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"On the representativeness of political corpora in linguistic research"

Perrez, Julien ; Randour, François ; Reuchamps, Min

ABSTRACT

There is a long tradition of linguistic research on political discourse from various theoretical perspectives, including critical discourse analysis (see among many others Fairclough 1995, Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, Wodak 1989), lexicometric approaches (see for instance Arnold 2005, Mayaffre 2005, 2016, Mayaffre & Poudat 2013, Authors 2015a) or cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor (see among many other Charteris Black 2011, Musolff 2004, 2013, 2016 L'Hôte 2012). In these studies, political corpora collected from discourses by political elites (presidential debates, presidential addresses, public speeches,…) often appear to be overrepresented, leaving aside other forms of political discourses such as media discourse on political issues (see however Musolff 2004, 2013) or citizen discourse. As Bougher (2012 :149) posits for metaphor analysis : "while research on metaphors in political discourse has flourished in recent years, the focus on elite communication has left metaphor's wider capacity as a reasoning tool for citizens underexplored". This results in a certain lack of representativeness of the political domain in linguistic studies. Indeed, political discourse is not restricted to the political elites alone. Advocating a more global to political corpora, including corpora from different subdomains of the political spectrum, our talk is structured in two main parts. Firstly, we will propose a quantitative bibliographic analysis aiming at assessing what type of political corpora are frequently used in linguistic research. Secondly, on the basis of p...

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On the **representativeness** of political corpora in linguistic research

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LIÈGE université
UR L&L
Langues et Lettres

AFLiCo JET 2018
Corpora and Representativeness |
Université Paris Nanterre

AFLiCo
ASSOCIATION FRANCAISE DE LINGUISTIQUE COGNITIVE

Introduction | Political discourse

- **Interdisciplinary research** on metaphors in the context of Belgian politics (focus on federalism) | Linguistics and political science
- Strong interest for political discourse in linguistic research
  - Various theoretical/methodological perspectives
    - Critical discourse analysis
      - Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), ***Political Discourse*** *Analysis. A Method for Advanced Students*
      - Wodak (1989), *Language, Power and Ideology : Studies in* ***Political Discourse***.
    - Lexicometric approaches
      - Mayaffre, D. & Poudat, C. (2013).*Quantitative Approaches to* ***Political Discourse*** *: Corpus Linguistics and Text Statistics*.
    - Cognitive linguistics | Conceptual Metaphor Theory
      - Charteris-Black, J. (2011). *Politicians and Rhetoric. The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*
      - Musolff, A. (2004). *Metaphor and* ***Political Discourse*** *Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe*
      - Musolff, A. (2016). ***Political*** *Metaphor Analysis :* ***Discourse*** *and Scenarios*

« Most scholars doing political discourse analysis are linguists and discourse analysts » (Van Dijk, 1997: 12)

« When we consider the use or application of disocurse approaches in political science, we find that it is one of the few social sciences that so far have barely been infected by the modern viruses of the study of text and talk » (Van Dijk, 1997: 12)

Introduction | Political discourse

- Concept of ‘political discourse’
  - Presented as a global and coherent genre
  - However…
  - High degree of **variation** behind this label

Article

The "Tweet Politics" of P

ARTICLE 249

Political discourse of a working-class town

Discourse & Society
Copyright © 1999
SAGE Publications
(London,
Thousand Oaks, CA
and New Delhi)
Vol 10(2): 249–276
[0957-9265
(199904) 10:2;
249–276; 005261]

SUSANA M. SOTILLO AND DANA STARACE-NASTASI
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) studies have examined the construction, reproduction, and mental appropriation of 'top–down' discourses of dominance but have paid little attention to 'bottom-up' analyses of semi-formal texts such as Letters to the Editor (LEs) in small-town newspapers. We investigate here the discourse of LEs written by candidates for political office, their

positioning in the

William J. J

Politica

posters

Thailan

ARTICLE 187

Toward a discourse approach to polling

Discourse Studies
Copyright © 2000
SAGE Publications.
(London,
Thousand Oaks, CA
and New Delhi)
Vol 2(2): 187–215.
[1461-4456
(200005) 2:2;
187–215; 010897]

LISBETH LIPARI
DENISON UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT This article presents a discourse model of polling that investigates what poll discourse is, how it is structured and how it functions. In contrast to most polling research, which presupposes

The discursive construction of the separation wall at Abu Dis

Graffiti as political discourse

BEN FENTON-SMITH
KANDA UNIVERSITY OF INTERNAT

the apology as a speech act

parliamentary apologies

David I. Hanauer
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

y
West of England

Introduction | Political discourse

- Concept of ‘political discourse’
  - Presented as a global and coherent discourse genre
  - However…
  - High degree of **variation** behind this label
    - Institutional context
    - Political actors
    - Medium (written vs. Spoken data)
    - Topics
  - // related to the definition of political discourse and politics in general
    - Broad area, fuzzy boundaries

Introduction | Political discourse

This question is allied to the question of what constitutes politics. If 'politics' is confined to **institutional politics** – parliamentary debates, party conference speeches, and the like, and generally more overtly linked to ideology, then the objects of study for political discourse analysis can be easily circumscribed. But **everyday conflicts** – say between men and women, workers and managers, policemen and black youths, even schoolchildren and teachers – are some- times by some people characterized as 'political'. However, it is **probably useful to maintain a distinction between institutional politics and everyday politics**. It is true that the borderline may be fuzzy, and that many other relationships between individuals and groups may not be regarded as politics at all by many people. (Chilton & Schäffner 2002)

Introduction | Political discourse

- Political discourse can be identified by its **actors**
  - « Text and talk of **professional politicians** or **political institutions**, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels » (Van Dijk 1997: 12)
- Domain of politics also includes **other participants** (**« recipients »**)
  - « Political activity and political process also involve people as citizens and voters, people as members of pressure and issue groups, demonstrators and dissidents, and so on » (Van Dijk 1997: 13)

Introduction | Political discourse

- Political discourse is also limited by the **activities** or **practices** accomplished by political text and talk (Van Dijk 1997: 14)
  - **Political action**
    - Governing, ruling, legislating, protesting, dissenting, voting,…
- Importance of the **context** for the categorization of a discourse as political
  - « Politicians talk politically also if their talks are contextualized in communicative events such as cabinet metings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, interviews with the media, bureaucratic pratices, protest demonstrations and so on. » (Van Dijk 1997:14)
  - Political goals related to **decision making**

Our study | Bibliometric analysis

- Research questions
  - How has **political discourse** been treated in the scientific literature (in the field of linguistics) for the last 20 years?
    - What types of political actors?
    - Which political themes?
    - Geographical coverage,
    - …
- Method
  - PRISMA

Our study | What is PRISMA?

- **PRISMA** stands for: *'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses'*

- **PRISMA** is 'An evidence-based minimum set of items for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses.'
  - Has been developed in the field of biomedical research
  - One of the main objective? Ensuring that the systematic reviews are transparent and replicable. Why? A

- **More info on PRISMA**
  - http://prisma-statement.org/
  - ***Key reference*** Moher *et al.* 2009, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. *PLoS Medicine*, 6(7).

Rationale behind the development of PRISMA

Argument 1: Literature reviews are important **contribution to scientific research** field:

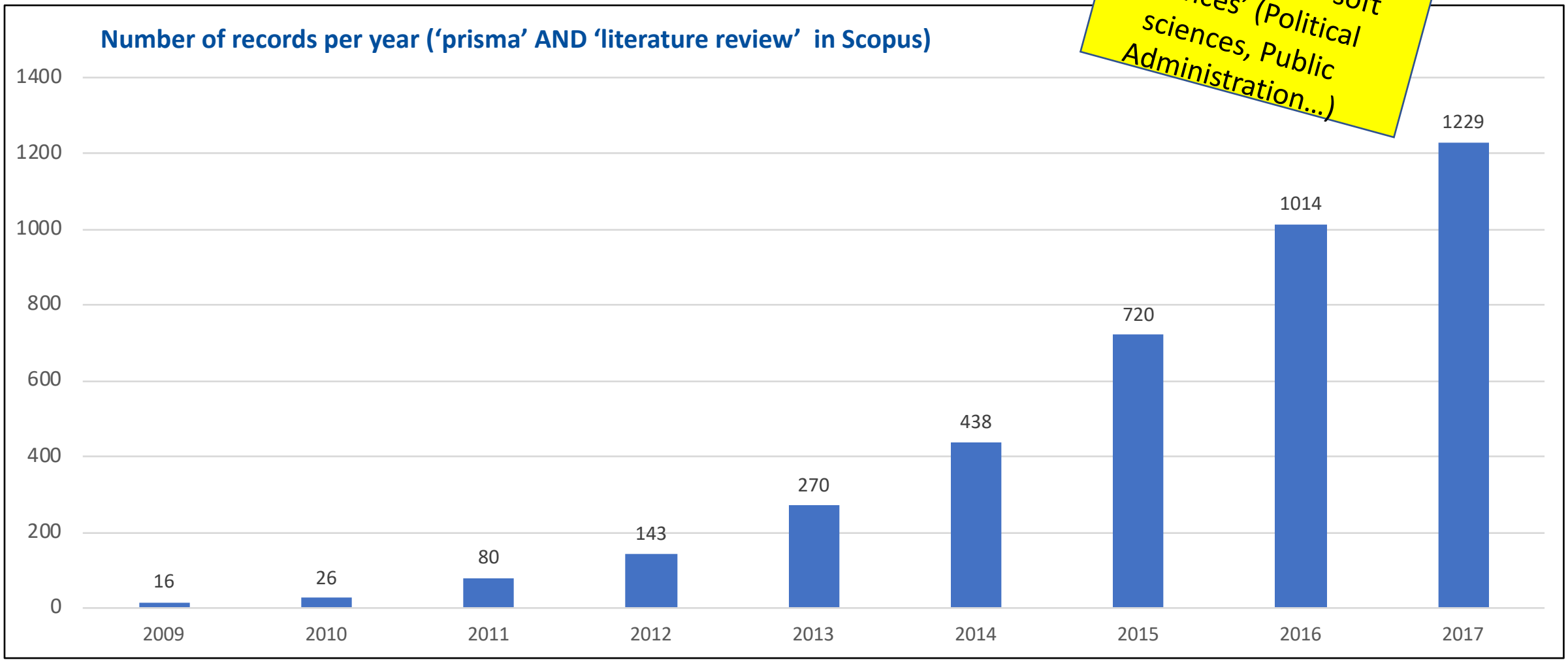
1. They allow researchers to keep up to date with the main trends in their field
2. More and more grants and European funding depend on good-quality reviews
3. Review results can influence actual practices (e.g. medical practices or organizational socialization practices)

Argument 2: Authors observed repeatedly that reporting of SLRs and meta-analyses used to be poor (Mulrow, 1987; Sacks et al., 1996, 1987; cited by Moher et al., 2009)

Argument 3: We may not rely on poorly-reported SLRs and meta-analyses → importance to **develop a set of standards to harmonize and improve** the practice of reporting of SLRs and meta-analysis

PRISMA use since 2009

Major and original use in 'Hard sciences', now developping to 'soft sciences' (Political sciences, Public Administration…)



PRISMA | Mains steps

Step 1: Developing a **research question**

Step 2: **Item search** on databases on the basis of a precise query

- A list of keywords related to the research question
- The logical connectors: OR, AND, BUT NOT, etc.
- The type of database (e.g., Web of Science or Scopus) and
- The search field (e.g., Psychology, Political and Social Science, Education Science, etc.)

Step 3: **Item selection**

- Item selection based on screening (formal) criteria and of screening of titles/abstracts → Check for Inter-coder reliability (2 coders)

Step 4: Development of a **coding grid** and 'first test'

- Develop Review criteria based on (sub)research questions
- Make a test on the first reviewed articles **→ TRIAL-AND-ERROR!** test'

Step 5: Review and report on the final sample and coding grid

PRISMA | What we did so far

Step 1: Defining a research question – ***Done***

Step 2: Item search on data-base – ***Done***

- Search in **SCOPUS** for « ***Political discourse*** » In Title, Abstract and list of Keywords.
- In **Articles**,
- Published after **1997**,
- In the subject Area: **arts and literature**
- In the language: **English**
- In 9 different journals: *Political Psychology, Semiotica, Discourse Studies, Journal of Pragmatics, Discourse and society, International Journal of applied Linguistics and English literature, Journal of Language and Politics, Language in society, Language and communication*.

Step 2: 160 articles

Step 3: Item selection - ***Done***

Step 3: 146 articles

PRISMA | What we did so far

We are on working on **STEP 4**: Development of a **coding grid** and the 'first test'

- We developed review criteria around broad categories to be tested
  - Administrative info (Authors, name of article, journal, keywords, Year, PDF)
  - Is political discourse explicitly defined? (if Yes, how and based on which references)
  - Who is speaking? (Elite, Citizens, Other)
  - Type/Genre (speeches, debate, interviews, Homely…) and interaction (vs. single out act)
  - Audience (politicians, media, citizens,…)
  - Medium of the political discourse analysed (Oral – written)
  - Geographic coverage
  - Corpus (Size, longitudinal analysis or not, source of the data)
  - Political field/issue covered
  - Analysis of metaphors? (If yes, which one; which method)
  - Theoretical background (CDA, CMT,…)
  - Method of analysis (use of software, quali vs. quanti)

Any ideas to finetune the grid?

Today, we present a **sample of 63 articles**, all articles published after 1997 in *Discourse and society* (50), *Discourse Studies* (8), *Semiotica* (3), *Political Psychology* (2) ***on some of the review criteria***

PRISMA | What we did so far

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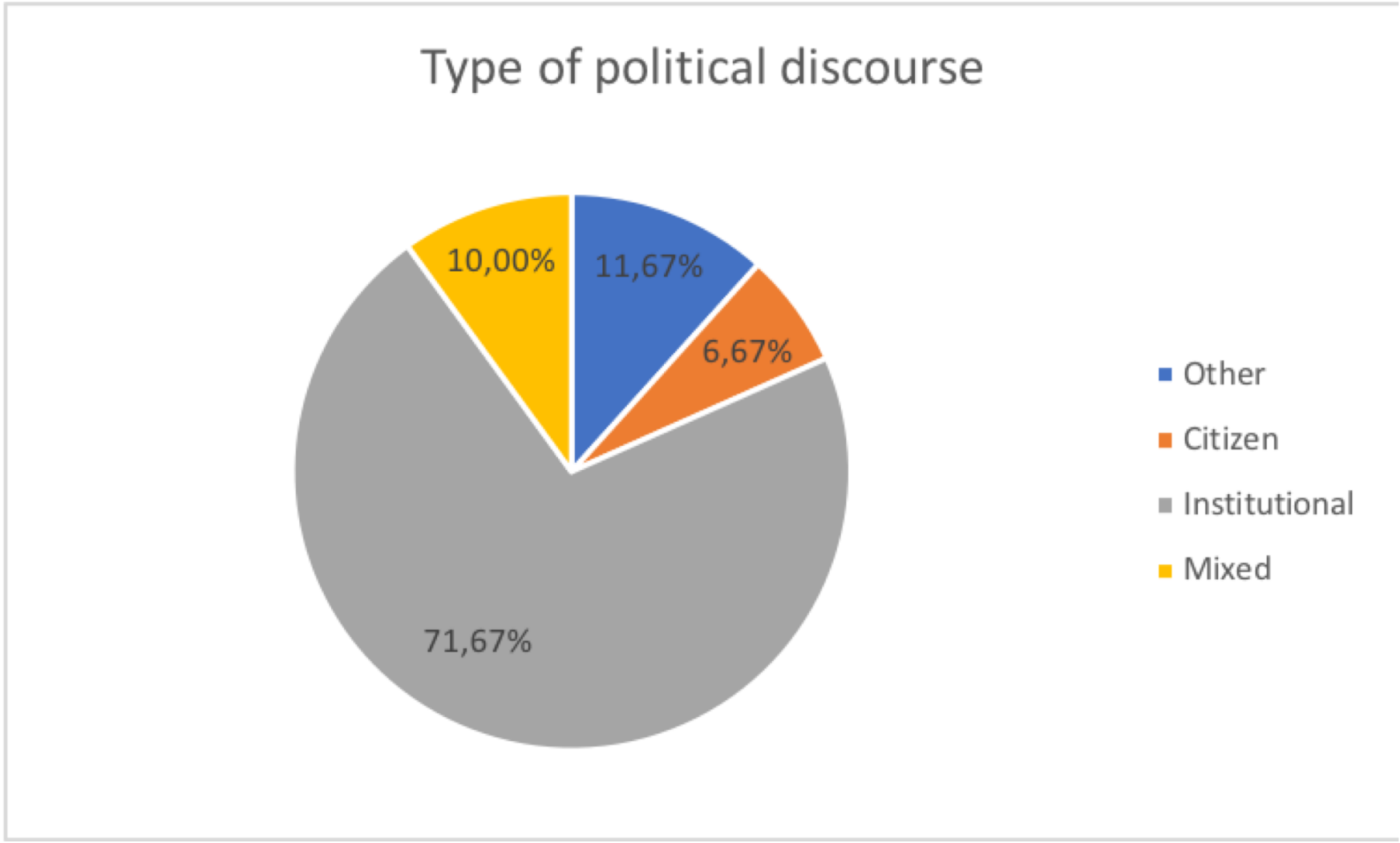
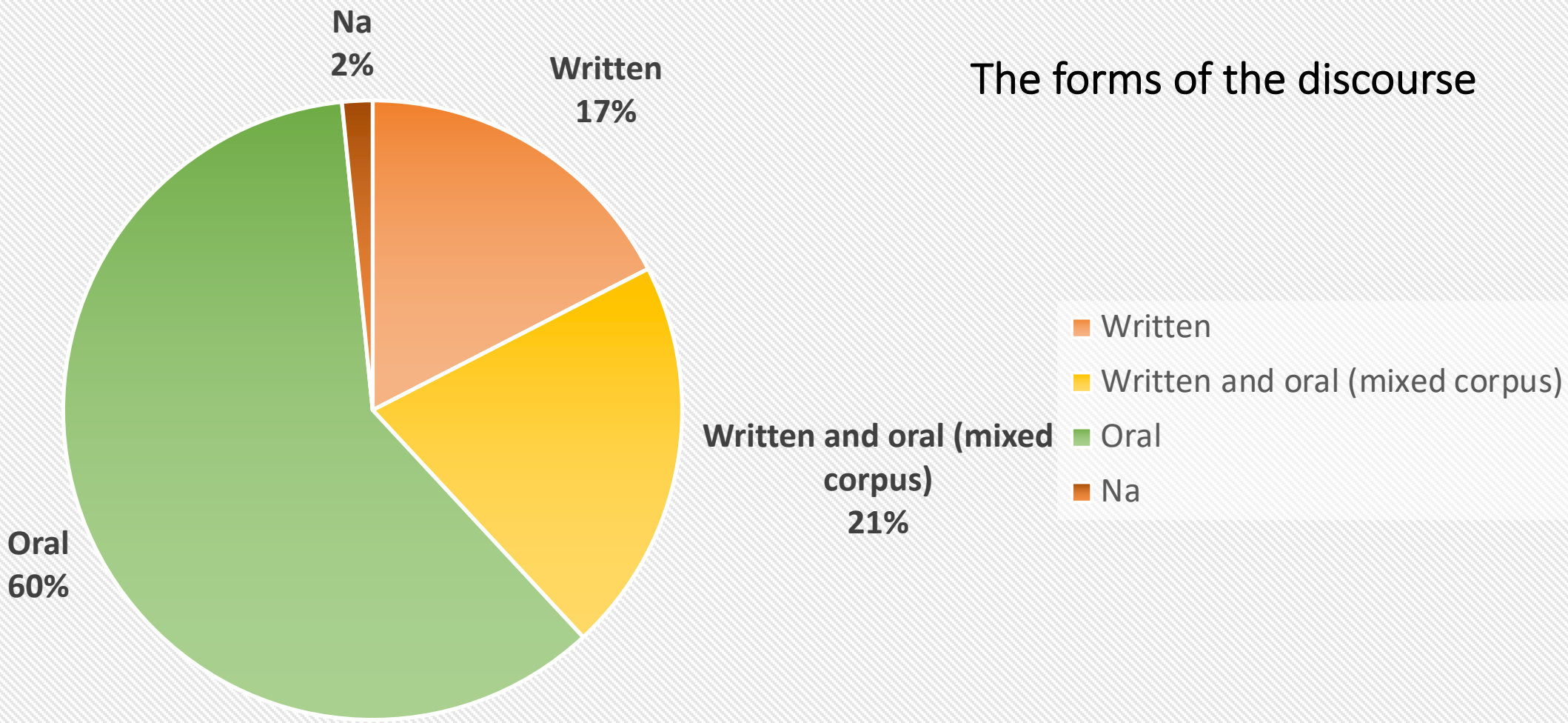
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

ON A SAMPLE OF 63 ARTICLES

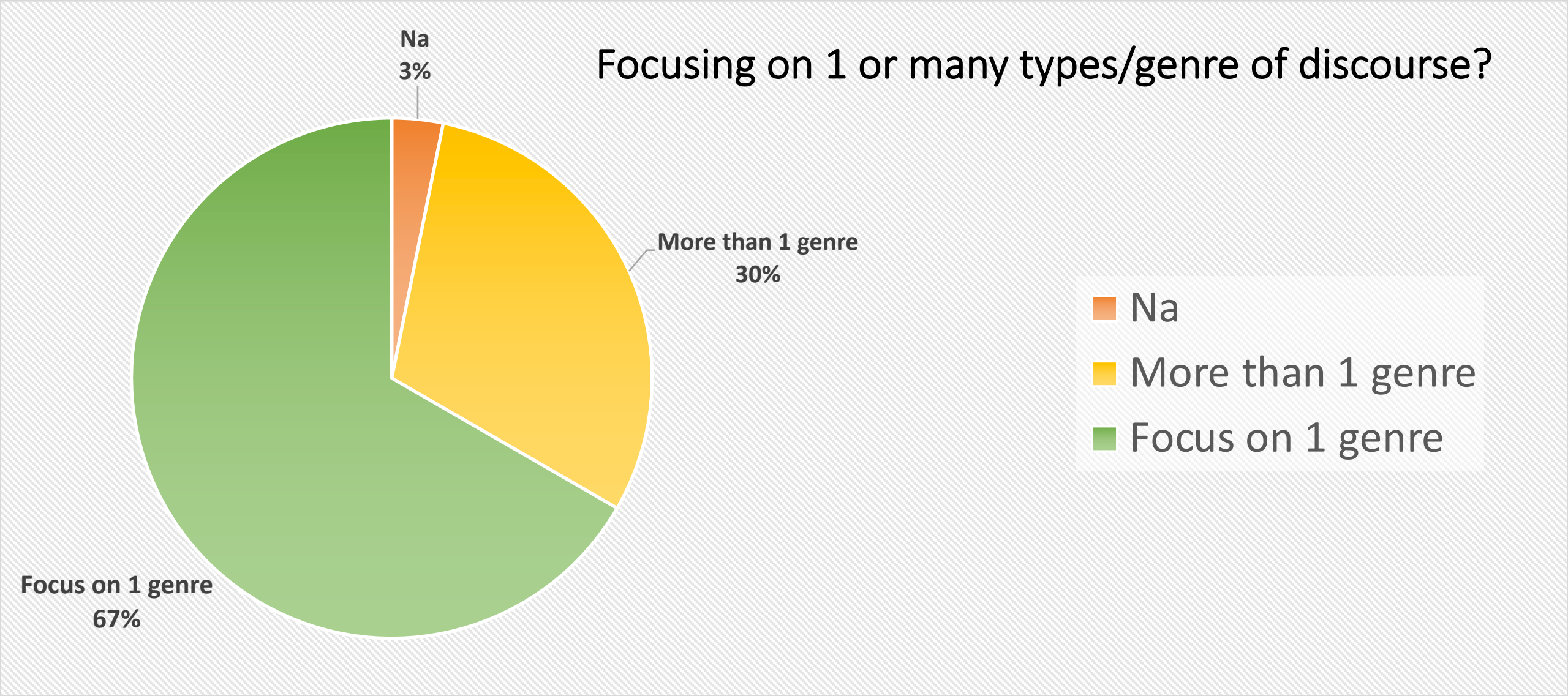
Types of political discourse



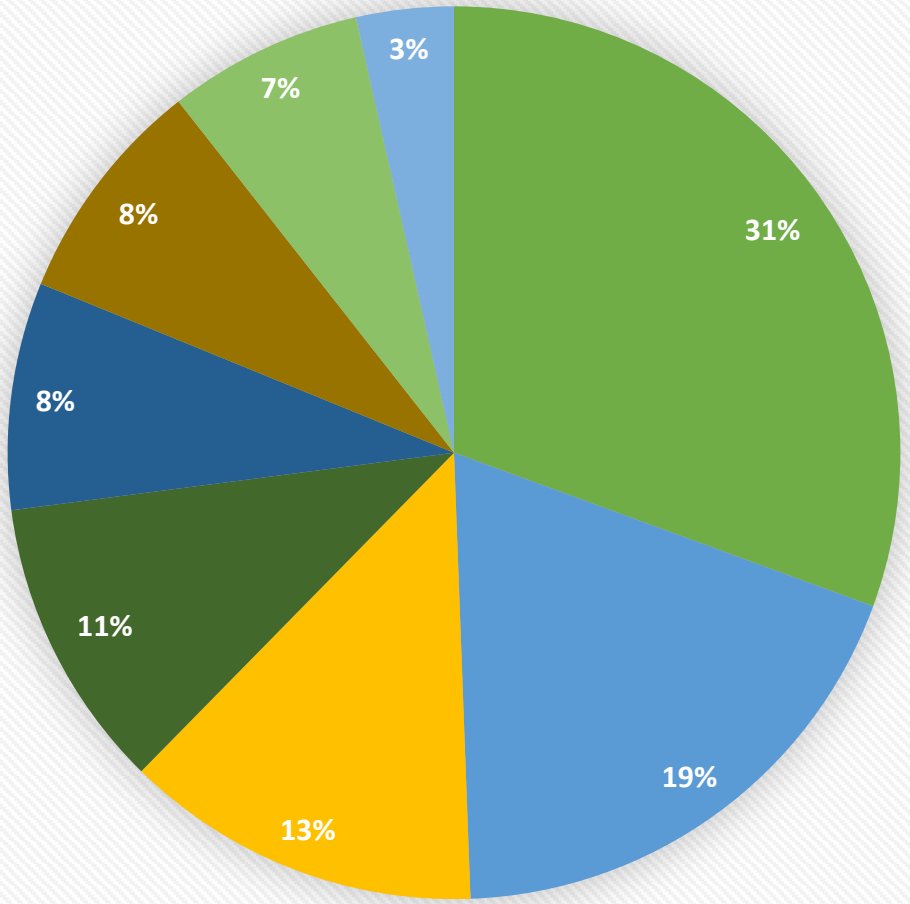
Medium


Na
2%
Written
17%
Written and oral (mixed corpus)
21%
Oral
60%
The forms of the discourse
Written
Written and oral (mixed corpus)
Oral
Na

Are the corpora homogenous ?



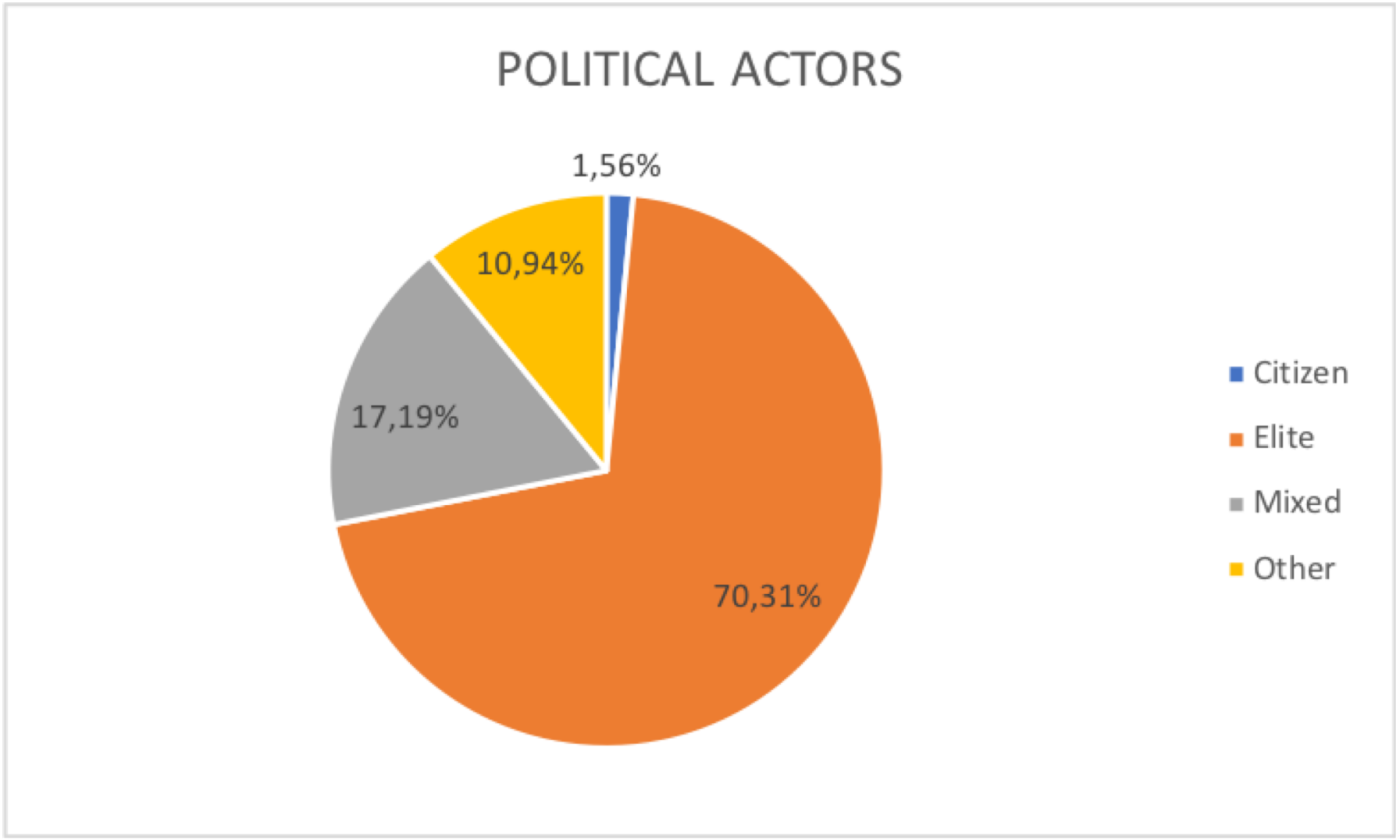
Genres



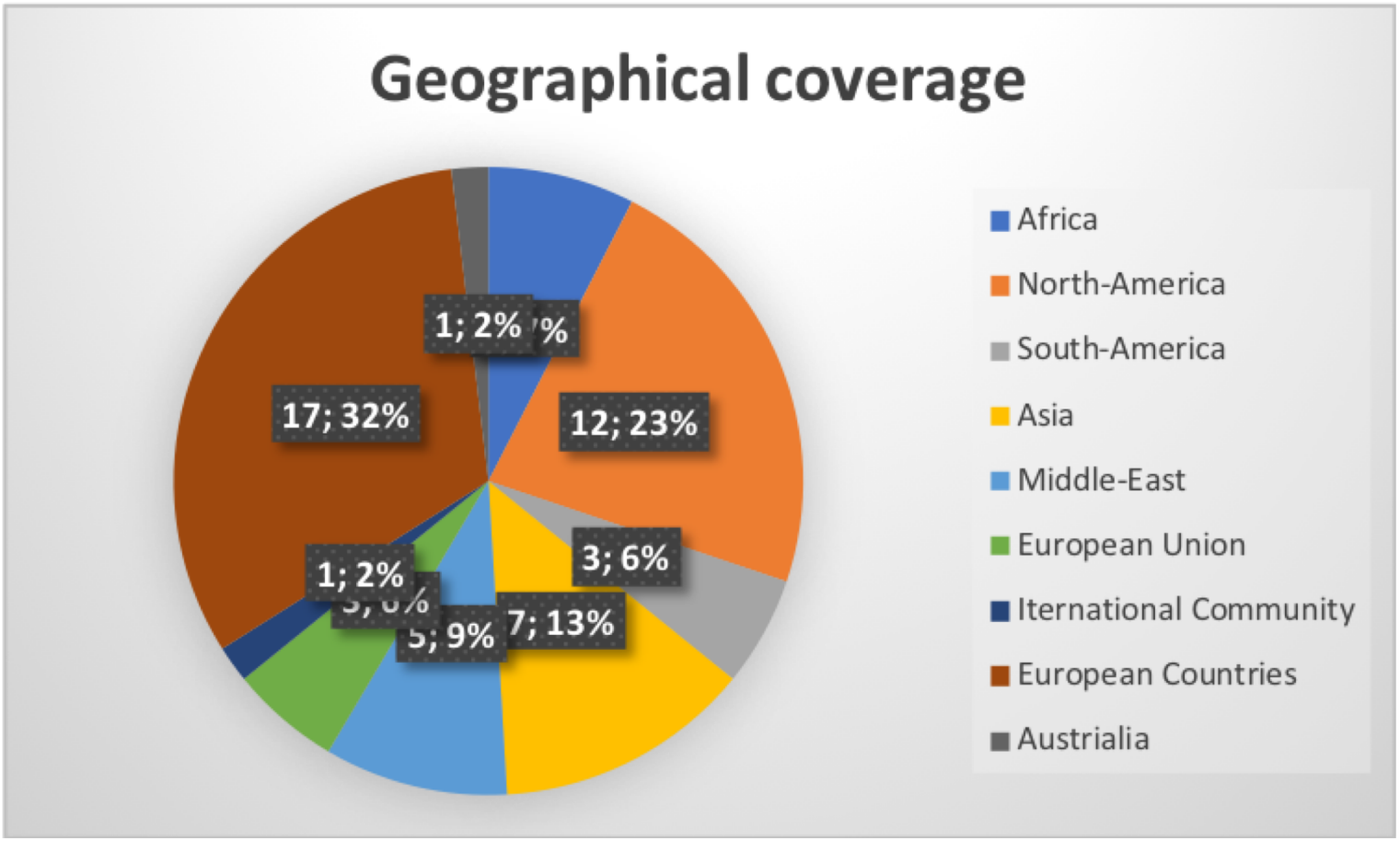
The genre of political discourse

- Speeches
- Newspaper articles
- Debate/interviews in Media (TV/Radio)
- Other
- Official documents
- Parliamentary debate
- Meetings/Hearings
- Press statement

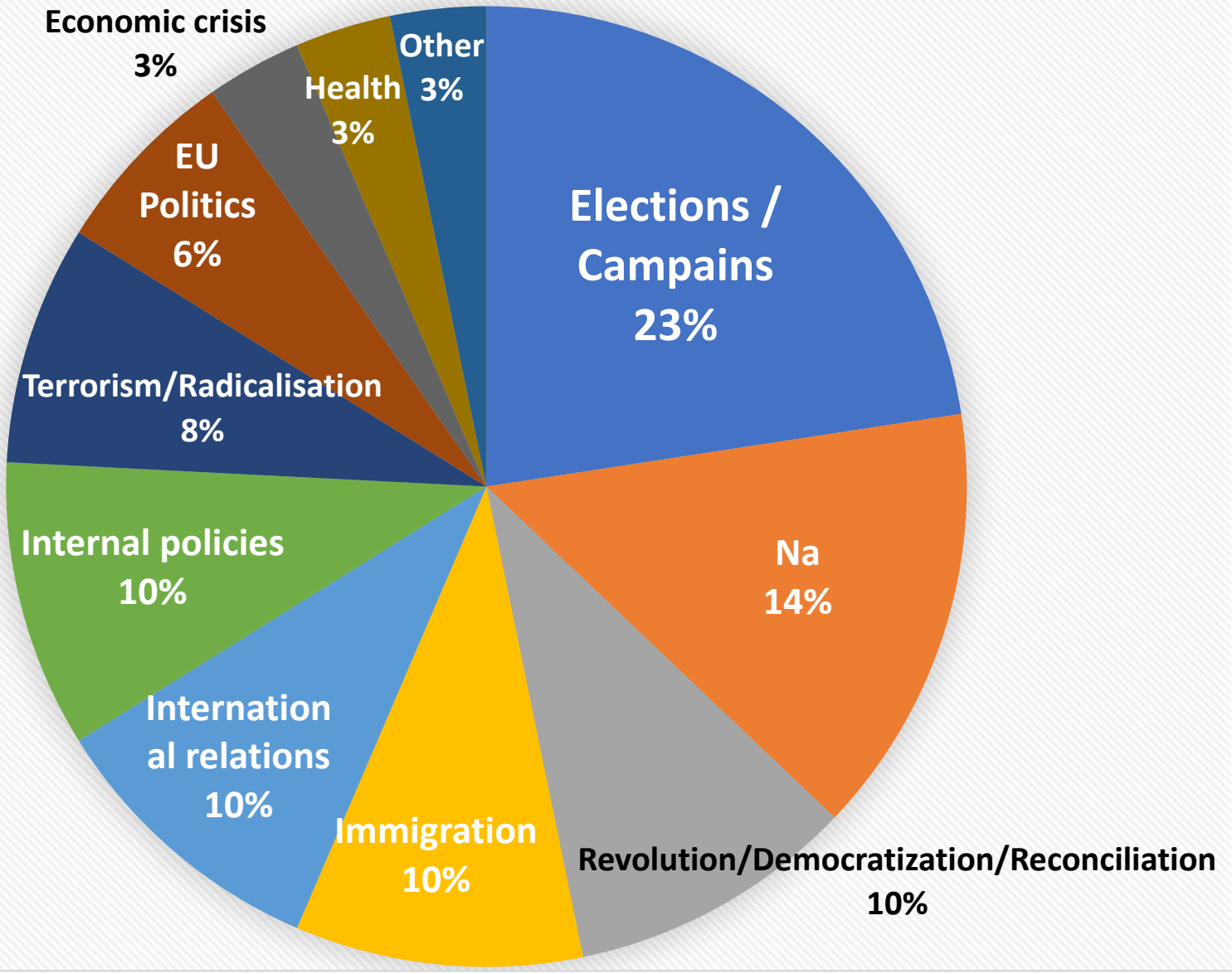
Political actors



Geographical coverage



Political issues



Main observations

- What do linguists talk about when studying political discourse?
  - Institutional context (official contexts)
  - Oral > written discourses (Speeches, Debates, Parliamentary sessions)
  - Overrepresentation of elite discourse (‘Professional politicians’)

- => **lack of representativeness** as far as the political actors are concerned
- => lack of combinations of **political genres**

Discussion

- **Citizen discourse analysis** can be a relevant avenue for political discourse analysis
  - “while research on metaphors in political discourse has flourished in recent years, the focus on elite communication has left metaphor’s wider capacity as a reasoning tool for citizens underexplored.” (Bougher 2012: 149)
  - From a **political point-of-view**
    - Rise of social networks => citizens can become more visible political actors
    - Response to technocratization of politics (« Bruxelles décide de tout » ☺)
    - Tendency towards more and more deliberative democracy | G1000 in Belgium
  - From a **linguistic perspective**
    - Citizen’s political cognition
    - How elite political discourse echoes in citizens’representations

Citizen discourse | A case study

(Perrez & Reuchamps 2014, 2015)

- **Focus group** discussions
  - Qualitative participatory tools
    - Participants are prompted to discuss a given (political) topic
- 2 citizens' panels (Liege & Antwerp in 2008)
  - 4 focus groups
    - Each including 6 to 9 people
  - Discussion about topics related to Belgian federalism
- Discussions were recorded and transcribed
- 2 corpora
  - Dutch-speaking citizens (47,579 words)
  - French-speaking citizens (52,003 words)

Citizen discourse | A case study

(Perrez & Reuchamps 2014, 2015)

- BELGIAN FEDERALISM IS A MARRIAGE
  - "Si l'on compare avec un *ménage*, certains *ménages se marient avec contrat de mariage*, d'autres pas,» (PBF, B1, 188-190)
  - If we compare this to a *couple*, some *couples get married under a wedding contract*, others don't…
  - "parce que je ne sais pas comment *cohabitent* la région wallonne et la région flamande avec le fédéralisme etc. » (PBF, B6, 145-148)
  - "because I don't know how the Flemish region and the Walloon region *are living together* under federalism"
  - "c'est comme dans un *ménage*, on ne règle jamais les solutions une fois pour toutes. On *se marie, ou en vit ensemble*, peut importe, à 20 ans, puis on a des enfants, puis les enfants deviennent grands, puis le bonhomme fait sa crise de la quarantaine, puis on se dit que tout compte fait, on se dit que c'était quand même pas si mal et puis rien, et puis entre, temps, madame est ménopausée et puis... » (PBF, B8, 1630-1636)
  - "it's like in a *couple*, you can't get all problems solved once and for all. You get married, or you're living together, whatever, at twenty, then you get kids, then the kids grow old, the husband goes through his midlife crisis, but then you realize it wasn't that bad after all, and then nothing, and then in the meantime, his wife gets menopause and then…"

Citizen discourse | A case study

(Perrez & Reuchamps 2014, 2015)

- « L6 : een gearrangeerd huwelijk kan ook ontbonden worden, zo moeilijk is dat allemaal niet. Het moet gewoon erkend worden door de internationale gemeenschap. »
- " an *arranged marriage* can also be abrogated"
- « L2 : ja maar dat is getrouwd voor goede en kwade dagen en wij zijn nu in kwade dagen. »
- "yes, but it has been *married for better or for worse* en we are now in bad (miserable) days"
- « L6 : maar bij een gearrangeerd huwelijk is het niet in goede en kwade dagen vrijwillig, maar is het verplicht in kwade dagen. « L6 : ik hoop toch dat we zover zijn dat huwelijken niet meer verplicht zijn ofwel? »
- "but in *an arranged marriage*, it's not voluntarily *for better or for worse*, but it's forced in bad (miserable) days. I hope we have come to a situation where *marriages* are *no longer forced*"
- « L1 : Neen, maar je kan dan toch karakter tonen, karakter tonen. »
- "No, but you can still show character"
- « L6 : Als ons dat ieder jaar 10 miljard euro kost, vind ik dat toch... » (PBN, 2279-2289)
- "If it costs us 10 billion euro a year, I find that…"

Discussion

- Greater attention to the various genres of political discourse
  - Study of **variation in metaphor use** across different subgenres
    - What types of metaphor in what types of political discourse?
    - Conceptual alignment
      - Who picks up a metaphorical mapping, reproduces it, and in what context?

  - **Corpus of TV-debates (VRT)**
    - **Lieven Van Gerven**: Het is niet omdat een klassiek federalisme, en daar zijn we mee eens, niet werkt met twee componenten, dat is duidelijk, er is geen federaal gezag. Als het ware daarboven in een **huwelijk** is ook geen derde man die de regel moet zeggen. Dat is duidelijk.

  - **Corpus of parliamentary debates (P. Heyvaert, PhD ULiège)**
    - 2007 - Peter Vanvelthoven – « Het wordt hoog tijd voor een echte regering met een visie op lange termijn. Daarvoor moeten we nog wachten tot de paasklokken luiden, als dit **gedwongen huwelijk** tenminste zo lang stand houdt ».

    - 2007 - Jean-Marie Dedecker - Deze regering is geen **politiek huwelijk** en zelfs geen **verstandshuwelijk**, maar hooguit een **schijnhuwelijk**. En een **schijnhuwelijk** leidt altijd naar een catastrofe, omdat het gebaseerd is op misleiding.

Conclusion

- Of what is political discourse representative in linguistic research?
- Bibliometric analysis > PRISMA
- Great diversity of political subgenres, however overrepresentations of specific genres (political elite, institutional contexts
- Broadening the scope of political discourse to other types might lead to new insights
  - Citizens' political cognition
  - Metaphor use

Thank you for you attention!