayoral election, and Zoran Radojičić, who won the Belgrade mayoral election, have been chosen as the materials for the analysis. Materials were sampled according to the key-words: "the 2018 election", "Sobyanin", «выборы 2018», «Собянин», „rinkimai 2019", „Šimašius", "izbori 2018", "Radojičić".

The materials were sampled on the premises that they had to correlate in terms of the volume, the quantity, the topic, the time of production, the genre and pathos (i.e., these are the materials agitating for the support of the candidate during the elections; they are informatively neutral or seemingly informative). It should be pointed out; however, that pre-election video clips intended to support the candidate R. Šimašius (similarly to the video clips about the Russian candidate Sobyanin and the Serbian candidate Z. Radojičić) have not been detected in the Lithuanian media, and instead the candidate addressed the voters through video messages).

As a result, the Russian, Lithuanian and Serbian subsets of the sampled materials correlate among themselves; all the three subsets contain materials where the candidate is speaking in the grammatical first person (in interviews and pre-election addresses) and the materials about the candidate presented from the "he/she" perspective (pre-election video clips, information messages), all the three subsets of materials are similar in terms of the volume, the quantity, the time of production, the genre and the pathos. The materials that were encountered first in the searching systems, with the exception of those criticising the candidate[3], were intentionally included in the sampling.

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[2] Despite the seeming similarity of the elections (the mayor, the capital, similar period) the situations under comparison differ immensely in terms of the procedure of the mayoral elections; thus, if in Moscow or Vilnius the mayor is elected by the voters (i.e., at the polls a citizen gets a ballot with the list of the candidates to the mayoral post), in Belgrade the voters vote to elect the Skupština of Belgrade, a Belgrade voter gets a ballot with the list of candidates, that is, parties. Each party has a list of its members, the person whose number is one on the list has a potential of occupying a leading role in the work of the Skupština of Belgrade. However, the first person on the list of the dominant party does not become the mayor automatically; the chairman of Skupština puts forward a candidate to the mayoral post, who is further on either elected or not by secret ballot.

[3] An attempt to identify the language means of creating the image of the candidate who was worth voting for and who took up the post was made in the research, that is why, the sampling does not contain any "negative" materials.

The fact that the materials are relatively limited does not allow the researcher to draw global conclusions concerning all media discourse under analysis, but we made an assumption that, first of all, the sources that "have been encountered first" are representative for the illustration of mainstream ideas; second of all, being part of the whole very often means sharing the same characteristics with the whole; hence, our sampled materials (being a part of media discourse) may have the same characteristics as media discourse in general.

Means of creating a candidate's media image

The analysis of the sampled materials demonstrated the fact that a positive media image may be created through the use of such means of contextual argumentation as rhetorical devices (emphasizing the fact that the interests of information recipients', that is, the voters', are important for the speaker, that is, the candidate), appeal to authority and tradition, the use of evaluative lexis and particular grammatical forms as the *ad hominem* arguments. The most relevant (i.e., the most frequent and recurrent in various materials) examples from the texts and their interpretation are provided below.

1. Who are voters? You, we or they?

Voters are a significant part of every pre-election campaign since the outcome of an election depends upon their choice. As a rule, candidates (in the course of any elections not necessarily political) determine the protection of voters' interests as their priority task, debates are held and pre-election texts are written mainly for voters. In the texts under analysis, there is an idea that the candidates are planning to improve the voters' living conditions while in the mayor's office. It is the feature shared by the Russian, Lithuanian and Serbian media discourses. However, the way the voters are referred to, the pronouns used to designate the voters, in particular, differ across the three discourses. The candidate to the position of the Moscow mayor S. S. Sobyanin frequently refers to Muscovites in the form of "together we", e.g., *мы с вами развернули в Москве огромные программы* [together we initiated great programmes in Moscow]*; чтобы мы вместе продолжали над работать* [so that we could continue working on them together (projects – *V. M.*, *A. Sh.*). In rhetoric, the device of using the inclusive pronoun, "we" in speeches is defined as being extremely simple and at the same time extremely effectual. Not only does the lexico-grammatical structure of the utterance change, but the picture of the world depicted by the discourse agent in his/her speech also changes; "we" means that the speaker does not divide himself/herself from the hearers' interests and that a sense of commonality between the speaker and the hearer is evoked.

The discourse of the Lithuanian candidate R. Šimašius is characterized by a plethora of the pronoun *jūs* [you] (and such suppletive form as "your" and other), for instance, *prieš jus – dvi Vilniaus ateities versijos* [you have two options of the future Vilnius]; *Jūs renkatės, ar išlaikyti teigiamų pokyčių kursą* [you are choosing whether to pursue the course towards positive changes]. That is, in his texts, the Lithuanian candidate addresses

the voters directly. It should be pointed out that the sampled video materials are not video clips created for the election campaign as it was in the case with the Russian and Serbian candidates[4], but they are the candidate R. Šimašius' video messages in which he addresses the viewers who are the voters through the use of you-constructions. The images are presented without any inserts, it is a classical continual shot when the speaker is looking straight into the camera and is as if talking to someone behind it.

In the discourse of the Serbian candidate Z. Radojičić the use of the pronoun *oni* [they] (and its suppletive "their") is worth paying attention, i.e., the candidate refers to the voters using the third-person pronoun. For example, in one of his interviews Z. Radojičić says about the residents Belgraders: *Želimo da razgovaramo s ljudima i da se oni uključe u donošenje odluka*, *jer oni najbolje znaju kako žele da žive i šta im je u njihovom kraju potrebno* [We want to talk to the people and want them to contribute to the decision-making, because they know the best what they want their life to be and what they need in their district]. Here is an example taken from another Z. Radojičić' interview: *njihove potrebe* [their needs]; *da im je život bolji* [that their life has improved].

Hence, the Russian candidate uses WE-constructions when referring to the voters, i.e., the speaker coheres his interests with the hearers' interests, whereas the Lithuanian candidate uses YOU-constructions and has a direct dialogue with his electorate, the Serbian candidate distances himself from the voters by using the third-person pronoun THEY.

2. The demonstration of a candidate's professionalism

In the texts that were analysed the work of the Moscow mayoral team under the guidance of S. Sobyanin (by the time of the election we are interested in S. Sobyanin had already held the Mayor's office for eight years) is evaluated positively, which can be proven by the figures extensively used both by S. Sobyanin and in the texts about S. Sobyanin (roubles, percentage, kilometers, square meters, cars, investments, population and so on are calculated). Past tense verbs having the perfective aspect as well as passive participles with the semantics of creation, such as, for example, *reconstructed*, *enhanced*, *built*, *activated*, *restored*, are frequently used both in the texts spoken on behalf of S. Sobyanin and in the texts about S. Sobyanin, which demonstrates his being aware of the current issues in the life of the capital (when he uses past tense verbs having the imperfective aspect, for example, in interviews), as well as impressive results of his work.

The Lithuanian candidate R. Šimašius also had a chance of demonstrating his business-like traits on the post he aspired to for the second time in the 2018 election. However, unlike his Moscow counterpart, R. Šimašius prefers to use present tense verbs with the semantics

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[4] The materials were sampled on the premises that they had to correlate in terms of the volume, the quantity, the topic, the time of production, the genre and pathos (i.e., these are the materials agitating for the support of the candidate during the elections, they are informatively neutral or seemingly informative). However, pre-election video clips intended to support the candidate R. Šimašius (similar to the ones about the Russian candidate S. Sobyanin and the Serbian candidate Z. Radojičić) have not been detected in the Lithuanian media; Lithuanian voters were offered the candidate's video messages instead).

of creation and enhancing instead of past tense verbs, for example, *atsinaujina* [is being renovated], *tiesiame dviračių takus*, [bicycle lanes are being built] *mažiname paslaugų kainas* [service prices are being reduced], *Vilnius susigrąžina* [Vilnius is regaining]. Figures in the texts are not frequent (sometimes one may come across a phrase "figures speak for themselves"). The positive result of R. Šimašius' work is described in general terms, for instance, *ant tvarių finansinių pamatų ir strategiškai pagrįstai* [on a financially solid foundation and having strategic grounds], *pasikloti atviro*, *sąžiningo*, *skaidraus ir energingo Vilniaus pamatą* [to build the foundation of an open, honest, transparent and energetic Vilnius].

The team of the Serbian candidate Z. Radojičić did not have an opportunity of working under his guidance; on the contrary, Z. Radojičić was involved into the sphere of medicine and started his career as a politician only approximately a year before the election to Skupština, that is why in the Serbian texts figures are almost never used, what is more, no past tense verbs with the semantics of creation are used, Z. Radojičić does not demonstrate his perfect knowledge of economic terms and his being aware of all the capital's current issues, but still the idea that Z. Radojičić is a worthy candidate able to achieve certain goals in his professional sphere is expressed in the Serbian texts. In one interview, Z. Radojičić speaks of himself as of a person who has achieved professional success as a medic: *postigli smo značajne rezultate u karijeri* [we have achieved significant results in the career – here Z. Radojičić refers to his colleagues and course mates. – *V. M.*, *A. Sh.*]. He is also telling a story about one shocking practice class during which an authoritative teacher prophesied to Z. Radojičić that he would become a good doctor. Z. Radojičić regards the anticipated job of the Belgrade mayor as a chance to use his exceptional abilities to ensure the society's well-being: *šansu da ostvarim svoje potencijale* [a chance of fulfilling his potential]. Z. Radojičić also shares his memories about his being a diligent person at the start of his career with the journalists: *mnogo sam učio*, *posvećeno i vredno radio* [I studied a lot, I worked diligently and enthusiastically]. Let us consider one more example: *Ponudu predsednika Vučića doživeo sam kao sledeći korak u karijeri i kao šansu da uradim još više*, *ovog puta za grad koji volim* [I viewed President Vučić's offer as a next step my career and in this case an opportunity of doing more for my favourite city]. Like in the first example in this paragraph, the word "career" is again used here to indicate a possible change of a job in case Z. Radojičić is elected to the post of the mayor of the capital (and apart from that, President's support is also being demonstrated here). It is possible to draw a conclusion concerning the fact that Serbian voters are not deterred by the candidate's public announcement that his new job is considered by him as a chance of personal development and career advancements.

The Russian and Lithuanian candidates had an opportunity to demonstrate to the society what can be achieved by them through the fulfilment of their mayoral duties. However, still they refer to their accomplishments in different ways: the Russian candidate uses the past tense verbs with the semantics of creation, the Lithuanian candidate, in his turn, uses the present tense verbs; the Russian candidate exploits figures and business lexis extensively, the Lithuanian candidate does not demonstrate his awareness of the current

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issues in the life of the capital. The Serbian candidate aspiring for the post for the first time did not have the possibility to appeal to his previous achievements, that is why to prove his professional appropriateness such a means of his team's positive image creation as Z. Radojičić's team's positive evaluation through the use of nouns and adjectives with positive connotation is used, e.g., *imamo najbolji tim od svih i sjajne proekte; tim eksperata* [our team is the best and the projects are remarkable; a team of experts], Z. Radojičić's team's programme is *excellent*, the team itself is *new*, *strong*, *and professional*, the one that is energetic and willing to improve the life of Belgrade's; and a possible victory in the election is one more successful step in the career of the Serbian candidate.

3. An appeal to the authority of the country's President

The theme of presidents' benevolent attitude towards the candidates S. Sobyanin and Z. Radojičić is present both in the Russian and Serbian media discourses, which, alongside with the demonstration of a candidate's professional abilities should contribute to the creation of his/her positive image in the eyes of the electorate.

In the Russian texts it is said that V. Putin had a meeting with S. Sobyanin and gave a high evaluation of his team's work, for instance, *ваша команда работает профессионально; идея интересна; замечательный процесс* [your team's work is interesting; the idea is interesting; a remarkable process], – says V. Putin to S. Sobyanin. The texts themselves do not contain many instances of President Putin's accounts of S. Sobyanin; however, one of the headlines in our sampling (as it is known, headlines are considered to be the strongest position in text) reads: "Putin gave a high evaluation of S. Sobyanin's team professionalism", the two words "high" and "professionalism" possess positive connotation thus contribute to the creation of the positive image of the Moscow mayor in the Russian media discourse.

The Lithuanian candidate for the position of the mayor of Vilnius R. Šimašius does not mention the country's President's name in any of the texts under analysis. In the texts about R. Šimašius (that have been sampled for the research) President's name has not been detected either. Here arises the question of whether in the political life of the society the professional spheres of the country's President and the capital's mayor are distant from each other (whereas, in Russia and Serbia they are very close to each other) or whether in R. Šimašius' pre-election campaign such a move as the recognition of his accomplishments by President intended to add more weight to R. Šimašius' candidature was not made intentionally (R. Šimašius was running for the mayoral elections for the second time).

In the Serbian texts sampled for the research, it is the candidate himself rather than the journalists who informs about the President's attitude toward his candidature, for example: *ponude kojom mi je predsednik ukazao poverenje* [by this offer President expressed his trust in me]. In one interview Z. Radojičić says that he meets President on his way to work, who usually asks Z. Radojičić how he is doing, says good-bye by wishing: "Carry on with what you are doing! See you… I am satisfied". In other texts, the Serbian President gives

Z. Radojičić a positive characteristic. First of all it should be pointed out that President appreciates Z. Radojičić's personality traits (whereas it is the results of S. Sobyanin's work rather than his personality traits that are praised by the Russian President), second of all, the Russian President pays tribute to S. Sobyanin's accomplishments in a face-to-face conversation, president A. Vučić, in his turn, speaks highly of the candidate in his absence and does it in the following way: *To je jedan divan, dobar čovek, koji voli decu i kojeg deca vole* [He is a wonderful, kind person who loves children and is loved by children] (Z. Radojičić is a paediatrician. – *V.M.*, *A.Sh.*). Apart from that in the title of the party-list, Z. Radojičić's backers encouraged to vote for, in which Z. Radojičić's name came first, the name of the head of the state is also on the list: „Aleksandar Vučić – Zato što volimo Beograd!" [Aleksandar Vučić – Because we love Belgrade!].

As it is seen from the analysis presented above, having in mind the appeal to the President's authority as an aspect of a candidate's image creation, certain similarities can be found between the Russian and Serbian media discourses (the Lithuanian candidate does not use the President's image in his pre-election campaign): both the Russian and Serbian candidates demonstrate the fact that they are being supported by the country's President, while the Russian President gives a balanced opinion of the candidate to the post of Moscow mayor, the Serbian President "praises" the candidate to the post of Belgrade mayor openly.

4. An appeal to the authority of a religious leader

In one of his interviews, the Serbian candidate to the post of the mayor of the capital Z. Radojičić mentions his meeting with Patriarch Irinej during which he said: „*Ovaj grad voditi, to je mnogo težak i ozbiljan posao. Čovek mora da bude vrlo oprezan i jako mudar. Ne sme posao gradonačelnika da se poredi sa vođenjem klinike*" [Governing this city is a difficult and serious task. A person has to be prudent and wise. Being in charge of a clinic cannot be compared to being a mayor].

Further on, Z. Radojičić mentions the fact that Patriarch's words have produced an impact on him and that he recalls the meeting very often. This episode was also intended to create a positive image of the Serbian candidate, since the chance of meeting the Serbian religious leader, considered an authority in the Serbian society, and discussing all the vicissitudes of being the mayor with him, should be evaluated highly in the Serbian society.

No appeals to the authority of the church have been found in the Russian and Lithuanian sampling.

Here a parallel can be drawn; as it was stated before in one of the previous investigations, in her both inaugural speeches the Lithuanian President does not mention either God or the church, whereas the Serbian President in his inaugural speech declared that he was going to take care of the preservation of the churches and monasteries of the Serbian church, later in his speech he refers to "The Serbian Orthodox Church" when A. Vučić says that a strong church is going to contribute to the preservation of his country's nation (Макарова 2018).

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Thus, the results of the research demonstrate the fact that religious values are important in the Serbian society and appeals to these values are present in contemporary Serbian media discourse (as opposed to the media discourses of Russia and Lithuania).

5. Evaluating the work of predecessors and rivals

There is no information concerning S. Sobyanin's predecessors in the same post in the texts under analysis, which may be related to the fact that S.S obyanin has held the mayoral post for many years and everything that happened before him is already distant past. On the other hand, the fact that the favourable to the candidates' issue of juxtaposing one's achievements with the predecessors' failures are being ignored may be accounted for by a rhetorical S. Sobyanin's strategy of putting emphasis on his accomplishments without comparing himself to his predecessors and rivals in the pre-election clash. Rivals as a theme in S.Sobyanin's discourse as well as in the discourse about S. Sobyanin is also absent.

There is no evaluation of Z. Radojičić's predecessor either due to another reason. Siniša Mali, who was about to finish his term as the mayor of Belgrade at the time of the election, was Z. Radojičić's colleague and his name was among the first on the list of Z. Radojičić's team. Hence, the texts about Z.Radojičić, who alongside with his predecessor is a member of the same team, could not be generated based on the opposition old – new, which is popular in political discourse. But Z. Radojičić's rivals are given certain attention in the Serbian sampling containing a funny video clip showing the rivals of Z. Radojičić's team who are absent from their work and instead of doing their work justice they are participating in endless rallies and protests against various government's decisions and in the end (in the finale of the clip) against the President of Serbia A. Vučić.

The texts in the Lithuanian sampling are rich in information (discrediting) concerning the work of the predecessor of the candidate R. Šimašius and his competitors. First of all, the idea that his first term in the mayoral post was extremely difficult because it was only problems that he had inherited from his predecessor is repeated very frequently, for example, *Miestas buvo ant bankroto ribos; viešoji infrastruktūra nusenusi; švietimas nefinansuojamas; administracija demoralizuota; o korupcijos tvaikas tiesiog tvyrojo ore* [The city was on the brink of bankruptcy; outdated infrastructure; education lacking financial support; demoralised administration; stinky corruption could be smelled in the air]. Second of all, it should be pointed out that in order to characterise his predecessor's work, to evaluate his rivals' ideas and programmes R. Šimašius employs evaluative lexis extensively, for example, *pavojingas idėjas* [dangerous ideas], *skambių frazių* [eloquent phrases], *ir bloga, ir nerealistinė* [both bad and unrealistic], *utopija* [utopia], *populistinis masalas* [populist bait], *ciniškas realybės ignoravimas* [the reality being ignored cynically] and many other. Thus, the antithesis of the previous (bad) and new (good) as the strategy of text construction, as well as the means of discrediting opponents by labelling have been used in the Lithuanian media discourse. To sum it up, the Russian candidate does not refer to his predecessor's and rivals' work in his texts. The Serbian candidate does not evaluate his predecessor's work (since he is a member of the same team, i.e., the issue of succession

comes to the fore), his rivals' achievements are being mocked. The Lithuanian candidate accounts for both his predecessor and rivals' achievements in an extremely negative way through the use of evaluative lexis and labels.

Conclusion

First, the research into the means of creating the media image of a candidate to the capital's mayoral post allowed us to conclude that:

1. the Russian candidate to the mayoral post creates a sense of togetherness with his electorate (by using the inclusive pronoun "we"), the Lithuanian candidate to the post of the mayor of Vilnius is has a dialogue with his voters (by using the pronoun "you"), the Serbian candidate to the post of the mayor of Belgrade distances himself from the electorate (referring to the voters as "they");

2. the Russian candidate demonstrates his professionalism by appealing to the facts supported by concrete figures; he refers to his work in the Moscow municipality by using numerous verb constructions, that is, the past tense verbs with the semantics of creating. The Lithuanian candidate uses the present tense verbs with the semantics of creating, he almost never uses figures, does not demonstrate his awareness of the current issues in the life of the capital. The Serbian candidate qualifies his work in the mayoral post as an upward progression of his career;

3. both the Russian and the Serbian candidate appeal to the authority of their countries' President to enhance their positive image (in contrast to the Lithuanian President);

4. the Serbian candidate to the post of the mayor of Belgrade appeals to the authority of the church to create a positive image (in contrast to the Russian and Lithuanian candidates);

5. the Russian candidate does not refer to the accomplishments of his predecessor and rivals. The Serbian candidate does not evaluate his predecessor's work; his political rivals are discredited in one of the pre-election video clips. The Lithuanian candidate refers both to his predecessor's and rivals' work negatively.

Second, we think that some of the similarities and differences in the media discourses compared in the research can be accounted for by the specifics of the Russian, Serbian and Lithuanian cultures, some of them can be accounted for by the candidates' personal characteristics (as well as by the authors of the methodological recommendations concerning how agitation campaigns should be run), which can be the subject of the research of a bigger corpus of texts and/or the discourse of other elections.

Third, the research has raised certain issues. For example, having in mind the well-known fact that contemporary searching-systems "adjust" to the needs of an individual user, trying to answer the question of whether other users are going to find the same (or similar in terms of the content) texts on the first and second pages of the search results on the requested topic seems interesting, that is, to what extent the list of the results is individualised and to what extent the content of the materials found is going to be different in every case.

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