Twitter discourse on LGBTQ+ in Slovenia

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Abstract

Since Twitter, as one of the main social networking platforms, plays an important part in forming gender and sexual identities, the aim of this study was to perform a corpus analysis of Twitter discourse pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community in Slovenia. The dataset for our study was extracted from the Janes corpus of Slovenian user-generated content, which contains almost 215 million tokens from Slovenian blog posts, forum messages, news comments, tweets, etc., and is richly annotated with socio-demographic and linguistic metadata. Our analysis is mainly qualitative and based on content analysis, followed by a critical discourse analysis examining how much control one social group imposes over another and tries to limit the freedom of other people's actions, using the concepts of "normal" and "natural" as key aspects in forming gender and sexual identities. The results of the analysis show the persistence of heteronormativity; so much so that it becomes naturalized, whereas any counterforce is seen as disruptive.

Keywords: corpus analysis, critical discourse analysis, computer-mediated communication, queer linguistics, heteronormativity

1 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

After the decriminalisation of homosexuality that took place in Slovenia in 1977, the question of social inequality based on sexual orientation became a relevant political topic in the 1980s, and was part of an extensive discussion in civil society movements (Mencin Čeplak and Kuhar 2010, 284). At that time, most of the political demands for social equality made by the LGBTQ+ community had been addressed (Kuhar and Mencin Čeplak 2016, 147). From the late 1970s to late 1980s, the Slovenian political space was marked by cultural and political civil society movements, which, among other demands, called for the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation through a series of citizens' initiatives. These issues were gradually overshadowed by Slovenia's struggle for political independence from Yugoslavia, and thus the initiatives advocating the rights of national, gender-related and sexual minorities slowly faded away from the political discourse (Mencin Čeplak and Kuhar 2010, 284–285). The initiatives for the elimination of gender inequalities were not abandoned in the course of drafting the Slovenian constitution – but after its adoption in 1991 they were considered less important compared to the 1980s, and were no longer at the forefront of political discourse along with concrete policy initiatives for the non-discriminatory treatment of gays and lesbians in legislation (Mencin Čeplak and Kuhar 2016, 153).

Discussions on the regulation of same-sex partnerships and initiatives for the adoption of a new Family Code have not led to any changes in legislation since the mid-1990s. As a matter of fact, the introduction of the Civil Partnership Registration Act in 2005 provided no appropriate solutions to the complaints of the LGBTQ+ community, but actually codified discrimination based on sexual orientation (Mencin Čeplak and Kuhar 2010, 288–289). All further attempts to eliminate discrimination were dominated by heated discussions throughout society in Slovenia. To a large extent, this was caused by a decision that such legislative amendments could be decided by a referendum, which shifted the focus of the discussion to the problems of the LGBTQ+ community but, at the same time, promoted a socially unacceptable public discourse.

The first referendum in 2011 was followed by a second in 2015, but no amendments to the legislation were made based on the results. The breakthrough in the legislation only happened after the Amendment to the Marriage and Family Relations was rejected in the 2015 referendum, which sought to equate the rights of homosexual partnerships with heterosexual ones simply by replacing the words *moški* (Eng. man) and *ženska* (Eng. woman) with the word *oseba* (Eng. person). Because the referendum amendment was rejected, the government worked out a compromise version of the legislation by adopting the Civil Union Act in 2016 (effective in 2017), which equates the rights and duties of heterosexual and

homosexual couples, with the exception of the right to joint adoption of children and the right to assisted reproduction.

2 THE STUDY

The analysis presented in this study will focus on two referendum campaign accounts on the social media platform Twitter in the period before the referendum on the Civil Partnership Registration Act in 2015, i.e. the main opponents of the amendment act with the *Za otroke gre* account (ZOG, Eng. For the children) and the proponents' main account *Čas je ZA* (ČJZ, Eng. It's time FOR).

Twitter and other social networks have become important media in political campaigns (Vonderschmitt 2012, Kumar and Natarajan 2016). Therefore, it should be interesting to see how they function in the Slovenian cultural environment, as the aforementioned campaigns can also be understood as part of a broader Slovenian political discourse. Though formally independent, both referendum campaigns were directly linked to Slovenian party politics: ZOG with the Slovenian right, including extreme right, and ČJZ with the left.

In this study, a corpus analysis will be combined with a critical discourse analysis, which has proven successful as an analytical procedure in related studies (Baker et al. 2008). Discourse as a social interaction will be observed in the specific context of two Twitter campaigns from the viewpoint of establishing social power, its distribution, maintenance and reproduction (van Dijk 2001, 352). Another goal will be to determine the role of discourse in establishing inequality in society and its maintenance in the process of domination (Fairclough 2001).

Discourse analysis therefore addresses some specific societal issues, as discourse is what constitutes culture and society (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 271–280), while new social practices, which maintain and constantly reproduce the traditional notions and established balances of power, are being constructed in the framework of communication on social networks (Baider and Kopytowska 2018). This is a typical characteristic of Twitter, the social network in which the dominant discourse has the ability of being reproduced by forwarding or sharing posts on other social networks. Lately, tweets have been published by traditional mass media as well, and it has been shown that they often reproduce tweets in a completely non-critical manner. Continuous exposure to a particular normative model thus only reinforces "normal" and "straight" identities, including gender and sexual identities (Motschenbacher 2010, 2011). Groups with less social power are therefore faced with a challenge to formulate strategies so that they can function in the context of the prevailing hegemonic

discourse, perhaps even by trying to change the differences in the social power (Gramsci 1971, Gorjanc 2017).

This research will therefore focus on determining how the question of hegemonic homosexuality was addressed in a highly heteronormative discourse in one of the campaigns (ZOG), and what discourse strategies were used to preserve the "natural and social order", and, consequently, an order that perpetuates inequalities and injustices in society (Fairclough 1985, 1989). In the campaign led by the advocates for change (ČJZ), the focus will be placed on the discourse strategies addressing this normative social order with a desire to change the social balances of power, assuming that any opposite reaction in the hegemonic heteronormative discourse is doomed to be recognized by the majority in society as the one destroying the established social order.

Gender and sexual identities are important parts of a society's make up, its normative models and value systems, and in that respect heterosexuality as a social construct is based on very strict social norms that dominate both the societies and discourses of the West (Coates 2013). As a set of cultural patterns, social and legal norms that establish heterosexual hegemony, heteronormativity conditions discourse practices with an unmarked heterosexual identity, which is always assumed in the discourse until it is actively denied (Yep et al. 2003, Lovaas and Jenkins 2007, Koch 2008). In Western societies, the discourse of heteronormative values, images and behaviours is also linked to the historical discourse of sexuality as a discourse used for shaping national identities (Motschenbacher 2013). For this reason, the aim of this study will be to determine how the discourse of sexuality and gender gets incorporated into national and nationalistic discourses when such models are subject to problematization, as also happens in some other cultural environments (Baider 2018, Baider and Kopytowska 2018).

2.1 Related work

This study establishes itself within research on computer-mediated communication (CMC), i.e. one of many different forms of interaction that people have with each other using computers as a means of communication. This body of research initially focused on building specialized corpora (Beißwenger et al. 2014) and later enabled research into diverse topics based on corpus data (Fišer and Beißwenger 2017, Fišer 2018), including sociolinguistic and discourse studies (Coats 2017, Verheijen 2017, Reher and Fišer 2018). Our study contributes to this body of research, enriching it with several specific aspects of the subject matter and embedding it in the Slovenian linguistic and cultural environment.

The paper is also situated within the framework of queer linguistics, i.e. an interdisciplinary approach within post-structural critical theories based on the analysis and deconstruction of traditional ideas, values and established social relations of power when it comes to issues of identity and the concepts of gender and sexuality (Jagose 1996, Koch 2008, 20). This approach also seeks to help understand the discourse construction of identity categories as ideological social constructs that have been characterized by heteronormativity throughout history (Koch 2008, 38–39). Numerous studies in the field of queer linguistics are based on the corpus-linguistic methodology (Baker 2005). They generally analyse heteronormativity as the dominant feature of discourse (Baker 2005) and related social constructs, such as a corpus study in which discourse shows greater social support for the concept of marriage than, for example, the concept of partnership or a single person (Baker 2008). A corpus-based analysis examining the Cypriot LGBTQ+ community examines the way in which the discourse constructions of sexuality are expressed within the hegemony of heterosexuality and heteronormativity (Baider 2018), whereby the relationship between quantitative and qualitative analysis favours the latter, as it does in our research and in most other discourse studies with a corpus-based approach (Kulick 2005).

Our research contributes to the research on the dominance of heteronormativity with its specific focus on the Slovenian perspective. It integrates the queer approach into the research field of CMC by adding a specific communication platform to other studies observing the balance of power among social groups, such as the extensive research into the discourse used on web forums by white supremacists and their argumentation strategies to establish a communal identity as the norm, which allows platform users to observe deviations from the established normative system and understand everything non-normative as deviant, especially when it comes to national, gender or sexual identity (Brindle 2016).

The methodological integration of a corpus-based approach with critical discourse analysis, which was used in this research, has been found to be effective for the study of discourse characteristics (Baker et al. 2008). The integration has been most useful for the analysis of discourse related to socially marginalized individuals and groups, or vulnerable groups in a society in general, such as refugees and asylum seekers (Baker and McEnery 2005, Gabrielatos and Baker 2008), or when examining the homophobic, xenophobic or hateful narratives aimed at what is other and different in general (Assimakopoulos and Vella Muscat 2017, Baider 2018, Baider and Kopytowska 2018). We have performed similar research (see Gorjanc and Fišer 2018), and with this study we fill the gaps identified in our previous work.

2.2 Research datasets

The research datasets for our analysis are extracted from the Janes[1] corpus of Slovenian user-generated content of almost 215 million tokens, such as tweets, forums, news and corresponding comments, blog posts and corresponding comments, as well as user and discussion pages on Wikipedia, posted in the period 2001–2015. In addition to the origin of the text and time of publication, the Janes corpus contains a number of manual and automatic annotations, e.g. the account type (private, corporate), author's gender (male, female, unknown), and region of publication, the language of the text (Slovenian, English, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, other), degree of text standardness (standard, partially non-standard, very non-standard), and sentiment (positive, negative, neutral). The corpus is also richly linguistically annotated, i.e. tokenized, normalized, lemmatized and morphosyntactically tagged (Fišer et al. 2016, 68–69; Fišer et al. 2018).

For the purpose of this research, the following datasets were extracted from Janes:

a)   tweets from the official ZOG campaign account, the main opponents of the amending act and the referendum initiators, and

b)   tweets from the official ČJZ campaign account, the main supporters of the amendment act.

The ZOG account was set up in February 2015, and the ČJZ account as late as November 2015. ZOG had already called on its followers to help in getting the signatures needed for a referendum, whereas the ČJZ account only served as a part of the campaign, and thus was set up just before the referendum in December 2015. Neither of the accounts have been active since the referendum, but they both remain online with all published material still available.

In total, the datasets comprise a little over 21,500 tokens. The datasets of both official campaigns, ZOG and ČJZ, are comparable in terms of quantity: 150 tweets made by ZOG and 175 tweets made by ČJZ, with 2,308 and 3,275 tokens, respectively. Nonetheless, these two datasets are fundamentally different with regard to the function of the communication channel and their ways of communicating: the ČJZ account is much more embedded in the social network as it has a far greater number of followers (851) and friends (332) compared to ZOG, with 208 followers and only 26 friends. ČJZ also has a higher average number of likes (244) and forwards of tweets (4.19), thus creating a greater Twitter discourse community than ZOG, with an average of 11 likes and 1.81 forwards of tweets. ZOG is therefore more of a one-way communication channel, one of the basic functions being to provide links to media coverage (Gorjanc and Fišer 2018, 279).

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1   Available on https://www.clarin.si/noske/run.cgi/corp_info?corpname=janes

However, because one of our previous analyses showed that the official campaign's account (ZOG) was mainly used for directing readers to websites or posts in ideologically related media (Gorjanc and Fišer 2018, 480), another ad hoc corpus of texts, the ZOG MED corpus, was compiled for the purpose of content analysis using the Sketch Engine tool. This corpus, which is based on the texts to which ZOG directed their followers with hyperlinks, comprises just over 52,900 tokens.[2]

The corpus contains 28 texts from 4 sources. Most of the texts are taken from http://24kul.si. This is the webpage of *Zavod za družino in kulturo življenja* ("The Institute for Family and the Culture of Life"), which is closely affiliated with the Catholic Church in Slovenia. The other 3 sources correspond in a roughly equal amount to texts taken from the web portal of the national broadcasting company https://www.rtvslo.si, texts on the webpage https://publishwall.si and texts on the webpage of Ognjišče, https://radio.ognjisce.si, which is a Catholic radio. In terms of token number, the posts taken from Catholic webpages make up 80.5% of the entire corpus. The corpus was tagged for parts of speech and lemmatised with the Sketch Engine tool.

2.3 Methodology

Because the datasets are relatively small in size and because of the limits of the corpus approach when it comes to revealing subtle discourse meanings (Stubbs 1994), we primarily focused on qualitative research. Having said that, some interesting quantitative data were obtained from the datasets as well. Full tweets from both campaigns have already been used in content analysis of the discourse (Gorjanc and Fišer 2018). In order to check the extent to which the official ZOG campaign on Twitter continued in the media coverage to which the campaign directed its followers, the ZOG MED corpus was used for content analysis in this study. The comparison of the ZOG datasets and the ZOG MED corpus was the starting point for determining which types of content influenced the selection of non-verbal communication elements of the opponents of the Act to reinforce their opposition to introducing legislative changes.

3 ANALYSIS

In order to determine which topics were predominant in the discourse of the two campaigns, each tweet was manually annotated for its main topic, with these topics then clustered into broader categories. The results show that tweets from

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2   All the texts harvested from the hyperlinks posted in the ZOG tweets, active on 31 January 2019, are included in the corpus.

the two accounts are very different in terms of the topics they address. It was significantly easier to classify the tweets posted by ČJZ than those by ZOG, which is primarily attributed to the clearer focus of ČJZ's entire campaign. This will be elaborated on in more detail in the following two subsections, where the results of the analysis are presented for each campaign.

3.1 The ZOG campaign

The ZOG campaign did not start and end with tweets that would pragmatically address potential followers in any way. Instead, it shared links that directed readers to news articles. Moreover, the campaign tweets were extremely heterogeneous in terms of content, and in certain cases even unrelated to the amendment that was the focus of the referendum. This is also indicated by the large share of the posts (15%) that we were unable to classify into any of the topics because the content of such posts was heterogeneous and largely unrelated to the referendum campaign. The analysis also showed that by choosing a diverse range of content this campaign sought to engage with those segments of society that generally would not have dealt with this kind of topic directly, but were more open to topics such as WWII, post-communism, and abortion.
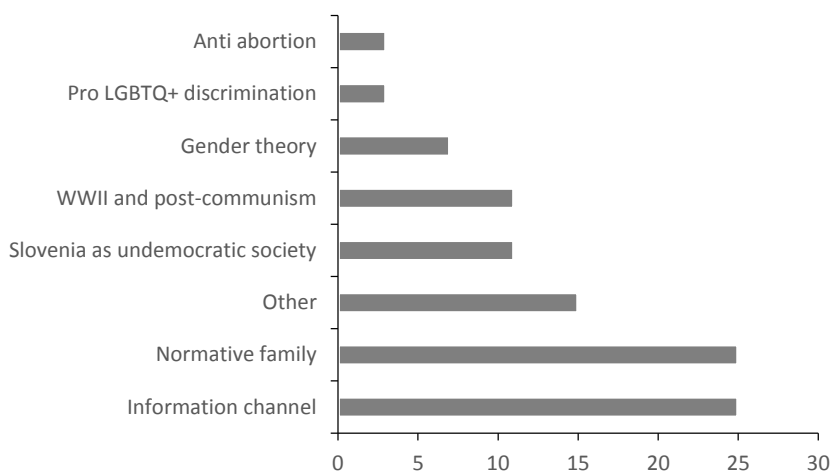

Figure 1: Twitter topics of the ZOG campaign (in %) throughout the period of activity of the ZOG account between 5 March and 3 November 2015 and prior to the referendum.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the most frequent topics we identified were the information channel, which was primarily used for organizing the community in order to gain enough signatures to call a referendum, and the normative family, each

representing a quarter of the posts. The authors of the ZOG campaign used the strategy of reproducing the traditional concept of the family and relied on the fact that this is recognized as the natural order within the hegemonic heterosexual discourse. This hegemonic heterosexual discourse, which follows the formula "family = mother, father and children", appeared to be successful as it dominated the other topics within the ZOG campaign Twittersphere. This norm has historically been accepted as society's preferred way of thinking, particularly from a religious perspective. At the same time, this strategy preserves the natural and social order and is also one of the most successful approaches for maintaining social inequality (van Dijk 1993, Fairclough 1985). However, it should be noted that ZOG limits the social model of the family with the concept of the Catholic normative model. Most of the tweets on this subject are directly related to this understanding of the family, as illustrated in the tweet "*Družina je Božji dar za uresničitev moškega in ženske, ki sta ustvarjena po Njegovi podobi*" (Eng. "Family is a gift from God for the realization of a man and a woman created in His image"), while Pope Francis is referred to as the ultimate authority of this model (Figure 2).

Figure 2: A ZOG tweet referencing the ultimate authority on the normative family and the accompanying text: "'You, the youth, should not be led astray by the harmful transient ideologies. Family is an anthropological fact.' Pope Francis".

In terms of the number of tweets, the Catholic narrative within the normative family topic is immediately followed by the topic in which Slovenia is described as an undemocratic society (11%), with tweets discussing the dysfunction of democracy, the people's "fight" with Parliament, and undemocratic imbalances in media reporting. This seems surprising at first glance. However, in this context, the campaign also engages in activities aimed at the democratization of the judiciary with reference to one of the key players in ZOG (all instances address a court case against the then opposition leader Janez Janša). This topic is followed by tweets about World War II, communism and postcommunist society (11%). These tweets

are mainly linked to the national television broadcasts of the programme *Pričevalci* (Eng. *Witnesses*), thereby positioning ZOG on the "non-communist" ideological side during and immediately after World War II. Because tweets on these two topics are nearly as frequent as those on the family, one can identify a clear strategy for addressing potential followers who are not interested in the content of the amendment itself, but can ideologically align with other topics with the same ideological underpinnings that simultaneously connect with national cohesiveness in a similar way to in some other settings (Baider and Kopytowska 2018). This is particularly noticeable in Slovenia, because of the connection of national cohesiveness with national division, as outlined by the experience of World War II, i.e. the reproduction of a social division that has been present in Slovenian society since the 1950s and resulted from a split between the traditional Catholic society and the liberal movement that culminated during and immediately after World War II.

Posts on the topic of gender theory (7%) cover a significant share of the data, and include tweets that are a direct opposition to progressive gender equality. The topic places ZOG in the framework of religious organizations such as the Roman Catholic Church and other movements on the right-wing of the political spectrum in Europe that use the academic concept of gender as mobilizing tool for social movements. They form an opposition to progressive gender equality and address questions of marriage equality, abortion, reproductive technologies, gender mainstreaming, sex education, sexual liberalism, transgender rights, antidiscrimination policies, etc. (Kuhar and Paternotte 2018). In the ZOG campaign, the topic of gender theory is related to the idea that it allows for a free choice of gender, promotes sexual diversity, and supports different sexual orientations. The last topic within the ZOG campaign covers anti-abortion tweets, which points to a potential new focus of the community and the political parties connected with it, one that diverges from discussions about homosexuality and takes on an issue that they consider a vital part of their politics.

Our analysis of the ZOG corpus indicated the large presence of hyperlinks in ZOG tweets (the average number of hyperlinks per tweet was 0.81) that directed readers to news articles. We followed these hyperlinks to establish their content as part of the overall discourse relating to the ZOG campaign, and compiled a corpus of the hyperlinked news articles. We analysed the ZOG MED corpus by extracting the key multi-word units based on their relative frequency in the corpus compared to the reference Slovenian Web 2015 corpus (Erjavec et al. 2015), since keywords tend to be a good indicator of the overall content of the texts (Scott and Tribble 2006). Our basic keyword extraction procedure, which was performed in the SketchEngine concordancer, lists all the identified n-gram candidates regardless of the scope of a given multi-word unit. This means that the same multi-word unit can be represented in several keywords (e.g. *problematika družine,* Eng. *problems related to the family* and *problematika družine in življenja,* Eng. *problems related to the family and life*), which is important to take into account in the interpretation of the results.

Table 1: 30 top-ranking key multi-word units in the ZOG MED corpus.

Slovene key multi-word expression	English translation
obveščanje o delovanju	communication on the operation
obveščanje o delovanju zavoda	communication on the operation of an institution
problematika družine	problems related to the family
problematika družine in življenja	problems related to the family and life
množično grobišče	mass grave
komunistično obdobje	communist era
vojni grob	war grave
kulturna dediščina	cultural heritage
delovanje zavoda	operation of an institution
človekova pravica	human right
človeško življenje	human life
aktivno državljanstvo	active citizenship
vojno grobišče	wartime mass grave
civilna iniciativa za družino	civic initiative for the family
družina in pravica otrok	family and children's rights
iniciativa za družino	initiative for the family
koalicija za otroke	coalition for children
družina in kultura življenja	family and life culture
državna uprava	public administration
katoličan pred diskriminacijo	a Catholic facing discrimination
kultura življenja	life culture
namen pospeševanja	aim of promotion
pospeševanje temeljnih vrednot	promotion of fundamental values
stigmatiziran v državni upravi	stigmatized in public administration
svoboda in aktivno državljanstvo	freedom and active citizenship
zavod za družino	institute for the family
zaščititi katoličane	to protect Catholics
interna spletna stran zavoda	the institute's internal website
najbolj preganjana verska skupnost	the most persecuted religious community
preganjana verska skupnost	persecuted religious community

The 30 top-ranking key multi-word units which can be seen in Table 1 give a good insight into the content of the articles. If we disregard the first two examples related to communication, the other key words mainly match and reinforce the basic content categories of the Twitter campaign. The topic of *družina* (Eng. family) particularly stands out, and is closely linked to the concept of *kultura življenja* (Eng. life culture) that, in media coverage, closely connects the keywords of *problematika družine* (Eng. problems related to the family), *civilna iniciativa za družino* (Eng. civic initiative for the family), *družina in pravica otrok* (Eng. family and children's rights), and *iniciativa za družino* (Eng. initiative for the family) with a topic

that is only briefly mentioned towards the end of the Twitter campaign, i.e. the right to decide freely about the birth of a child or the issue of abortion: *problematika družine in življenja* (Eng. problems related to the family and life), *človeško življenje* (Eng. human life), *družina in kultura življenja* (Eng. family and life culture), and *kultura življenja* (Eng. life culture).

The media coverage in the links shared by the ZOG campaign places the referendum within the context of Catholicism, with a narrative suggesting that marriage equality is a threat to the religious community. This strategy attempts to engage ZOG supporters in terms of active citizenship to protect Catholicism against this attack: *aktivno državljanstvo* (Eng. active citizenship), *svoboda in aktivno državljanstvo* (Eng. freedom and active citizenship), *zaščititi katoličane* (Eng. to protect Catholics), *najbolj preganjana verska skupnost* (Eng. the most persecuted religious community), *preganjana verska skupnost* (Eng. persecuted religious community), and *katoličan pred diskriminacijo* (Eng. a Catholic facing discrimination).

The topic from Figure 1 which is strongly present in the media coverage that the ZOG campaign linked to in its tweets addresses potential supporters who ideologically associate themselves with the non-communist recent history, that is "World War II and post-communism". In this case, the key narrative specifically targets the emotions by referring to the horrific consequences of World War II: *množično grobišče* (Eng. mass grave), *komunistično obdobje* (Eng. communist era), *vojni grob* (Eng. war grave), and *vojno grobišče* (Eng. wartime mass grave).

Although the connection to the various European movements that utilize the concept of gender theory is an important part of the posts in the Twitter campaign, this topic is not as present in the linked media coverage. It seems that it is easier for the campaign to address and potentially persuade or manipulate supporters with familiar concepts they understand, and particularly with a narrative that preserves the social order and causes no instability, but nevertheless creates enough uncertainty for the community to ensure that its members stay active.

3.2 The ČJZ campaign

The ČJZ campaign started with its first tweet, which addressed potential followers and introduced the campaign's hashtags: "*Pozdravljeni, vsi enakomisleči državljani in državljanke, Slovenija, čas je ZA #casjeZA*" (Eng. Welcome, all like-minded citizens, Slovenia, it's time FOR #timeFOR). The last tweet concludes the campaign by thanking the followers: "***Čas ZA našo zgodbo še prihaja***. *Kmalu. Hvala vsem za izkazano podporo na voliščih.*" (Eng. **The time FOR our story is yet to come**. Soon. Thank you all **for** the support at the polls. #timeFOR.)
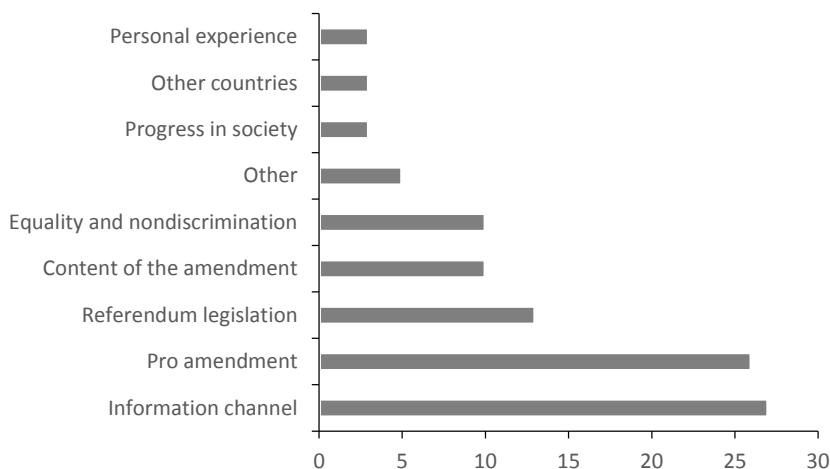
Figure 3: Twitter topics of the ČJZ campaign (in %) throughout the period of activity of the ČJZ account, which was between 22 November and 10 December 2015, during the referendum campaign.

In contrast to ZOG, the ČJZ campaign focused specifically on the referendum itself rather than on wider aspects of society, as can be seen from the list of topics that were identified in the analysis of the corpus of ČJZ in Figure 3. The majority of the tweets (53%) were a combination of pro-amendment comments (26%) and information for supporters about related events (27%). Next are tweets that sought to explain the referendum legislation and its interpretation (13%) and the content of the amending act (10%). The tweets explaining the content of the act, which also responded to disinformation in the mainly right-wing media about it, were an important part of the campaign. It is also clear that one of the campaign's strategies was to get voters to the polls, because a substantial portion of the tweets urged people to participate in the referendum, as we can see in Figure 4 where we have the well-known public figure

Figure 4: A tweet calling for a high voter turnout.

and entertainer Vid Valič and a tweet: "Are you FOR equality? Then it's off to the referendum on Sunday. Yes, your vote counts! @VidValic #casjeZA".

This campaign also served as an information channel (27%), providing important information about and invitations to events. From this we can see that the Twitter campaign played an important role in building a community both online and offline that would support the referendum.

The individual topic of the ČJZ campaign reveals discourse strategies that try to change the established social order as well as the social balance of power. In doing so, the campaign also the used personal experiences of LGBTQ+ community members, although such tweets accounted for a very small percentage of the total (3%). Such tweets aimed to increase understanding of the real life experiences of the LBTQ+ community, and how the referendum would affect them. The same percentage of tweets (3%) linked the campaign with foreign practices and supporters from abroad (3%). By referring to other nations the campaign linked the amendment to the wider discourse on social change and development, which it suggests should now become part of legislation.

Neither campaign refers to the other directly in their tweets. There are, however, subtle references, such as the ČJZ tweet quoting the writer and director Miha Mazzini (Figure 5): "May anyone who so wishes get married. God bless them, says Miha Mazzini." This is one of the rare tweets that subtly address the normative topic of the Catholic concept of marriage.

Figure 5: A tweet referencing the concept of the Catholic norm of the family.

The ČJZ campaign is thus activist, clearly based on the ideological concepts of human rights, human dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and non-discrimination. In other words, everything is understood in the context of social progress as seen in a tweet saying "*Enakopravnost nam je zapisana v koreninah. Čas je, da jo prevedemo še v zakone.*" (Eng. Equality is rooted in all of us. The time has come to incorporate it into legislation). Furthermore, *#casjeZA* (Eng. #timeFOR) carries one of

the strongest non-verbal messages, as the supporters of the amendment were photographed under the monument to the poet France Prešeren in one of the main squares in the capital, Ljubljana (see Figure 6). Prešeren is the author of the lyrics of the Slovenian national anthem, celebrating equality among nations and individual freedom: "*Živé naj vsi naródi, // ki hrepené dočákat› dán, // da kóder sónce hódi, // prepír iz svéta bó pregnán, // da roják, // prost bo vsák, // ne vrág, le sósed bo meják.* " (Eng. "God's blessing on all nations, // Who long and work for that bright day, // When o'er earth's habitations // No war, no strife shall hold its sway; // Who long to see // That all men free // No more shall foes, but neighbours be.").

Figure 6: A tweet showing ČJZ supporters by the Prešeren Monument in Ljubljana (Caption: "Equality is rooted in all of us. The time has come to incorporate it into legislation. #timeFOR").

The tweet symbolically connects the content of the anthem, the place where the photo was taken and the supporters of changing legislation in all their diversity, as we can see activists, celebrities, politicians and members of the general public.

Both campaigns play with the concept of nationality, but use it in two very different ways. The ZOG campaign falls within the populist discourse of the right, which contextualizes nationality as a "natural" part of shaping and preserving a nation. It focuses on who belongs to a nation, what they should be like, and construes the Other as a threat to our nation, on cultural, religious, sexual, ethnic or other grounds (Kuhar 2015, 122). On the other hand, the ČJZ campaign addresses those aspects of national identity that historically emphasized freedom as the key element of cohabitation, and perceived national liberation in the context of the individual's unconditional freedom.

4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this mainly qualitative corpus critical discourse analysis was to observe the discourse of two referendum campaign Twitter accounts on the Amendment to the Marriage and Family Relations Act in 2015, one belonging to ZOG, the main opponents of the amendment and initiators of the referendum, and the central account of the amendment supporters belonging to ČJZ.

All the tweets published by both campaigns were included in the analysis. The findings showed that the ZOG campaign was highly heterogeneous and covered a number of subjects that were not directly related to the amendment, while the ČJZ campaign was more focused in terms of the time and content of the referendum. The ZOG campaign used the strategy of reproducing the traditional concept of the family within the hegemonic heterosexual discourse as the main discourse strategy, but at the same time restricted it with the concept of the Catholic normative model. The use of gender theory as a topic is an important segment of the campaign, which explicitly places itself within the ideological framework of mobilization movements against equality that are seen across the right-wing in Europe. Interestingly, this was not a particularly common topic in the related media articles, which used well-known concepts, mainly with a narrative of the family and family values that preserve the social order and stability, but also worked to trigger feelings of uncertainty and threat with regard to the Catholic community, thus inspiring more action among its members. Tweets are often linked to the issue of abortion, which was only mentioned towards the end of the official ZOG Twitter campaign. This campaign also heavily used the strategy of addressing potential followers who are not interested in the content of the amendment, but can relate to other topics with the same ideological basis: World War II, communism and the post-communist society.

The ČJZ campaign, on the other hand, clearly focused on the referendum legislation and the content of the amendment, but also responded to the disinformation in right-wing media about the referendum. Its campaigners tried to introduce changes to the established social order and social balances of power with the use of celebrities and professionals from Slovenia and abroad, as well as by referencing foreign practices and using the discourse on social change and social development, which in their view also has to be included into legislation. The campaign was also activist, explicitly based on the ideological concepts of human rights, human dignity, freedom, fairness, equality, and non-discrimination.

Although all political campaigns around the world, at least from 2008 onwards, have been aware of the influence of social media and thus exploited such platforms (Vonderschmitt 2012, 3), we find it hard to judge the real impact of both

Twitter accounts with regard to the outcome of the referendum. This is especially so because the Twitter account of the ZOG initiative, which triggered the referendum in the first place, was mainly active in the period until the referendum was called, but not during the official referendum campaign. The referendum was unsuccessful as the proposed legislative measure was not adopted, but the entire discourse on the matter of LGBTQ+ rights in the context of equality of marriage – including the discourses of both campaigns – certainly contributed to a heightened sensitivity of the general public to such issues, and in some respects also that of the political public. The latter, in 2016, a year after the referendum, adopted the Partnership Act, which includes all rights of marriage, except adoption and in-vitro fertilization.

This analysis has given us a good general insight into the discursive strategies of both campaigns; however, for a more comprehensive overview in the future, the qualitative analysis should be extend to take the non-verbal aspects of the posts into account as well, given that non-textual forms of discourse are increasingly becoming one of the most important features of social media. In future work, it would be interesting to extend our analysis to include Tweets tagged with the hashtags of the campaigns, and to include those Tweets that made use of other hashtags linked to topics associated with both campaigns of the referendum. This way, we will be able to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of Twitter discourse pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community in Slovenia at the time before the referendum.

Acknowledgements

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