

Linguistic Representations of Contested Identities in the Media. The Special Case of South-Eastern Europeans as 'Others' in the British Press. By Mihaela Culea, Hartung-Gorre Publishing House, Konstanz, 2016, ISBN 978-3-86628-569-9, 238 pp.

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Only by reading the title, *Linguistic Representations of Contested Identities in the Media. The Special Case of South-Eastern Europeans as 'Others' in the British Press*, you can already get a fair picture of the content of the book and the key concepts of this contemporary social world that will be dealt with. Concepts, such as representation, identity, contestation, othering, in the European space are at the core of this reading. These notions have current relevance and are connected in the study in order to investigate the chosen topic from both a theoretical and a practical perspective.

The book aims to determine how media representations in the European member states can influence perceptions of national identity by portraying the other national groups in terms of 'otherness'. Thus, it draws attention to the media as a powerful tool in transmitting, shaping and influencing public perception of sensitive issues in society. It also provides an in-depth understanding of media-circulated representations of Eastern-Europeans, which are often based on negative evaluation, and discloses the linguistic mechanisms that construct them. It also discusses other contested national identities in Europe, the Bulgarian and the British one, to a lesser extent. The corpus analysed is made up of newspaper articles, as main corpus, to which other online media texts are added.

The book also draws attention on the way language is used and how, as we know, can do good or a lot of harm. Like Steve Buckledee's study (*The Language of Brexit: How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union*, Bloomsbury, 2018), this book also illustrates "the power that language possesses" (Buckledee 2018: 1), investigating a

number of textual strategies used by the media a few years before Brexit.

It is structured in two parts. The first part contextualizes the topic, explains the major concepts employed and sets the general background of the study.

Thus, in Chapter 1. *Introduction*, the subject matter and methods employed are presented, along with the motivation for choosing the topic and its current relevance. Chapter 2, entitled *Introducing the European Union. Towards a European Identity*, offers a brief history of the organization, overviews some of the central values and principles it advocates, and critically discusses the connection between the EU and a number of concepts which are central to it, such as identity, Europeanization, or globalization. In Chapter 3, *'Otherness', the European Union and the Media*, it is shown that the social practice of othering does not support the principles at the core of the EU, with the immigrant negatively catalogued as 'other', according to political or media representations in Britain, especially of South-Eastern Europeans.

Part two gives an overview of the analytical approach to the subject matter, conducting the study of 'otherness' on the basis of three central concepts, namely, conceptual metaphor, stereotype, and moral panic discourse. The methodological framework proposed is based on a qualitative discourse analysis of media texts from three interrelated perspectives: conceptual metaphor analysis, stereotype analysis and moral panic discourse analysis. The three concepts, metaphor, stereotype and moral panic, construct a discursive representation that transmits images of negative alterity in relation to national identity.

As the title suggests, Chapter 4, *The Conceptual Metaphors of the European Press Discourse*, explores instances of metaphorical representation in the European press from the time frame 2012–2013, laying stress on two demonized nations, the Greek and the Romanian nations, from the perspective of critical metaphor analysis. In this chapter, the natural calamity or invasion metaphors associated with

Romanian immigration to the UK reveal special connotations and social implications. Metaphors related to Brexit were circulated by the press earlier than 2016, examples from the British or European media being offered in this chapter mostly from the pre-Brexit period (2013-2014). Another relevant study on the persuasive function of language through Brexit-based metaphors in a range of media and political texts is Jonathan Charteris-Black's *Metaphors of Brexit: No Cherries on the Cake?*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019, examining the period 2016-2018.

Chapter 5, *Stereotypical Representations in the European Media*, exposes a number of recurrent stereotypical images circulated by the European media in a visual or verbal form, with emphasis on the Romanians and the Greeks. The creation, maintenance and transmission of national stereotypes has a harmful effect in society, the stereotyped nations being attributed a number of characteristics that often uncover the existence of uninformed, oversimplified judgments.

Chapter 6, *Migration, Centre vs. Margin and the British Press Discourse. Reporting and Subjectivity*, examines additional instances of negative representation in the British press, uncovering common biased outlooks against South-Eastern Europeans because of economic and social reasons. A component of the created moral panic, the immigrant is perceived as a threat, scapegoated, marginalized, and, consequently, treated with hostility. Crusading as highly moralizing actors, journalists and politicians created and maintained a state of public anxiety surrounding Romanian immigrants in the UK, to the point of envisaging hyperbolic dimensions of immigration following the liberalization of borders starting with 2014.

Thus, the book constitutes a useful reading for those interested in such topics as national identity, bias, prejudice, stereotype, migration, or media representation in the European space. At the time of the review, the analysed press corpus was no longer of recent date, focusing mostly on the period before Brexit, more precisely the preceding years of Brexit: mostly 2012-2013, with few references to

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2014 and 2015. However, it can contribute to a better understanding of the pre-Brexit period and the contextualisation of Brexit since it discusses major concerns in the UK that were used by pro-Leavers in their Brexit campaign. The most important part of the book is the one that analyses press articles extracted from British newspapers such as the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph*, the *Independent*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* etc., the conducted analyses being guided by central concepts of discourse analysis.

The book also draws attention to the ideological functions of language and tackles the manner in which the media language in particular shapes public opinion and influences public perception of and responses to the subjects it presents. It encourages critical reflection on the matters presented, with the aim of raising awareness of existing prejudices and biased perceptions of national identities, using severely critical language. Thus, it ultimately promotes the avoidance and elimination of such social practices and the ethical contribution of the media to the fair and balanced treatment of the other in the European space.

References

- Buckledee, Steve (2018): *The Language of Brexit: How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union*, Bloomsbury.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan (2019): *Metaphors of Brexit: No Cherries on the Cake?*, Palgrave Macmillan.

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