Slovakia in the British News:
A Discourse Analysis

Dominika Halusková

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

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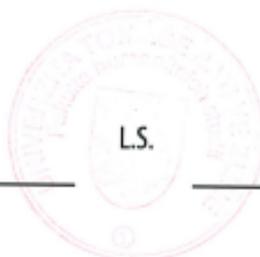
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ABSTRAKT

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá diskurznou analýzou vybraných článkov o Slovensku publikovaných v britskej tlači medzi rokmi 2014 a 2022. Taktiež analyzuje formovanie identity reprezentantov slovenskej spoločnosti, ktorí sa v korpuse vyskytovali najčastejšie. Práca sa delí na dve časti, a to teoretickú a praktickú. Teoretická časť je zameraná na vysvetlenie základnej terminológie spojenej s novinami, textom, diskurzom, diskurznou analýzou a multimodálnou analýzou diskurzu. Teoretická časť sa zároveň zaoberá aj vybranými nástrojmi diskurznej analýzy, ktoré sú neskôr použité v praktickej časti práce. Praktická časť prináša možné interpretácie jazykových a vizuálnych prostriedkov, ktoré si autori pri zmienke o Slovensku a jednotlivých reprezentantoch spoločnosti zvolili.

Kľúčové slová: diskurz, diskurzná analýza, multimodálna analýza diskurzu, text, britské noviny, The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph, Slovensko, identita, reprezentanti spoločnosti

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with discourse analysis of selected articles about Slovakia published by quality British newspapers between 2014 and 2022. It also analyses the construction of identity of the most prominent social actors appearing in the corpus. The thesis is divided into two parts, namely the theoretical and the practical part. The theoretical part explains the basic terminology connected to newspapers, text, discourse, discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. It also focuses on selected tools of discourse analysis that are later used in the practical part of the thesis. In the practical part of the thesis, a possible interpretation of the language and visual choices made by the authors when referring to Slovakia or the social actors is suggested.

Keywords: discourse, discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, text, the British newspapers, The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph, Slovakia, identity, social actors

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Checking the news is a part of our everyday life. Throughout the years, the world has become digitalised and globalised, and nowadays, people are surrounded by a progressively more enormous influx of the latest information from various sources. The editors have to perform the careful work of tailoring the content to reflect the newspapers' stance and, thus, influence the opinion on the topic at hand. This can be done with virtually any topic, event, person, or even country. However, using discourse analysis, one can uncover why the entity is described in one way or another. Therefore, when a citizen of the United Kingdom checks their favourite newspaper website in the evening or during a busy afternoon, they can see the events, language choices and social actors that the editors foregrounded. Opinion-forming is crucial on many levels and, most importantly, on a global scale. News reports significantly impact how a country is perceived in foreign countries and may impact tourism, politics, foreign investment and many other spheres.

The thesis is divided into two parts – theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part outlines the basic terms connected to the topic. It deals with newspapers and defines text, discourse and discourse analysis. Additionally, it also explains terms found in the multimodal discourse analysis.

The practical part consists of two chapters. Firstly, the discourse analysis of Slovakia is carried out using an analysis of linguistic choices made when referring to the country. It also explores the use of imagery, occasional use of metaphor and metonymy to enhance the overall communicative message of the text. The second part is dedicated to analysing the identity of the most prominent social actors mentioned in the corpus. It analyses the visual as well as the linguistic choices, actions and techniques the authors used to shape the actor's identity in the text.

The aim of the thesis is to apply tools of discourse analysis and analyse the linguistic and visual choices made when referring to Slovakia. Additionally, it also focuses on the identity construction of the most prominent social actors foregrounded by the selected British newspapers.

I. THEORY

1 NEWSPAPERS

The following chapter outlines basic terms and potential challenges connected with newspapers. It provides an insight into the perception of the word "news" and focuses on bias in the news representation and social class of the readers of British newspapers. Additionally, it provides information about selected British newspapers whose articles will be analysed in the second part of the thesis.

Newspapers are an inseparable part of the lives of British people (Williams 2009, 1). According to Tunstall, the British press holds a significant position in Europe when it comes to the national newspapers issued by publishers located in one city only. Not only does London have the majority of the national newspapers published there, but at the same time, they are also market leaders (1996, 2). One of the reasons contributing to this phenomenon is the geographic significance of the city (Williams 2009, 6).

Newspapers can be described as "artefacts of the commercial and political world" (Reah 2002, 3). Reah's description suggests that the newspapers will be some way or other always tailored to the system people live in and will favour certain parties and representations over others (2002, 3). Reah stresses the fact that not necessarily everything that happens in the world may be of interest to all people, as the literal meaning of the word "news" implies. She points out that the information about a recent event should be of interest and importance and should have to do with certain groups of people to be considered news. Therefore, not everything that happens in a particular country, or the world, is worth publishing (2002, 4). Based on this statement, it is clear that there needs to be someone who chooses which events are worth sharing and may possibly spark interest in the readers.

A similar perspective is brought forward by Fowler who explains that there are too many events taking place in the world and it is out of question to publish information about all of them. As such, events are selected and presented to the readers and are already creating a particular "view of the world" (1991, 11). Fowler writes about news values. News values are used by the editors to decide what should appear in the press and what should be excluded. The news stories are chosen based on several criteria. The more criteria an event or a story meets, the higher the chance of being selected and published (13, 1991). One of the things to highlight would be the inability of the reader to see the texts that were not chosen based on the editor's choice (Reah 2002, 4). The reader is the recipient of the news and thus has no real chance of influencing the selection process (Reah 2002, 4). As a result, the selected

texts that appear either online or in the newspapers contribute to a certain image and representation of the topic in question.

1.1 Classification of Newspapers

According to Tunstall, newspapers can be divided into three main categories:

- **the broadsheet newspapers** – *The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, Financial Times*
- **the midmarket newspapers** – *Daily Express, Daily Mail*
- **the "lower" tabloids** – *The Sun, Daily Mirror, Daily Star*

(1996, 9–14)

Tunstall states that the tabloids serve to attract the reader by light-hearted topics and lot of entertainment, photos and big headlines, whereas the broadsheet newspapers provide the reader with predominantly serious topics which are complemented by sport and entertainment. Thus, the focus of the tabloids is mainly on the material the reader can look at, not waste much effort on and feel something, whereas the focus of the quality newspapers is to present serious topics (1996, 11–12).

1.2 Newspapers and Social Class

Naturally, certain groups of people tend to cluster and form social groups that make up social classes. They share interests and deal with similar problems in their lives. Hence, they will be more likely to search for similar news in their free time. Williams suggests that there is a link between the social class of the readers and the newspapers they read. Throughout the years, the "upmarket/broadsheet" newspapers have been read mainly by readers with better social standing, good education and higher income levels (2009, 9).

On the contrary, Williams claims that "popular/tabloid" newspapers are popular mainly among people with a lower income and education. As their name suggests, the "middle-market/middle-brow" newspapers find their readers just in the middle of this spectrum (2009, 9). As per Williams' observation, there is a clear link between social status and interest in various types of newspapers.

1.3 Bias in the News

There appears to be little contrast in evaluating the objectivity of news reporting between the journalists and the discourse analysts. As Fowler pointed out, the journalists and the status quo about their job is that they gather facts and objectively report on the findings

without any overt representation of their own worldview. However, discourse analysis shows that the language choices serve not only to convey bare facts, but they are loaded with various ideas and propositions (1991, 1). Nevertheless, it should be noted that every single media company is "socially, economically and politically situated" (Fowler 1991, 10). This means that there may not be one completely objective and truth-speaking viewpoint only. News reporting is not made in a vacuum. Consequently, it could always be influenced one way or the other and biased to a certain extent.

Additionally, Reah explains that there is a difference between news and how it is presented. News is commonly referred to as "news stories". The implication of the word "story" suggests that it may not always contain factual information only (2002, 5). Consequently, this statement suggests that some pieces of news may be interpreted differently depending on the writer who adds his own footprint to the story. As such, each writer will make the language choices subjectively and create a unique news report that will have a unique effect on the reader.

1.4 Selected British Newspapers

This chapter introduces three British newspapers which were chosen for the purpose of this thesis. The chapter briefly outlines the newspapers' history and sheds light on the essential information. All articles constituting the corpus were selected from the newspapers listed below.

1.4.1   The Telegraph

Founded in 1855 by Colonel Arthur B. Sleigh, *The Daily Telegraph* gained its prestige in the British press and is regarded to be among the quality newspapers (Williams 2009, 101–3). The newspaper's name contains an invention that played a crucial role in the distribution and production of texts at that time – the telegraph (The Telegraph, n.d.). Initially, the newspaper was called *The Daily Telegraph and Courier*, but after 71 days, it changed its name to what we know nowadays being *The Daily Telegraph* (The Telegraph, n.d.). *The Daily Telegraph* is a broadsheet newspaper (Tunstall 1996, 12) and supports the right-wing worldview and conservative attitudes (Tunstall 1996, 168). The Telegraph's website states that the year of 1961 saw the launch of *The Sunday Telegraph*. *The Daily Telegraph* is issued daily, whereas *The Sunday Telegraph* is issued every Sunday. There is also a digital version of the newspaper called *The Telegraph* (The Telegraph, n.d.).

1.4.2 The Guardian

The Guardian also belongs to the group of quality newspapers. Concerning the expression of the worldview, it is rather left-wing (Tunstall 1996, 168). Not only does it cover politics, but also other topics such as sport, culture and social topics (Tunstall 1996, 169). The Guardian's website states that the initial thought that sparked the interest in establishing this newspaper was the Peterloo Massacre and the need for the expression of a liberal stance connected to it. It was founded in 1821 by John Edward Taylor with the initial name *The Manchester Guardian*, which was changed later on. Initially, it was only published weekly (The Guardian 2017). However, nowadays, it is published every day except Sundays (The Guardian 2012). It is also available online in the digital form.

1.4.3 The Independent

From the selected newspapers, *The Independent* is the newest one. It was founded in 1986 by Andreas Whittam Smith (The Independent, n.d.). As per the authors, it focuses on current issues without favouring one party over the other (The Independent, n.d.). Consequently, it represents a middle ground between *The Guardian's* and *The Telegraph's* worldviews. However, the newspaper highlights their "progressive, liberal values and trusted journalism" (The Independent, n.d.). Tunstall marks it as an upmarket broadsheet (1996, 25). In 2003, it was made available not only in broadsheet size but also in tabloid form (The Independent 2003). Nowadays, it is only available in digital form (The Independent, n.d.). It covers various topics – from worldwide news to sport, culture, lifestyle and travel.

1.5 Readership Characteristics and the Average Reach

To get a better picture of who the readers of the mentioned quality newspapers are, several facts gained from research and statistical data will be presented. The data help to understand the readers' background and show their preferences.

Based on the research results interpreted by *Hurst Media*, the average age of a reader of *The Guardian* is 54 years and the average annual income is £28 000. The newspaper ranked 67 % progressive and is favoured mainly by prosperous and progressive readers with good skills in the digital world (Hurst media, n.d.-b). Watson's (2022c) interpretation in *Statista* shows that overall, the print and digital version of the newspaper was read by 14.7 million female readers and 12.43 million male readers between April 2019 and March 2020. Thus, the data suggests that women were more likely to read *The Guardian's* content in recent years. Furthermore, the data indicates that the newspaper is read more by older adults aged

35+ than young adults aged 15–34. With approximately 27 million annual readers in the selected year, the data shows that the number of older adult readers is twice as high as that of young adult readers (Watson 2022c).

According to the research results interpreted by *Hurst Media*, 48 % of the readers of *The Daily Telegraph* are aged 45–74 and one in three readers earns more than £50 000 per year (Hurst Media, n.d.-a). According to the data presented by Watson in *Statista*, from April 2019 to March 2020, the overall number of readers of the digital and print options of *The Daily Telegraph* reached almost 23 million people. The gender category is a bit more balanced in comparison to *The Guardian*, with approximately 12 million female and 11 million male readers. Additionally, *The Daily Telegraph* is also popular among older adults aged 35 + with considerably more than double the amount of older adult readers than young adult readers (2022a).

The data interpreted by Watson in *Statista* also show the reach of *The Independent*. From April 2019 to March 2020, *The Independent* had an audience of more than 28 million readers. Regarding gender, female readers prevailed over male readers, with a total count of approximately 15.15 and 12.94 million respectively. Finally, the number of older adults again doubled the number of young adult readers with its approximately 19.21 million readers (2022b).
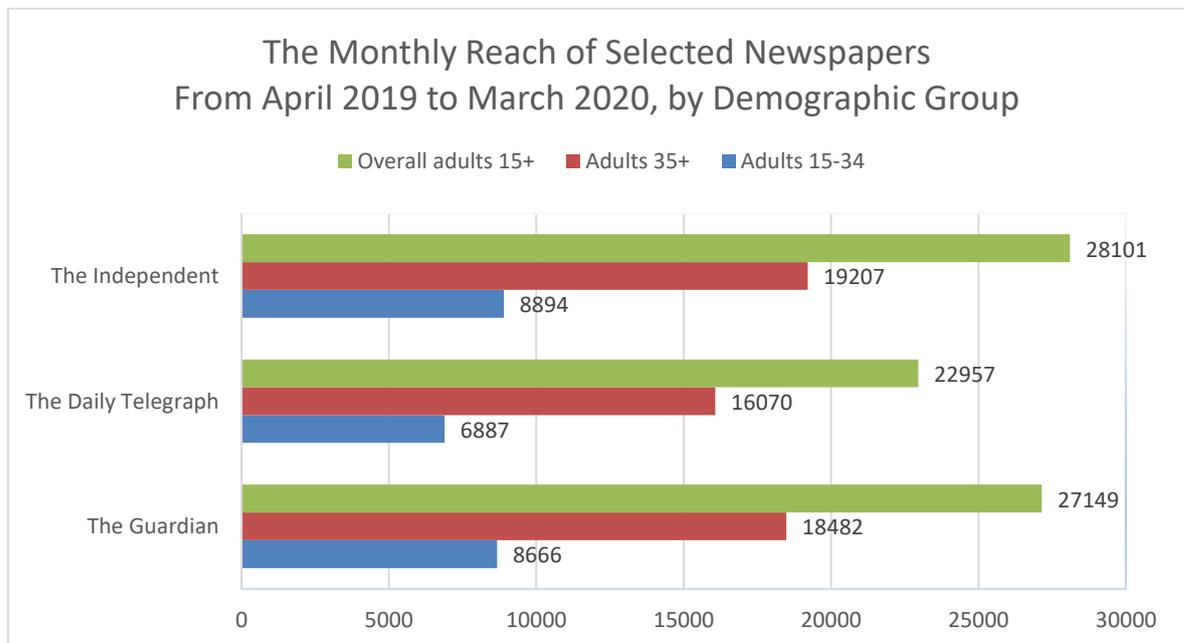

Figure 1 The Monthly Reach of Selected Newspapers from April 2019 to March 2020, by Demographic Group (Watson 2022a), (Watson 2022b), (Watson 2022c)
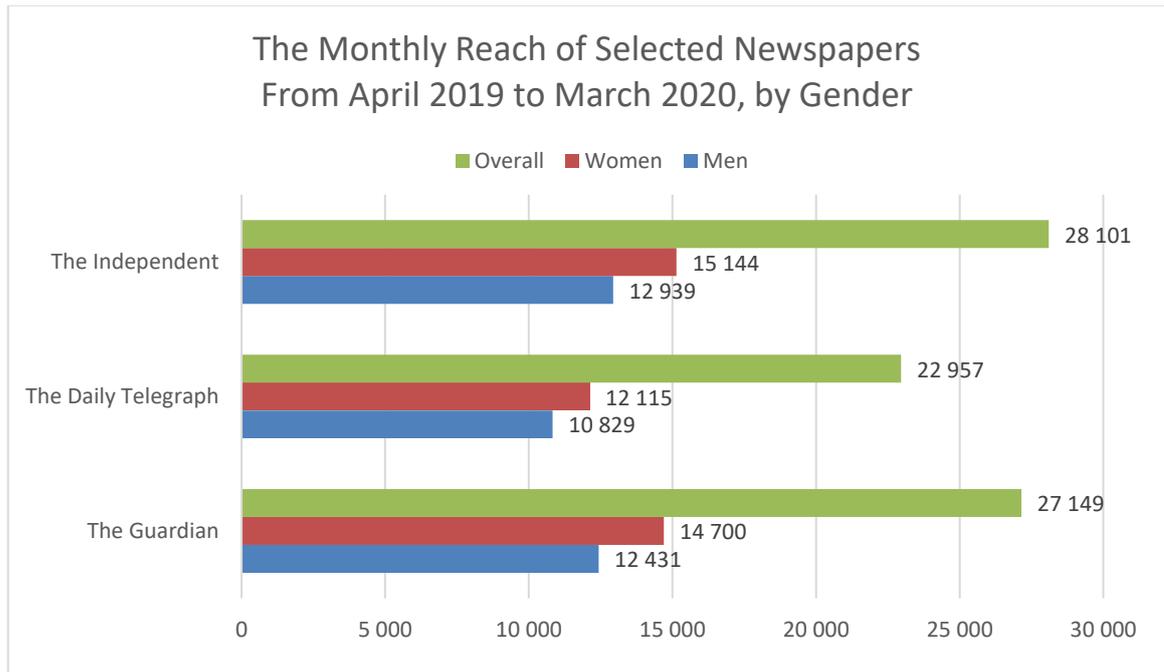
Figure 2 The Monthly Reach of Selected Newspapers from April 2019 to March 2020, by Gender (Watson 2022a), (Watson 2022b), (Watson 2022c)

As the data provided by *Statista* tracks overall readership of print as well as digital platforms, it may be concluded that younger adults are less interested in quality newspaper readership than older adults. The data suggests that all three selected newspapers reach a lower number of young adults and the audience predominantly comprises older adults. Thus, if the newspaper companies know their customers, the content will be created to track the older generations' beliefs, ideas and wants. This may be a vital factor to keep in mind when studying the social actors and events that are selected and presented to the reader. As per good marketing practice, the selection will be based on the needs of the predominant group and does not necessarily have to include that many topics that would be more engaging for the younger audience, as the preferences of those two groups may vary to a considerable extent. This can also steer the representation of events in a specific direction.

2 TEXT

There are different approaches to defining the term "text." Fairclough defines text as "the written or spoken language produced in a discursive event" (2013, 95). Fairclough claims that every text has three kinds of meaning that are interconnected. Firstly, the ideational meaning through which the author explains the ideas about the world as such. Secondly, the interpersonal meaning unravels the social relations and identities formed by means of text production. Lastly, the textual meaning allows the detection of the already given and the new information. Alternatively, it enables the recipient to identify the foregrounded and backgrounded information (2013, 94). As a result, all three meanings will be included in every text and the author will make their choices and construct the meanings based on the communicative purpose they try to push forward. Therefore, any text production contributes to our perception of a particular worldview.

In the following definition, the focus shifts from the form of language produced (spoken/written) to its internal arrangement and structure. According to Halliday and Webster, texts are "coherent and interconnected pieces of language" (2014, 183). The authors further state that the vital aspect of text production is "texture." Texture allows for text production based on the language choices and their organization from the lexical, phonetic and syntactic points of view (Halliday and Webster 2014, 183).

Widdowson defines text as "an actual use of language" (2007, 4). In addition, a text is considered to be everything that a sender produces with the aim to communicate a message (Widdowson 2007, 4). To elaborate further, he claims that understanding the language in which the text is written represents only one way of achieving successful interpretation. If the readers come across a certain structure of a text, they may be able to interpret its communicative purpose without understanding the language (Widdowson 2007, 4).

Based on the previous statement, another essential factor to mention is the relation between a text and a context. Understanding the purpose and the language in which the text is written is just one aspect of plausible interpretation. As Widdowson states, the receivers are also capable of interpreting the message based on conventions and cultural background knowledge. Thus, their interpretation incorporates the language used in the message as well as the context in which it occurs, allowing for more accurate interpretation (2007, 4–5).

2.1 Standards of Textuality

De Beaugrande and Dressler claim that every text must meet standards of textuality in order to be able to communicate a message. If the text does not meet the standards, the desired

effect will not take place (1981, 3). As per De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), there are seven standards of textuality:

- **Cohesion**

De Beaugrande and Dressler explain that cohesion represents the way the sentences and words that make up a text are interconnected. Cohesion relies heavily on grammar, as the individual words and sentences rely on one another based on their functions and also on conventions (1981, 3).

- **Coherence**

The authors further state that the term coherence mainly represents the process of thinking about the relationship between the text and the concepts and relations underlying the text. Coherence can be understood as an interplay between the knowledge of the world, situations and processes we store in our brain and the information presented in the text (De Beaugrande and Dressler 1981, 4–7).

- **Intentionality**

De Beaugrande and Dressler claim that the term intentionality answers the question of why the text was produced. It is solely connected with the producer whose intention may be, e. g. to inform, present a specific worldview, or have some other aims. Therefore, it shifts the focus from the text and its internal structure, as in cohesion and coherence, to the user (1981, 7).

- **Acceptability**

As per De Beaugrande and Dressler's explanation, a receiver will find the text acceptable and will be content with interpreting the message if they find the text cohesive and coherent, but more importantly, the receiver should be interested in the message the text conveys. All in all, the text is accepted if it is useful for the receiver. Therefore, the text type used should be acceptable for a certain social situation and align with the receiver's aim (1981, 7–8).

- **Informativity**

The authors state that informativity portrays the extent to which the text is informative. The receiver can either be presented with the information that is expected or there may be a new occurrence of a previously unknown and unexpected piece of information. Consequently, there may be texts with higher and lower informative value for the receiver. The receiver may even reject the text if it is of shallow informative value (De Beaugrande and Dressler 1981, 8–9).

- **Situationality**

According to De Beaugrande and Dressler, situationality refers to the circumstances in which the receiver can interpret the text without any significant problems. Thus, it can be thought of as a linking element between the text and the reality in which the text occurs. The receiver can think about the relationship between the placement of the text in the real world and the text itself and interpret it based on the situation in which it occurs (1981, 9–10).

- **Intertextuality**

As stated by De Beaugrande and Dressler, intertextuality takes place if a text has a set of references tied to other texts which were produced in the past. Therefore, the intended interpretation of the text at hand also relies on the knowledge of the other texts it refers to (1981, 10–11).

To conclude, this chapter dealt with the term "text" and its various definitions, from focusing on the type of text and its internal structure to the communicative purpose of the text and factors influencing its interpretation. Seven standards of textuality were introduced to provide a deeper understanding of text production.

3   DISCOURSE AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The primary part of this thesis is focused on discourse analysis and for this reason, basic terms need to be explained. A proper understanding of discourse and discourse analysis is fundamental for carrying out the practical part of the thesis.

3.1 Discourse

In order to be able to see a text and its interpretation in the bigger picture, the term discourse must be defined. Discourse is a term that connects the language choices made by the text producer and the context in which the text is used (Machin and Mayr 2012, 20). Strauss and Feiz define discourse as "the social and cognitive process of putting the world into words". (2014, 2). Such activity is carried out by the linguistic as well as other semiotic choices made by the text producer (Strauss and Feiz 2014, 2). To elaborate on the previous statement, discourses can, thus, be understood "as models of the world" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 20). Consequently, the linguistic choices the producer makes support certain worldviews and ideologies and supress others (Machin and Mayr 2012, 20).

Similarly, Widdowson claims that the term discourse stands for the purpose of text production. As such, discourse answers the question of why the text was produced and what were the reasons influencing the actual text production (2007, 6). The reasons can differ, ranging from personal motivation to ideological beliefs (Widdowson 2007, 7). This view partially corresponds with Machin and Mayr's view stated above, in the sense of motivated text production, which is closely tied to expressing worldviews and making way for maintaining certain ideologies.

According to Fairclough, discourse is not something that can simply be seen as an "object," because the term itself is more complex. As he portrays it, discourse can be regarded as being composed of "sets of relations." Therefore, to be fully understood, we need to analyse relations on multiple levels using discourse analysis (2013, 3).

3.2 Discourse Analysis

As stated by Gee, discourse analysis is "the study of language in use" (2014a, 8). In his book, Gee mentions two forms of discourse analysis. The first one is what he calls "descriptive" discourse analysis. When conducting descriptive discourse analysis, the main aim is to offer profound interpretations and analyse the way language is used. Additionally, the linguists conducting this type of analysis also pay close attention to the effect it has on the reader, considering the language choices made by the producer (2014a, 9). The second type of

analysis mentioned by Gee is "critical discourse analysis." It aims to look at the bigger picture but at the same time also focuses on the tasks carried out in the descriptive discourse analysis. However, critical discourse analysts aspire to apply their findings to the world outside of the text itself and explain potential relations to politics or society in general (2014a, 9). For this reason, Fairclough views critical discourse analysis as discipline that interconnects more fields such as "linguistics, politics, sociology," and many others (2013, 4). Therefore, he calls it "transdisciplinary" (Fairclough 2013, 4).

Similarly, Richardson argues that if a simple content analysis is used as the only method when trying to find out how media influence the audience and their opinions and beliefs, it is not sufficient. As such, should the analyst focus solely on describing the content, the aspect of inspecting the author's language choices would be omitted (2007, 38). The tool to provide an in-depth understanding of the text is discourse analysis. According to Richardson's definition, discourse analysis "involves an analysis of texts as they are embedded within, and relate to, social conditions of production and consumption" (2007, 39). Thus, not only do we look at the surface, but we also try to see why the choices have been made and interpret the viable meaning in the broader context, possibly having an effect on several levels.

3.3 Selected Tools of Discourse Analysis

This sub-chapter will deal with selected tools of discourse analysis, which will be utilized in the analytical part.

3.3.1   Identity and Representation in Discourse

Identity in discourse is not understood as the identity we are born with, but it is rather gradually created by what we say, what we do and what form we use to communicate this to the external world (Paltridge 2012, 10). As stated by Paltridge, each person has a unique set of identities, ranging from identities manifesting themselves when identifying with people of the same gender, relatives, colleagues, peers, or other social groups. Thus, people take on roles and use language and other means to display them. Identities are ever-changing and primarily created by the use of discourse. However, identity construction does not necessarily depend entirely on a person. One's identity can also be constructed by other users (2012, 24). As Gee puts it, not only do we create identities for ourselves, but in the process, we may also contribute to the identities of others (2014a, 33–34).

Machin and Mayr (2012, 77) state that social actors can never be presented objectively. Thus, the producer of the text can make their language choices based on those pieces of the

social actors' identity they want to highlight and reinforce. Nevertheless, there may be actions and characteristics of the social actors that would be backgrounded or not mentioned at all. The term "social actors" refers to an individual or a group of people represented in the text (Machin and Mayr 2012, 77). The producers of the text can employ various strategies to reach the desired effect. Based on Van Leeuwen's classification (in Machin and Mayr 2012), an actor can be personalised or impersonalised, depending on what the producer wants to highlight. Impersonalisation could be used to hide the social actor and their actions behind an institution or an authority, or on the other hand, to underpin the importance of the communicative message (Machin and Mayr 2012, 79–80).

Additionally, Van Leeuwen's classification also states that the producer of the text can mention the participants using their names, or they can decide to omit the name but foreground their function. Thus, they are either nominised or functionalised. Nomination and functionalisation pertain to connotations. When a participant is nominised it connotes something more personal, while if they are functionalised, this connotes validity (Van Leeuwen, in Machin and Mayr 2012, 79–82). To explore the perception of authority and the significance of social standing, the producer can use or omit the honorifics (Van Leeuwen, in Machin and Mayr 2012, 82).

3.3.2 Word Connotations

According to Machin and Mayr, the choice of vocabulary is never accidental. Vocabulary can be understood as an "available set of options" (2012, 32). Machin and Mayr further elaborate on this idea by stating that choosing one word over another can influence the interpretation of a text significantly. For example, the word "home" would connote a feeling of safety and togetherness, whereas the word "building" would not be that emotionally loaded. It would rather be a bit more distant. Therefore, the choice of vocabulary carries associations different for each culture and, at the same time, categorises events, people and experiences into "frameworks" (2012, 32).

Moreover, imagery can be used in a similar way. As mentioned above, the choice of vocabulary is not spontaneous, but it involves careful thought to achieve the communicative purpose. How the author describes the scene or the event can contribute to the reader's perception of the text. Thus, imagery can also connote specific associations in the reader's mind and position them in the desired place.

3.3.3 Metaphor

Richardson claims that metaphor can be understood as "perceiving one thing in terms of another" (2007, 66). Demjén and Semino explain that by using metaphor, the producer searches and joins two distinct concepts and seeks similarities between them. By doing so, certain aspects of the concepts are foregrounded, but at the same time, they can also be backgrounded (2020, 213–14). Metaphors make use of "cross-domain mapping," where each metaphor contains the "source" conceptual domain and a "target" conceptual domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). To apply the terms to the example provided by Demjén and Semino, if we were to describe a relationship as a journey, the source conceptual domain would be the journey and the target conceptual domain would be love (2020, 214–15). Machin and Mayr explain that metaphors are encountered on a daily basis and carry ideology. The use of metaphors in society can have a significant impact on our worldview as well as the system we live in (2012, 164–67).

3.3.4 Metonymy

The definition of metonymy is, to a large extent, similar to metaphor. As per Demjén and Semino, when using metonymy, the text producer takes one concept and talks about it using another concept. However, these two distinct concepts must have one thing in common – association (2020, 215). Therefore, metaphor is used as a trope based on the similarities between the concepts, whereas metonymy involves direct association (Richardson 2007, 67–68). Demjén and Semino state that "metonymy involves a mapping within (rather than across) conceptual domains" (2020, 215). According to Machin and Mayr, metonymy can be used to mask the social actors and their actions and attribute the actions to an institution rather than to specific people (2012, 171).

To sum up, the chapter outlined a basic understanding of the term discourse and described methods of discourse analysis. Secondly, selected tools of discourse analysis were introduced. The chapter shed light only on the tools of discourse analysis that will be used in the practical part. To conclude, it is important to note that this thesis does not provide an overview of all available tools for discourse analysis, but only focuses on selected ones.

4   MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As explained by Machin and Mayr, multimodal discourse analysis is a fairly new discipline which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. The term multimodal analysis was coined by Kress and van Leeuwen. The fundamental thought behind the creation of this discipline was the realisation that language choices are not the only vehicles that carry meaning and contribute to the overall communicative purpose of the text. Text can be supplemented by various semiotic modes, such as, for example, visuals (2012, 6–7). Hart states that the term "multimodality" should be understood in terms of multiple modes that form the meaning the text producer is trying to communicate (2020, 143). Thus, a mode can be described as any means that communicates meaning (Hart 2020, 146).

As Kress puts it, language choices are not the only meaning-making elements. One should think about the set of modes of a culture as "one coherent, integral field, of – nevertheless distinct – resources for making meaning" (2012, 38). Based on Kress' statement, language does not account for the overall meaning creation but plays only a partial role (2012, 38). Additionally, Bednarek and Caple state that the choices the producers make include an emotional load. By selecting one image over another, the producers already evaluate the topic in question as they provide its "symbolic representations" (Bednarek and Caple 2012, chap. 5). Thus, visuals embedded in the text will be a matter of choice and will underpin the communicative message of the text, which can be achieved by the use of tools explained below.

4.1 Selected Tools of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis can be carried out using numerous tools. Therefore, for the purpose of the analytical part of the thesis, several terms connected with images will be explained.

4.1.1   Denotation vs. Connotation

Based on Barthes' theory, visuals can be used either to simply denotate – to depict a person, a place or an event, or to connote. Connotation comes to play to evoke particular ideas in our brain and associate them with what is being denoted in the picture, thus creating an identity or a set of values we associate with what is being represented (in Machin and Mayr 2012, 49–50).

Ledin and Machin (2020, chap. 2) state three crucial points that should be taken into account when dealing with visuals and the topic mentioned above. Firstly, the level of

abstraction is interconnected with the degree of connotations the image invokes. The higher the abstraction, the higher the chance of the connotative meaning coming to the mind. Secondly, they stress the importance of the context in which the image is used. Depending on the context, the image can be more connotative or, conversely, more denotative. Lastly, they highlight the fact that if the producer of the communicative message wants to convey certain meaning, they will use what the authors call "established connotators" to ensure that the reader will get the message as intended and reach the desired effect. Such connotators are frequently used, and there is a low chance of misinterpreting or not understanding the desired association (Ledin and Machin 2020, chap. 2).

4.1.2 Settings

Machin and Mayr expand on Barthes by explaining that settings are also, to a large extent, connected to connotations. Images are powerful tools, and just by looking at the settings, several connotations may come to mind. Settings are used "to communicate general ideas, to connote discourses and their values, identities and actions" (2012, 52). According to Machin and Mayr, the images can either document the event or the activity or symbolise it. Therefore, sometimes the text includes an image of an actual situation, and sometimes there is only a symbol to be found. Both choices are made consciously to impact the reader and the interpretation of the communicative message (2012, 52–54).

4.1.3 Salience

As explained by Machin and Mayr, salience is connected to the prominent features of the visuals accompanying the text. If a feature is prominent, it draws the reader's attention and puts forward desired meanings. This can be achieved in several ways. Firstly, using focus, the producer of the composition can foreground certain people and their stories or representations and background others. Secondly, the colour and tone also play a crucial role when it comes to salience. The more saturated the colour, the more it will stand out and attract the reader. Similarly, brighter tones will catch the reader's attention, providing a higher chance to see the hidden meaning and connotes what is desired. Lastly, there is a need to look for cultural symbols, which may also underpin the overall communicative message (2012, 54–56).

4.1.4 Gaze

The social actor in the picture can look at the reader to create the feeling of participation, which is called a "demand" image (Kress and van Leeuwen in Hart 2020, 161). Machin and

Mayr (2012, 70–71) compare the participant in the image looking directly at the reader to social interaction. When a person is addressed directly, the other party expects a response. The same is true about the gaze in the "demand" image. Other key factors that come to play are the emotions and body language of the person in the picture. More distant gestures and mimics can make the participant more distant and authoritative, whereas friendly gestures can connote the feeling of participation and appreciation (Machin and Mayr 2012, 70–71). On the other hand, if the gaze is not pointed at the reader, it is denoted as an "offer" image (Kress and van Leeuwen in Hart 2020, 161). Machin and Mayr state that such images are provided for the informative function and do not require the reader's involvement (2012, 71).

4.1.5   Perspective, Angle and Distance

Perspective belongs among noteworthy aspects of multimodal analysis as well. As stated by Kress and van Leeuwen, perspective supplements the representation by adding extra meaning – more specifically, attitudinal meaning (in Hart 2020, 161). Hart distinguishes between the "oblique angle" and "frontal angle". Using the frontal angle, the reader becomes part of the scene and can be easily positioned based on the angle from which the image is taken. Thus, the reader becomes part of one of the represented groups. On the contrary, the oblique angle is used when the author wants to suggest a certain distance. Depending on the exact angle, the reader can take a neutral position or choose which representation they favour more (2020, 161–64).

Moreover, Machin and Mayr also expand on the importance of perspective and angle by stating that if the person in the picture is positioned "side-on" and at the same time "close-up," it can invoke the feeling of closeness. By feeling close, the viewer also becomes part of the scene and can relate easily. The further the participant in the picture is, the less compassionate the viewer is and usually, the emotions go colder as the viewer becomes a mere observer of the depicted (2012, 98–99). In addition, Machin and Mayr also mention that the viewer can either "look up to" or "look down on" the participants in the picture. This signifies the perception of power. When the viewer looks up to the participant, it will make the participant appear in a position of power. Conversely, should the viewer look down on the participant, there will be a shift in the perception. The viewer will most likely see the participant as less powerful, even weak (2012, 100).

Lastly, as suggested by Machin and Mayr (2012, 97), distance is a specific marker of the relationship between the reader and the person captured in the image. The further the

participant is, the less likely the reader will form a social bond with them. The distance in the picture is classified on three levels, as the "close, medium, or long shot" size of frame (Machin and Mayr 2012, 97).

4.2 Visual modality

Machin and Mayr provide Kress and van Leeuwen's classification of markers of visual modality (2012, 202–5). The first point which the authors state is how detailed the objects look in the picture. Using naturalistic modality, the author keeps the details as intact as possible, representing a truthful picture of reality. However, there are techniques that can be used to impact the perception of the truthfulness of the picture. Some of the parts of the picture can be touched on by using "diffused lighting effect," which decreases the level of modality. To bring forward another perspective, the text producer can also choose not to represent specific people and events but use pictures that only symbolise similar issues. This also significantly lowers the overall modality (Machin and Mayr 2012, 202–3). Thus, an analyst needs to identify how the detail is articulated and try to interpret why it may be the case. Some features may be less or more prominent, but eventually, it is only a matter of choice, which can be explained or interpreted as serving a certain purpose.

Machin and Mayr also state that attention should also be paid to the background, as there are various types "ranging from a blank background, via lightly sketched in or out-of-focus backgrounds, to maximally sharp and detailed backgrounds" (2012, 203). Each of these can contribute to the meaning in a different way, depending on the context and the text they are embedded in.

Another aspect that Machin and Mayr highlight is the degree of articulation of tone. Some images can be black and white; therefore, the tonality is perceived only on two opposite sides of the scale. Moreover, Western cultures associate lighter tones with "transparency and truth," and darker tones carry more negative emotional load. They are usually associated with negative characteristics such as "concealment, lack of clarity and the unknown" (2012, 205).

In summary, this chapter first dealt with the notion of multimodal discourse analysis and its definition. Then, the key terms connected to the multimodal analysis, such as connotations, settings, salience, gaze, perspective, angle, distance and visual modality, were shortly described for the purpose of the practical part of the thesis. The terms will be later applied to analyse images that were part of the articles in the corpus.

II. ANALYSIS

5 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the thesis is to analyse the representation of Slovakia and several social actors in British news from the discourse analysis perspective. The practical part focuses on language choices, construction of identity, and a short multimodal analysis. The discourse analysis is carried out based on tools by James Paul Gee (2014b). All parts of the analysis seek to shed light on how the readers of selected British quality newspapers might perceive Slovakia.

For the analytical part of the thesis, I gathered 23 articles from three British quality newspapers – namely *The Guardian, The Independent* and *The Telegraph*. All of these articles were available online. Then, the selection of the articles followed. From the large volume of articles published between 2014 and 2022, I chose the articles whose content represented the latest political and socioeconomic topics, reflected on the noteworthy events in Slovakia and helped to shape the representation of the country and the social actors in the news. The articles were downloaded from the newspapers' websites and added to the corpus. Some of the articles in the corpus mention Slovakia along with other countries. However, if the information was relevant and interpretable, I decided to include it as a part of the corpus. On the other hand, when searching for articles with tags such as Slovakia/Slovak/Slovakian/Bratislava, I found several articles that included information about the country only marginally and were not informative enough to draw conclusions from. Furthermore, some articles were purely factual and did not help to shape the identity of the country in any way. Based on these facts, such articles were excluded.

The articles chosen were published from March 30, 2014, to October 14, 2022. The underlying reason for this specific time frame is that this period marks several nation-shaping events from the country's modern history as well as the key global events that have impacted society in general in recent years. This starts with the presidential elections where Andrej Kiska was elected, followed by the parliamentary elections and the country's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Brexit[1] and immigration crisis, murder of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, the subsequent mass protests and political scandals followed by a series of elections including the presidential elections where Zuzana Čaputová was elected, parliamentary elections, elections to the European Parliament, the terrorist attack in Bratislava and the global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the war in Ukraine (Slovakia's neighbouring country) and sanctions against Russia. In the chosen time frame,

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[1] Slovakia and the United Kingdom were both part of the European Union before the Brexit, with high number of Slovak people working/living in the United Kingdom.

plenty of events that could be recognised and written about by the foreign media took place, taking into account the possible impact they could have on the perception of the country in the news.

The articles were carefully chosen to demonstrate the perception of Slovakia in British news, focusing on several objectives. Firstly, the linguistic choices made to paint the picture of the country as such were examined. I focused mainly on emotive language and the polarity of selected words, deciding on the connotation and the possible feelings it may invoke in the reader's mind and categorising the words into two groups – words with positive connotations and words with negative connotations. I tried to put myself in the reader's shoes and evaluate the connotations based on my opinion. For example, adjectives such as "beautiful," "cosmopolitan," and "fantastic" were perceived as positive, whereas "obscure," "strange," and "faceless" were deemed negative.

Then, I examined the language choices made to describe the country as such and pin it down on the map, focusing on its denomination as a part of Eastern Europe, Central Europe, or the European Union. Additionally, I analysed the use of metaphors and metonyms and the way they enhanced the meaning of the message the author was trying to convey. Moreover, the use of imagery was examined. I identified the parts that used imagery to set the mood for the text and influence the feelings of the reader, either in a positive or a negative way.

Secondly, the analysis of the identity of social actors was conducted. Overall, it had two major parts. As for the first part, I focused on the social actors that were foregrounded in the corpus and the linguistic means the authors chose to do so. I chose the social actors who appeared in the articles most frequently and highlighted relevant parts that served for identity creation. The highlighted parts described the actions or the background of the social actors, which were carefully chosen to have either a positive or negative effect on the reader. The distribution of the information about individual social actors was rather sparse, with each article containing information about multiple social actors. Therefore, I decided to make a list for each social actor and selected parts of articles from the corpus relevant to the actors.

In the second part, the analysis was conducted based on the model presented by Machin and Mayr (2012, 79–85). I started by highlighting specific language choices used to introduce the social actor, including pronouns, proper nouns, and denominations of their functions. In some of the articles, I tried to identify relevant contrast between the social actors. In such parts, the parties were compared, and possible interpretation was suggested, focusing mainly on why the authors chose to present the parties in the following way and what may have been their hidden motivation. On top of that, I also focused on the space

these social actors occupy in the media and if they are quoted or only mentioned, thus giving them credibility and authority based on their statements.

Finally, for the purpose of the multimodal analysis, I closely examined several images from the articles in the corpus. The analysis was conducted based on the multimodal analysis from Machin and Mayr (2012). I mainly focused on what the images denote and connote, the settings and the salience (Machin and Mayr 2012, 49–56). Moreover, the attitude of depicted social actors was identified based on the examination of gaze (Machin and Mayr 2012, 70–74). Another point of view to consider was the "positioning" by means of distance and angle (Machin and Mayr 2012, 96–100). Lastly, I focused on the visual modality through the articulation of the background, the details, the light and shadow, tone, and saturation (Machin and Mayr 2012, 202–6). The aim of the multimodal analysis was to reflect on the use of visuals to symbolise certain phenomena or convey a message.

To conclude, the practical part is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on language choices. Then, the second part identifies the social actors and examines how their identities were constructed. Both parts are supplemented by a short multimodal analysis. Finally, the results are synthesised, and the conclusion reflecting the aim of the thesis is made.

6 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

6.1 Slovakia

In this chapter of the thesis, I closely examine the language choices made to denote the country in selected British newspapers. Afterwards, a short multimodal analysis is conducted.

6.1.1 Denotation of the Country – Language Choices

As the overall identity of the country depends on how it is introduced by the press, in the following part of the analysis, the adjectives and noun phrases used to denote the country are analysed. The denotations were divided into four categories based on their most prominent features. Below is a complete list of the language choices in the corpus that were used to denote Slovakia, excluding the most general denotations such as "Slovakia" or "the country":

Language Choices Related to Geography:

(1) *this European country* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(2) *the Central European country* – The Telegraph (Day 2022)

(3) *the eastern European member states* – The Telegraph (Telegraph View 2016)

(4) *"I am not a huge fan of skiing in Eastern Europe."* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(5) *a Roman Catholic stronghold in Central and Eastern Europe* – The Independent (AP News Wire 2022c)

(6) *this relatively recent addition to world maps* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(7) *the euro zone country* – The Telegraph (The Telegraph's Foreign Staff 2019)

(8) *"the heart of Europe"* – The Independent (AP News Wire 2021)

(9) *the heart of Europe* – The Telegraph (Nattrass 2022)

The first notable observation is that *The Guardian* completely omits the geographical aspect. In all articles in the corpus, *The Guardian* refers to the country only using "Slovakia" or "the country". As *The Guardian* belongs to newspapers holding the leftist view, it can be argued that it tries to establish the country as an equal partner, without returning to its history as the part of the Eastern bloc and reminding the reader of the connotative load this denotation carries. On the contrary, *The Telegraph* seems to be heavily focused on the geographical aspect of the denotation, but at the same time firmly establishes the position of Slovakia as a part of Europe in (1), (2), (3), (4), (7) and (9). Nevertheless, *The Telegraph's* writers have a hard time having a single voice in its more precise position on the map, as some of the

denotations refer to Slovakia as a "the Central European country" (2) and some still prefer the latter option. However, more prominent is the denotation "eastern European country" in (3), (4). In contrast, *The Independent* combines both and uses the form "Central and Eastern Europe" (5).

Lastly, a metaphor is used in (8) and (9). Slovakia is denoted as "the heart of Europe," which equates the most important organ in the human body (the heart) to the country. This would suggest that *The Independent* and *The Telegraph* view Slovakia as an essential part of Europe, the same as the heart is an essential part of the human body. This metaphor can also be related to its geographical location, as Slovakia lies in the middle of Europe. However, with either of the meaning applied, it arises positive connotations and the metaphor belongs to one of the positive denotations of the country.

Language Choices Related to the Character of the Country:

(10) *the overlooked country* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(11) *the forgotten country* – The Telegraph (Hardy 2021)

(12) *a divided country* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(13) *a country rife with corruption and unease* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(14) *this still deeply conservative country* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(15) *the world's joint-eighth newest country* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(16) *the country is still dogged by the scourges of corruption and organised crime that flourished in the immediate years following the collapse of communism* – The Telegraph (Day 2020b)

(17) *one of the euro zone's most financially sound states, popular with foreign investors, particularly car makers* – The Guardian (Reuters 2016)

In this part of the analysis, I focus on emotive language and the connotations the adjectives carry. Examples (12), (13) and (16) serve purely as carriers of negative emotional load. Slovakia is depicted as a country which the typical reader would not want to visit or live in. Based on the adjectives used, the typical reader of *The Telegraph* and *The Independent*, already has a set of associations on their mind when continuing with the reading. Reading these heavily connoted adjectives will impact the reader's thought processes about the country and how they interpret the message.

Conversely, (14) at first appears to be just a neutral, factual statement. However, the interpretation changes when the reader notices the adverb "still". This changes the interpretation from neutral to emotionally loaded. The adverb "still" may represent the lack

of progress and the inability to move forward. It connotes the feeling of a country stuck in the past with the "old values," still clinging to the conservative style of life as opposed to dynamic, Western countries.

At first glance, it may appear that (10) and (11) could also be part of the negative polarity denotations. Nevertheless, the context of the articles made it clear that the adjectives "overlooked" and "forgotten" seem to be used in a more positive sense, as the articles further introduce aspects of the country that should not remain "overlooked" anymore and should encourage the reader to visit the country. Example (15) also serves a positive connotation, where the author foregrounds the fact that the country is still fairly young and therefore, it can be a good idea to travel and explore it.

Lastly, one example that could be taken as having its place on the purely positive side of the scale is (17). *The Guardian* represents Slovakia as a country worth putting financial resources into. *The Guardian's* credibility in this statement can encourage potential investors to invest in the Slovak industry, as the newspaper guarantees the trustworthiness of the statement.

Language Choices Related to Religion:

(18) *predominantly Catholic country* – The Guardian (Reuters 2016)

(19) *a Roman Catholic stronghold in Central and Eastern Europe (used twice)* – The Independent (AP News Wire 2022c)

Language Choices Related to Size of the Country:

(20) *The killings prompted **outrage** in **this small country of just five million people**, leading to the biggest rallies seen since the Velvet Revolution of 1989 brought down decades of Communist rule.* – The Telegraph (Squires 2018)

(21) *the former communist country of 5.4 million, which joined the European Union in 2004 and the eurozone in 2009* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2014)

(22) *a country of just under 5.5m people* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(23) *the country of 5.4 million people* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2020)

Lastly, Slovakia is also popularly denoted with reference to religion. This also appears to be a prominent aspect that the British newspapers focus on, but not as prominent as the size of the country. The size of the country was mentioned twice as much as its religiosity but in very different contexts.

Firstly, in example (20), it is used as a contrast to enhance the nation's overall strength, where the country's size is used along with the noun "outrage," connoting strength, bravery and the will of the citizens to stand up for their country. Overall, this contrasts the

geographical size of the country and the magnitude of the protests the nation is capable of organizing.

Additionally, (21) also seems to serve the positive side of the spectrum. It could be argued that the size is used to shift the focus from the small "former communist country" to a country which is a part of the larger, internationally well-respected institution such as the European Union, which would suggest the overall progress of the country. Here, the author is moving Slovakia from the position of a small, oppressed country to an independent state that chooses to be a part of the European Union.

Lastly, another positive example is (22) from the travel section, where the size of the country is used to invoke the feeling of a relaxed and not overcrowded place where the readers would feel welcomed. Example (23) seems to be the most neutral of them all, as it only seems to be used as a synonym for the country, without any additional meanings.

6.1.2 Imagery

Imagery is an essential tool to describe how the scenery looks and is usually used in travel-related articles. Below are several examples extracted from the corpus:

(24) *In landlocked Slovakia's capital, Bratislava, you'll find a **picturesque** Old Town, its **winding streets perfect** for **wandering aimlessly**, stopping every so often for a caffeine fix in one of the city's many **Vienna-style coffee houses**. Head up to Bratislava **Castle for stunning views over the rooftops**.* – The Independent (Wright 2021)

(25) *...but Kapitulská Street **makes you feel like you have gone back a few centuries**.* – The Guardian (Nowshin 2022)

(26) *The **engine of Slovakia's fast-growing economy, the city has developed tech and media companies**, while increasing numbers of tourists come to enjoy **its baroque palaces, fairytale cobbled streets and affordable bars**.* – The Guardian (MacDowall 2018)

(27) *Bratislava Castle, **the whitewashed symbol of the city that looms over the centre**...* – The Guardian (MacDowall 2018)

(28) *...and its **crowning glory** is the Tatras.* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

(29) *...St Elizabeth Cathedral is a **splendid Gothic masterpiece** which dates to the 14th century...* – The Telegraph (Smith 2022)

Highlighted language choices all carry positive connotations and set the mood for the text. Furthermore, they seem to serve marketing purpose, as these travel articles are used to

promote the tourism of a specific country. Examples (24), (25), (26), (27), (28), (29) do the task quite well, as the colourful adjectives such as "picturesque," "stunning," "fairytale," "crowning," make the readers use their imagination and picture themselves walking the streets of the city. Examples (25) and (29) also foreground the rich history of the country and its reflection in reality.

The author uses a metaphor to describe the city in (26), where he equates Bratislava to the engine of the fast-growing economy. The reader may associate this metaphor with progress, dynamics and the driving force of the country. Furthermore, a metonym is used afterwards where the city is the agent of the verb "developed". The noun "city" represents the workforce of the capital city, but not the city itself literally. Overall, the metonymy is also used to enhance the perception of Bratislava as a dynamic, vibrant city worth visiting.

(30) *Gone are the **notorious heaps of garbage, and uninhabitable buildings have been demolished**. – The Independent (AP News Wire 2021)*

(31) *A fitting place to go for the "pope of the peripheries," Lunik XI is **the biggest of about 600 shabby, segregated settlements** where the poorest 20% of the country's 400,000 Roma live. – The Independent (AP News Wire 2021)*

However, there are also examples from an article about the Pope's visit to Slovakia, describing one of the poorest settlements of the country. Nevertheless, I would evaluate this neutrally or even positively, as (30) provides a description of the improvement in the community. Understandably, this place had to be described in a gloomy way (31) as it is home to the poorest people in the country. The imagery thus serves a stylistic purpose and contrasts the glamour of the Pope's visit with the impoverished part of Slovakia he visited.

6.1.3 Multimodal Analysis

In this part of the thesis, two pictures from the article by MacDowall (2018) from *The Guardian* are analysed based on Machin and Mayr (2012). The article featuring both photos under investigation (1A and 1B) focused on promoting travel to Slovakia. The pictures show a somewhat paradoxical representation of the country. On one hand, the reader is presented with a picturesque view of the capital city in the prominent upper part of the article (1A), but on the other hand, as the reader approaches the end of the article they encounter a picture that one would not expect when reading a typical article about travelling (1B), which would aim to promote the travel to the area.

Figure 3 Picture 1A: RossHelen. *Výhled na panorama Bratislavy na staré město.* 2016. Photograph. Getty Images/iStockphoto.

Figure 4 Picture 1B: Levene, David. *The Petrzalka Region in the South of Bratislava.* 2018. Photograph. In The Guardian. (Reprinted with permission of David Levene)

Depicting old, decaying buildings with window-to-window flats next to one another, picture 1B connotes coldness, lack of progress and overall feeling of oppression. The thought-provoking question is why it was used in the article. The plausible explanation seems to be the text accompanying the picture, explaining that this is Petržalka (one of the parts of the capital city), and the blocks of flats reach far back to the communist history of the country. Nevertheless, this clearly serves to create associations in the reader's mind, as when the reader sees this picture, hardly ever will they think about visiting the country. In this picture, this part of Petržalka is presented solely as a soulless place. However, it is essential to note that this aspect could have been omitted should the article aim only to promote travel to Slovakia. Many people may be discouraged from visiting if such strong associations and

connotations come to mind, which may impact the overall feeling after reading the article. Another important aspect is the position of the picture. Picture 1B is to be found almost at the end of the article, which could leave a negative, lasting impression on the reader's mind.

On the other hand, picture 1A provides an entirely different view of the country. This is a typical image one would find in articles dealing with travelling. It is highly saturated to be more appealing to the viewer and connotes cosiness, warmth and purity. The lack of traffic may connote the calmness of the city and may encourage people to visit Slovakia, as they will create a positive association in their minds.

To summarize, when it comes to denotations, the adjectives that describe the country may initially seem purely negative. However, when put in context, some of them can be interpreted positively, as mentioned above. On one hand, the authors seem to focus mainly on the position of Slovakia on the map, on its character, which is to a large extent described negatively, on the religiosity and size of the country. On the other hand, imagery is used positively as it is primarily found in travel-related articles and helps to reach the desired effect. For the sake of the multimodal analysis, only two pictures were chosen to be able to compare and contrast them and suggest possible interpretation. Based on the examples from the corpus, Slovakia is mainly described as a small, conservative and religious country with hidden gems worth visiting.

7   SOCIAL ACTORS AND THEIR IDENTITY

In this chapter, the most prominent social actors who appear in British newspapers will be analysed. The analysis will mainly focus on the identities the authors created for the social actors.

7.1 Zuzana Čaputová

The presidential election in 2019 saw the publication of multiple articles of the newly elected president Zuzana Čaputová. The initial information the British readers received about the new head of Slovakia was crucial in opinion forming. Therefore, it is important to look at how the president was described at this point in time, but also throughout her presidency.

7.1.1   Language Choices

The president is presented as a politician compliant with most of the values of the Western political scene. The fact that she is a woman also plays an important role in some of the articles. The article published by *The Independent* represents a mostly positive picture of the president. Starting with an emotional story explaining her choice to get involved in a famous case about an illegal landfill (32), it sets a mood for the whole article:

(32) *Zuzana Caputova* **had been battling** *to close a toxic landfill* **in her hometown,** *Pezinok…* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(33) *Ms Caputova* **had waged a 14-year fight** *with a company Kocner represented that wanted to build an illegal landfill in* **her home town***.* – The Telegraph (The Telegraph's Foreign Staff 2019)

The author uses the metaphor "battling" (32) to position her as a hero fighting for the right of "*her* hometown". A similar metaphor is also used by *The Telegraph* in (33). This supposedly connotes a strong feeling of her loyalty to her hometown, which would resonate with many readers as a hometown is usually perceived as something people are very sentimental about. The statement's intense emotional load in *The Independent* is supported by a story where her colleague's wife and, shortly after that, her godfather, are both getting diagnosed with cancer. Cancer, in this story, is used to connote the fear about the loved ones, which, again, is a topic that many people can relate to. As a result, by relating to these topics, the readers slowly relate to the president.

Then, the article (The Independent 2019) presents the reader with another emotionally loaded topic – motherhood. The author states that the president was pregnant when she took up the illegal landfill case and the president is quoted:

(34) *"Motherhood inspired me to get involved." –* The Independent (The Independent 2019)

This helps to portray the president as a female role model, bringing out the topics that most women readers can relate to. This would resonate with many, as *The Independent*'s readers are predominantly women as per the data provided in the theoretical part. It helps to shape her identity in a different direction, which has hardly ever been seen in Slovak politics mainly dominated by middle-aged men. The statements (32), (33) and (34) portray her as a self-made woman that can handle it all and does not view motherhood as an obstacle. Conversely, as written in (34), the president connects motherhood with "inspiration". Her female identity is also transmitted into the style of her politics. In (35) *The Guardian* uses adjectives such as "gentler" and "kinder," which would be qualities stereotypically associated primarily with women:

(35) *...the liberal former civil society activist Zuzana Čaputová won the presidency after promising a **gentler** and **kinder** politics. –* The Guardian (Walker 2020)

However, her identity is also described in a different light, using the words:

(36) *"On 31 March, Caputova, then a 45-year-old lawyer and **political neophyte** who had never held state office, became the first woman sworn in as president of Slovakia." –* The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(37) *Ms Caputova, **a pro-EU political novice** who will be the euro zone country's first female president... –* The Telegraph (The Telegraph's Foreign Staff 2019)

In (36), the word "neophyte" presents a negative connotation. The fact that she is functionalised gives her credibility, but this is very quickly doubted, almost erased by using the word "neophyte" and stating that she has no previous experience holding any state function. This sentence may serve to signal to the readers that she has no experience in state office, and as trustworthy as she may seem, she lacks skills for running a country. The same is done by *The Telegraph*, which uses the synonym "political novice" but softens the statement by calling her "pro-EU," where the European Union would serve as an institutional quality guarantee of her political activities. The next statement aligns completely with the latest topics being dealt with in Western countries:

(38) *Caputova is proudly European, supports minority rights and **does not shy away from controversial stances**, like her support for gay rights, including the adoption of children by same-sex couples. –* The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(39) *Ms Caputova started her acceptance speech by thanking voters in Slovak, as well as in the Hungarian, Czech, Roma and Ruthenian languages, turning to all main minority groups.* – The Telegraph (The Telegraph's Foreign Staff 2019)

Here, the president embodies all current topics in modern society, usually used to polarise society into two groups – supporters and opposition. Depending on the reader's political orientation, this would bring the president closer or further from them. Additionally, *The Telegraph* stresses her fondness for diversity, ensuring the reader knows she did not leave out any minority group in her acceptance speech. This would also resonate with many British readers, especially those that belong to minorities, as British society is substantially diverse. The last notable point would be the use of phrasal verb "shy away from," which portrays her as somebody who is willing to be vocal about topics that are considered controversial in Slovakia. Another point to highlight is her confidence to stand up for her opinion and do whatever it takes to achieve her aims:

(40) *She **left** the mayor's office in 1998, along with the heads of several other departments, after a **disagreement** with the administration.* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

(41) *The day she went into labour, she says, she was completing a legal brief. Pavlovic says she was nothing if not **tough** and **stubborn**.* – The Independent (The Independent 2019)

Statement (40) shows the president's ability to stand up for what she believes is right, no matter the consequences. The statement serves to connote the qualities of a good leader – confidence, fight for justice, and fearlessness. Statement (41) shows her as a hard-working woman, clinging to her mission even on the last day of her pregnancy. This again enhances her identity as a strong, fearless female figure. Nevertheless, adjectives as "tough" and "stubborn" do not seem to be the stereotypical adjectives to describe a woman. As a result, the adjectives may be used to reinforce her male-like qualities if she wants to make her way to global politics – which is, to a large extent, almost full of men.

7.1.2 Multimodal Analysis

The first picture that the reader encounters is picture (2A), as it has a prominent position in the article layout and has a considerably bigger size than the other pictures embedded in the text. Judging from the clothes and the settings, it seems like both pictures were taken on the same day, possibly showing the two faces of the president. Firstly, the more distant and authoritative (2A) and secondly, the amiable and warm version (2B).

Figure 5 Picture 2A: Klamar, Joe. *Zuzana Čaputová*. 2019. Photograph. Getty Images. In The Independent.

Figure 6 Picture 2B: Simicek, Vladimir. *Zuzana Čaputová*. 2019. Photograph. Getty Images/iStockphoto. In The Independent.

The pictures examined do not show the actual process of Čaputová becoming a president (e. g. the election night). Instead, they show her as a ready-made figure of Slovak politics who confidently owns her position. In both (2A and 2B) settings symbolise the office of the president. The device that could carry connotations would be the flag of Slovakia and the

European Union along with the Slovak Presidential Palace. These would symbolise the state of which she is now a leader. Institutions and flags usually carry a high degree of associations, and they serve as what Ledin and Machin call "established connotators" (2020, chap. 2), embodying the state, its history, nation-shaping events and the citizens. In this case, the symbols may represent the responsibility and tough decisions the role of the president entails and symbolise that she can stand up for them confidently.

When it comes to salience based on Machin and Mayr's (2012, 54–56) perspective, Čaputová is wearing an eye-catching red blouse, which serves to attract the reader's attention. She seems to dominate the picture (2A), even when she hardly takes up half of it and is even positioned slightly to the right-bottom corner. Without saturation, she would be less prominent. Therefore, the saturation makes the president own the reader's attention. In 2B, the red colour still makes the president one of the central elements of the picture, but here, it is apparent that the author wants the reader to notice how the choice of clothing aligns perfectly with the colours of the Slovak flag. The overall message is enhanced by the colour of the sky, which represents the last colour of the Slovak flag – blue. This clearly serves to illustrate the synergy between the country and the president and generates the feeling of perfect harmony between these two entities.

The gaze is not directly pointed at the reader in either of the pictures. Thus, the pictures look more like an "offer image" (Kress and van Leeuwen in Hart 2020, 161). As stated by Machin and Mayr, such images are here for informative purposes, and the reader's participation is not demanded (2012, 71). This would suggest that the president does not require any reaction from the reader but is here to serve and care for the country's problems without involving the reader's endeavour. The crucial part here is the role of mimics (Machin and Mayr 2012, 70–71). In the picture (2A), Zuzana Čaputová looks considerably serious, with her eyebrows slightly dropped to indicate frowning, and her mimics invoke the feeling of seriousness and authority. On the contrary, in the picture (2B), she is smiling, has a relaxed facial expression and seems more friendly than authoritative. As stated previously, the article aims to show two sides of the president's identity. However, the authoritative one (2A) appears to be more important for the communicative purpose of the article as it is in a more prominent position.

Both pictures (2A and 2B) ale taken using the frontal angle (Hart 2020, 161), where the viewer is facing the president directly, which clearly outlines the position of the reader as a part of the society. Similarly, they are taken from the "side-on" and "close-up" perspective, indicating that the president and the reader are on equal terms (Machin and Mayr 2012, 98–

99). Even if the president is looking off the frame, the "close" size of frame helps her share the emotions with the reader (Machin and Mayr 2012, 97). Firstly, in 2A, the burden of authority and secondly in 2B, the happiness, willingness to talk to the citizens and easy-going mood. Additionally, in 2A, she is positioned higher than the reader, so the reader must look up to her. This enhances the perception of the power she holds in the state, making the reader feel her natural authority. Moreover, she is significantly close in both pictures, almost erasing the distance between the reader (a citizen) and the social actor (the authority). Based on the short distance, the reader is more likely to bond with the president (Machin and Mayr 2012, 97), sharing the good and the bad the country has to offer.

Regarding the visual modality and its explanation in Machin and Mayr (2012, 202–5), the articulation of the detail in (2A) is very low when paying attention to the background. Many foreign readers would not recognise the Slovak Presidential Palace in this picture, as the setting is blurred and seems to be less important. The focus in 2A is solely on the president and her emotions. On the contrary, in 2B, the background is less out of focus, and the reader is more likely to see the connection between the background and the president. 2B makes it evident that the building behind her is the Slovak Presidential Palace, with flags of Slovakia and the European Union standing tall. The president remains the main focus, but proportionally, the palace as a symbol of the country takes up a similar part of the picture. This might serve as an equalising force between the figure of the president and the country itself.

Lastly, the tones in 2A are lighter, which is also underpinned by choice of clothing. As mentioned above, the president is wearing a red blouse, but the choice of the colour of the jacket in compliance with the background foreground her fight for the truth. She stands in the light, which enhances the overall light tonality. As stated by Machin and Mayr, lighter tones are associated with "transparency and truth" (2012, 205). On the contrary, in 2B the president herself is foregrounded and seems to be depicted using light tonality. Nevertheless, the Slovak Presidential Palace, which serves as a symbol of the country, is much darker than in 2A, which might suggest the overall negative state of the country.

7.2 Igor Matovič

Matovič served as a prime minister from 2020 to 2021. Currently, he belongs to one of the least trusted figures in modern Slovak politics. He is a leader of the political party OĽaNO, which won the majority of seats in the parliamentary election in 2020. The following chapter will outline how the selected British newspapers constructed his identity.

In the following part, I will analyse the most prominent language choices made when referring to the former prime minister Igor Matovič. This part includes several examples from the article published by *The Guardian*. In this example, it appears evident that he is contrasted with president Zuzana Čaputová.

(42) ***President Zuzana Čaputová, a liberal****, said on Sunday she would announce her next steps on Monday,* ***while Matovič earlier said she had already invited him to talks via telephone****.* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2020)

Example (42) clearly shows the unconventional personality of the former prime minister. While the president is described as a prudent person taking time with the further steps of the process, Matovič is claimed to had already disclosed the private details of their conversation to the press. This already contributes to creating the identity of a politician who cannot be trusted. This statement is doubled also by the way Čaputová is functionalized, but Matovič is only nominised. The author of the article thus made a conscious choice to omit Matovič's function to reach the desired communicative effect mentioned above. Additionally, *The Guardian* refer to him as:

(43) ***Matovič, who is an eccentric self-made millionaire and former media boss****, set up OLaNO, which is short for "ordinary people and independent personalities, a decade ago.* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2020)

(44) *Analysts suggest that* ***Matovič, a media-savvy but unpredictable politician****, has a good shot at becoming premier if he manages to unify the splintered opposition.* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2020)

Example (43) shows a paradoxical representation, calling him an "an eccentric self-made millionaire and former media boss" and contrasting the name of his political party, including "ordinary people," with the way he is described. The paradox is that the reader would hardly ever expect "an eccentric self-made millionaire and former media boss" as a leader of a party that claims to consist of "ordinary people and independent personalities." Thus, the author gives the reader subtle hints without stating anything explicitly but makes the conscious choice to shape his identity as "a man of paradoxes." Another important choice to highlight is his denomination as a "former media boss." The noun "boss" seems to carry a negative connotation, bringing out the feeling of authority, power and manipulation of public opinion with connection to the media. The author decides to functionalise him using the negative connotations rather than his political function being the leader of OĽaNO.

In example (44), the author reinforces Matovič's position as somebody who is skilful with the media but does not tend to make rational choices. The statement further uncovers

that the country's future is hanging by a thread as Matovič is the only one who can unite the opposition and form a new government. Contrasting this with the first part of the sentence is also quite paradoxical, as the reader will hardly think about somebody called "unpredictable" as a person they would trust with uniting the opposition.

Matovič is described similarly by *The Telegraph*:

(45) *The leader of the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLANO) party, Igor Matovic, is **a millionaire media mogul**.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020b)

In (45), his political function is situated in the "theme" position, whereas the fact that he is a wealthy "media mogul" is rhematised. Therefore, the reader will focus on the new information – the fact that he is a wealthy man with power rather than his function in politics. In *The Telegraph's* article, another contrast with the president is raised by statements that occur subsequently:

(46) *Latent anger over the murders also helped **Zuzana Caputova, a human rights lawyer**, win Slovakia's presidential election in 2019.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020b)

(47) *While any new government headed by **Mr Matovic** will probably make tackling corruption a high-profile priority **he may well struggle** to undo the damage to Slovakia's reputation the double murder caused.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020b)

Where the president is nominised and functionalised, the winner of the parliamentary elections is referred to as simply – Mr Matovic. Generally, after the election, in the place where he is functionalised, it is mainly done in a way that invokes negative connotations, such as in (43), (44), (45).

Nevertheless, it needs to be stated that *The Telegraph* also portrays him as a trustworthy politician during the Covid-19 pandemic. He is quoted, which establishes him as a credible source.

(48) *"It's important that as many people as possible are tested," **Igor Matovic, the Slovakian prime minister**, said at a press conference.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020a)

(49) *"If we don't put the handbrake on, we'll reach the point at which the Czech Republic is now, or the Italian city of Bergamo was in the spring, and we'll have to make decisions on whom to save and whom to allow to die in the end," **warned the prime minister**.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020a)

(50) *"People who cannot provide a test [result], either from state testing or from a test they have taken privately will be quarantined for the next 10 days," **said Mr Matovic**.* – The Telegraph (Day 2020a)

In (48), the author chooses to do both – nominise and functionalise Matovič. Along with being directly quoted, the nominisation might have been applied to bring him closer to the reader in a matter such delicate as the pandemic and the restrictions, and the functionalisation would connote his credibility (Van Leeuwen, in Machin and Mayr 2012, 81–82). Then, in example (49), the author underpins the seriousness of the statement by solely functionalising him and hiding him behind the office of the prime minister. It can also be claimed that the author impersonalises him and backs his statement by the prime minister's office, giving him the necessary distance from his statement. Finally, in example (50), he is purely nominised to connote togetherness with the reader, positioning him as an ordinary person so people can easily relate to him. This could have been done due to the content of the statement, the author might have wanted to show that this will also apply to "Mr Matovic," using the honorifics to remind the reader that his social status is still significant. Nonetheless, he can also be perceived as "one of us," and the same measures apply to him.

7.3 Robert Fico

Robert Fico is a well-known Slovak politician and a leader of a left-wing party called Smer – sociálna demokracia. He served as a prime minister from 2006–2010 and from 2012–2018. This chapter will present him from the perspective of the British press, analysing the language choices that stood out the most when referring to Robert Fico and his identity in the press.

(51) *Fico, who is considered **a populist politician**,…* – The Independent (AP News Wire 2022b)

(52) *…the leftist Smer-Social Democracy **of former populist Prime Minister Robert Fico**.* – The Independent (AP News Wire 2022c)

(53) *…and led to the toppling in 2108 of **the powerful head of the populist-left Smer-Social Democracy (Smer-SD)**, Robert Fico, as prime minister.* – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2020)

(54) *Fico, who had been prime minister for 10 of the past 12 years, **portrayed himself as a more reasonable figure than populist and nationalist forces in neighbouring Hungary and Poland,** although at times he **used populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric**, and once referred to journalists as "dirty anti-Slovak prostitutes."* – The Guardian (Walker 2018)

Firstly, it is evident that in recent years, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* made their choices to foreground his populistic style of politics, mentioning it in all examples above.

However, it is important to note that the attribute "populist" is not directly ascribed to Fico in (53), but to his political party. Despite that, he is still directly linked with this style of politics in (51) and (52). In (54), this is done indirectly, where the author firstly introduces him in Fico's own words as a down-to-earth person, but later contrasts Fico's words with his actions. This choice is made to weaken his credibility implicitly.

(55) *...resignation* **of long-standing prime minister Robert Fico** *a month later*. – The Guardian (Walker 2020)

(56) *...***of Fico, who had dominated Slovakia as prime minister for 10 of the previous 12 years**. – The Guardian (Reuters 2019)

(57) *On Thursday, the crisis brought down* **Roberto Fico, the prime minister, who has been in office for 10 out of the last 12 years**. – The Telegraph (Squires 2018)

Another aspect that is brought forward by the British newspapers seems to be the time he held state office on any level. This choice is made to stress the strength of the protests that took place after the murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová, forcing Fico to resign as a prime minister. The authors use the number of years he had been in the office to show the strength of people who were able to put public pressure on somebody as established in the office as him to stand down. This message is enhanced by functionalisation, which shows that ordinary citizens can impact politics, even the figures as influential as Fico is.

(58) *Fico,* **the Smer prime minister who had been keen to transfer to the presidential palace**. – The Guardian (Walker 2019)

(59) **Mr Fico, whose country** *currently holds the rotating EU presidency...* – The Telegraph (Telegraph View 2016)

(60) **Mr Fico** *tendered his resignation to Andrej Kiska, Slovakia's president, but with one key condition – that his party,* **Smer-SD, be allowed to choose his successor**. – Telegraph (Squires 2018)

(61) *...for Fico, who previously enjoyed* **ironclad popularity***, as he gears up for the 2016 general election*. – The Guardian (Agence France-Presse 2014)

Example (59), along with (56) and (61), establishes Fico as the quintessential part of Slovak politics. The choice of words in example (59) indicates that the country is solely in his hands, as the author uses the possessive determiner "whose" to reiterate the power Fico yields over the country. In (56), he uses the verb "dominates" to connote authority and, again, power. Example (56) impersonalises the government of Slovakia, as it is impossible for Fico to have dominated the whole country and every single citizen. In (61), his popularity is compared to

"iron," which connotes his voters' stable and firm support. Overall, these statements position him as the strongest politician who runs the country on his own. The same idea is also transferred to (60), where he appears to hold power also over former president Andrej Kiska, showing the reader that Fico is the man who can set his own rules, and even the president has to comply with them.

Example (58) shows that despite all the scandals, Fico confidently stands as a political leader and aspires to hold the president's office. This also contributes to his fearless and dominant identity in Slovak politics.

Another important point is that *The Telegraph* uses the honorifics as "Mr" to refer to Fico more often than *The Guardian* or *The Independent.* Therefore, it gives him more credibility than the other selected newspapers. This may also appear quite paradoxical, as *The Telegraph* is believed to hold the right-wing view, and Fico's party is claimed to be left-wing. However, most actions subtly indicate that his stance is more conservative. Therefore, it may be that his populistic actions are, to a certain extent, backgrounded by *The Telegraph* as some may align with the newspaper's worldview.

To conclude, the three selected social actors seem to have a precise sense of identity in the British press. The identity constructed for Zuzana Čaputová appears to be on the positive side of the spectrum, with her strong female image and concentration on topics popular in Western countries. On the other hand, Robert Fico is described as a powerful populist politician who dominated the country. Additionally, Igor Matovič is usually associated with his power in media and seems to be established as a credible source during the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to carry out a discourse analysis of the perception of Slovakia and the most prominent social actors of the country in the selected British newspapers, focusing on the articles published online by The Guardian, The Telegraph and The Independent. The analysis was conducted based on specific examples from the articles, suggesting how the identity was constructed and how the reader may perceive the linguistic choices the authors used to position the country and the social actors in the reader's mind.

From the practical part of the thesis, it is evident that a typical reader of British quality newspapers will perceive Slovakia as a small European country with deeply religious roots. A noteworthy observation is that some of the denominations used by The Telegraph seem to heavily foreground the precise position as a part of Eastern or Central Europe. On the contrary, The Guardian's readers will perceive Slovakia as a country in its own right, without trying to pinpoint which part of Europe it is precisely part of. Therefore, this connotative view that often carries an emotional load, usually connected with the country's history as a part of the Eastern bloc, would be omitted when it comes to the interpretation of The Guardian's readers.

The adjectives and noun phrases that supplemented the denotation of the country mainly carried connotations on the negative scale, positioning Slovakia as a corrupt country whose citizens are still loyal to conservative values. Another group of adjectives, such as "overlooked," "forgotten" may at first seem negative. However, when put in the context of the whole article, some adjectives that initially looked more negative were used to serve a positive purpose. This has been done mainly in the articles related to tourism, where the first negative adjective was used as a hook to read on and discover that the country has something to offer.

When it comes to the imagery in tourism-related articles, it was used with more positive connotations. The authors usually highlighted the positive aspects of the places. On the contrary, when carrying out the multimodal analysis of two pictures to be found in one of the articles published by The Guardian, it is evident that the authors have no intention of backgrounding the less appealing parts of the capital city.

The analysis of the social actors proved that the British media favour Zuzana Čaputová, and her identity consists mainly of being a liberal lawyer, a politician and a mother. The fact that she is a woman is foregrounded by the topics such as motherhood and the stereotypically female qualities attributed to her style of politics. Throughout her presidency, her statements

are also frequently used in contrast with the statements of other politicians, where she is mostly directly quoted.

The analysis shows that the most foregrounded characteristics of Igor Matovič are his experience with the media and his specific style of politics. His actions are mentioned in contrast to the president's, overall undermining his ability to govern the country. Robert Fico is described as a populist politician, with the newspapers usually highlighting his time in office as a prime minister. He is also described as somebody who dominates the country.

In summary, the thesis utilised the selected tools of discourse analysis and applied them to analyse the articles published by the British press to gain insight into how Slovakia could be perceived by foreign readers. To gain a holistic view of the representation of the country, more articles and discourse analysis tools would need to be applied. The analysis focuses only on selected elements, due to the adequate extent of the research.

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Visual Material

Klamar, Joe. *Zuzana Čaputová*. 2019. Photograph. Getty Images. In The Independent, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/slovakia-zuzana-caputova-czech-republic-president-corruption-landfill-a8962156.html.

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LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDICES

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