When fairy tales come true: Culture-specific figurative framing in contemporary Hungarian political rhetoric

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STRUCTURE OF THE TALK

1. Introduction
2. Research question and hypothesis
3. Methodology
4. Discussion of results
5. Conclusions
1. INTRODUCTION

- System change after communism
- Unanimous agreement to join the EU
- High expectations, very positive image
- Referendum: 83.76%
- Final stage of the transformation process
- Final stage of democratization
- Hungary “rejoining” Europe
I. INTRODUCTION

• Strained relationship
• Sargentini report
• 49% (Eurobarometer)
• Hungarian government’s framing of its relationship with the EU
2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

• How has the Hungarian government framed its relationship with the European Union in the past few years?

• Conflict an **immanent feature** of world politics (Morgenthau 1948)

• CONFLICT frame **routinely exploited** by politicians to explain and justify their foreign policy (Lakoff 1991; Mio 1997; Musolff 2016; etc.)

• **H₁**: Framing of relationship with EU based on CONFLICT frame

2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

• How has the Hungarian government framed its relationship with the European Union in the past few years?

• Frames primarily **cultural constructs** (Kövecses 2005)

• CONFLICT frame instantiated by more specific, “culturally and historically mediated” scenarios (Musolff 2016: 30)

• $H_2$: Government has framed its conflict with the EU as
  1) Hungarian freedom fight against oppression (against the Habsburgs in 19th century or against the Soviet regime in 1956);
  2) Common Hungarian fairy tale of the youngest son’s quest for happiness (cf. Lakoff 1991)

3. METHODOLOGY

1. **Corpus:** Websites
   - Hungarian Government (kormany.hu)
   - Prime Minister (miniszterelnok.hu)

2. **Observed period:** 2015–2017
   - Originally from 2010 onwards, but no reliable data
   - Comparable datasets

3. **Keyword:** Brüsszel
   - Conventionalized expression for “EU” (PLACE FOR INSTITUTION)
   - “subtle political bias” to reduce complex entity of EU Commission to one city (Musolff 2016: 9)
   - Sentences (≠ identical sentences; ≠ city of Brussels)
     - “The answer is simple, because we don’t want to give more power to Brussels.”
3. METHODOLOGY

- In sum **415 tokens**
  - 2015: 50 tokens
  - 2016: 206 tokens
  - 2017: 159 tokens
- Bottom-up analysis of data
- Metaphor identification procedure (Pragglejaz 2007)
- **Three** main metaphorical frames emerged
  - FORCE
  - CONFLICT
  - PERSON

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Major metaphorical frames, 2015–2017

- EU as person
- Conflict
- Force
- Other
4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

1) Force

• EU as force and Hungary as counter-force
  • „Brüsszelt meg kell állítanunk…” (2016)
  • “We must stop Brussels…”
  • Widely used in 2017 in anti-EU ads concerning immigration (Benczes in prep.)

“Let’s stop Brussels!”
National Consultation 2017
4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

2) **Conflict**

- **EU as opponent in argument/battle**
  - „Brüsszel a bevándorlás miatt támadja Magyarországot…” (2017)
  - “Brussels is *attacking* Hungary because of immigration…”

- **Argument is war**
  - „Magyarország megvéde az igazát Brüsszellel szemben” (2015)
  - “Hungary *defended* its position against Brussels”
4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3) EU AS PERSON

- Person with desires, emotions, interests and opinions
- Agent who initiates actions
  - „Brüsszel megtiltaná, hogy kereskedelmi megállapodást kössünk unión kívüli országgal…” (2015)
  - “Brussels would prohibit us from signing a trade agreement with countries outside of the EU…”
- Commonly manifested as NATION AS FAMILY in literature
  - Married life of a couple (Musolff 2001)
  - Parent–child relations (Lakoff 2004)

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

- Scenarios
- “less schematic subtype of frame insofar as they include **specific narrative and evaluative perspectives**, which make them attractive for drawing strong inferences in political discourses” (Musolff 2016: 30)

- PARTNER/COLLEAGUE IN JOINT VENTURE (EGALITARIAN MODEL)
  - EU and Hungary as partners with equal rights and mutual obligations
  - *show respect to one another, make suggestions, help each other, depend on each other, share the work*
  - 10% ⇒ 7.8% ⇒ 6.9%
4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

- AUTHORITY FIGURE (HIERARCHICAL MODEL)
  - Possesses recognized authority (Osorio-Kupferblum 2015)
  - Asserts its will and decisions on Hungary because it is able to do so
  - No coercion or force involved
  - Punishes Hungary when it thinks it’s necessary
  - But has obligations and responsibilities
    - „az energia árát a piac vagy Brüsszel határozza meg”
    - „the price of energy is determined by the market or Brussels”
  - permit, prohibit, punish, determine, want, regulate, exact, subordinate
  - 60% ⇒ 58% ⇒ 62%

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

- **BULLY (TOTALITARIAN MODEL)**
  - EU as threatening figure to Hungary
  - EU has **power** to make others do something they would otherwise not be doing (↔ authority)
  - *force, pressurize, coerce, blackmail, take away rights, take control, place itself above rules, take away our sovereignty*
  - 15% ⇒ 10% ⇒ 14%
- **EU AS COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP**
  - „mi többször is elmondtuk: Brüsszel nem Moszkva”
  - “we have said it a number of times: Brussels is not Moscow”
  - Legitimizes government’s conflict with EU ⇒
  - Freedom fight of 1956 against oppression (Soviet rule)
5. CONCLUSIONS

• Aim of research: investigate framing of Hungarian government’s relationship to EU
• Prior accession: highly positive image
• Currently more negative conceptualisation based on FORCE, CONFLICT and EU AS PERSON frames
• CONFLICT not particularly prevalent – H₁ not justified
• EU AS PERSON particularly prevalent, manifested as PARTNER, AUTHORITY FIGURE and BULLY
• BULLY FRAME draws on culture-specific scenario of freedom fight against oppressive rule – H₂ justified
• Legitimizes government’s conflict with EU
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!