

“IT’S NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH”.
THE NOTIONS OF TRUTH AND FALSE-
HOOD AS PERSUASIVE DEVICES IN
POLISH AND SWEDISH PARLIAMEN-
TARY TALK

MAGDALENA DOMERADZKA

SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw

ABSTRACT. The article analyses references made to the notion of truth and falsehood in Swedish and Polish parliamentary talk. The results show that despite the mainstreaming of post-structuralism in contemporary society, the notion of truth – the central question of Western philosophy – is still present in the parliamentary talk and in the ways in which MPs deliberate and engage in arguments. As the article argues, the MPs deploy discursive strategies exploiting mostly the classical or early modern objective theories of truth. Seeing truth as the ultimate value makes it expedient as a persuasive device and part of *epideictic oratory*. Apart from the similarities found in the Swedish and Polish parliamentary talk, the article shows differences mainly in how directly an accusation of lying can be voiced in the two parliaments.

 sciendo

PRESSto.

Indeed, truth is no doubt a form of power.

Michel Foucault

INTRODUCTION

Studies of parliamentary talk in a number of countries prove parliamentary discourses to be far from Habermas’ ideal speech situation (Habermas 1984). What is more, with the world-wide debates on the phenomena like post-truth politics, fake news, alternative facts and the role of the new media, the notion of truth in the public and political debate has received new dimensions.

The present study *does not* aim at unveiling the fallacies of argumentation or identifying possible doublespeak. Instead, I seek to identify communicative

strategies that use the notion of *truth* and *falsehood* as part of parliamentary rhetoric and their possible roles in parliamentary talk.

Using the concepts of truth and falsehood, the latter understood as the opposite of truth, can certainly be seen as characteristic of different types of discourse and language in general. Saying "It's true and you know it" can be seen as part of everyday rhetoric. This study, however, focuses on the functions that using the concepts of truth and falsehood can play in political discourse as exemplified by Swedish and Polish parliamentary talk.

2. AIMS, CORPORA AND METHOD

The present study aims to examine the notion of *truth* as a rhetorical device in parliamentary discourses in the Swedish Riksdag and the Polish Sejm, two parliaments that have different organisational practices as well as in many ways varying traditions of political culture and political discourse.

The corpus comprises all the officially available transcripts of debates held in the Swedish Riksdag and the Polish Lower House, Sejm, during two different terms of office. The period was chosen with the aim of covering different political situations with the same parties being in majority part of this time and the rest of the time – in opposition. The debates took place from September 2010 to April 2018 and from November 2011 to April 2018 for the Swedish and Polish corpus, respectively. As the primary aim of the study was to analyse interaction between the debating MPs, the Swedish corpus consists (with a few exceptions) of party leaders' debates and the Polish one comprises plenary meetings with a large number of both MPs and government representatives present. Finding the same type of debates was impossible due to the different debating practices of the two parliaments.

The methodology employed is pragma-rhetoric that combines a close analysis of contexts with the analysis of persuasive aspects carried out using modern rhetoric (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2013). The comparative approach of the study will hopefully help to give a more in-depth insight into the nature of these political discourses as they are formed in two different cultures and is hoped to contribute to the body of cross-linguistic analyses of parliamentary discourse that is still in the process of developing a satisfactory research methodology, especially with regard to, among other aspects, culture-dependent patterns and practices of politeness (cf. Harris 2001).

It is not my ambition to identify all possible words or phrases that are used to describe a political situation and in some way or other employ the concept of *truth* and *falsehood*. These would include semantically unmarked expressions such as "there is", "it is" and words like "situation" as well as various metaphors (see Kampka 2013). What I want to identify are the heuristic and persuasive

functions that using the concepts of *truth* and *falsehood* can play in parliamentary talk. The expressions I analyse are the most frequent words and phrases using the concept of *truth* and *falsehood* (for a more detailed list see Bralczyk 2007:183-185). A more detailed analysis of the expressions found in both corpora could certainly prove beneficial for the study, it would, however, exceed the scope of one article. For more exhaustive semantical studies of *truth* and *lying* in Polish see e.g. Antas (1999), Karwatowska (2003).

I choose to use rhetoric as *modus operandi* as my primary goal is to investigate persuasion, although I also refer briefly to face-threatening acts developed within the politeness theory (Goffman, 1967). I decide not to use Grice’s cooperative maxims, which could have been a possible framework in my study. The view I assume instead is a broader theoretical approach that sees the cooperation in parliamentary talk as a competition of different truths (see section 5 *Truth* in parliamentary discourse).

3. THEORIES OF TRUTH

The notion of *truth* has since the earliest times received countless scholarly interpretations. Beginning with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, thinkers have been preoccupied with the idea of an objective truth and the search for it has formed the values and beliefs of the whole Western World (Allen 1992). Classical philosophy saw *truth* as likeness or sameness with *what is*, i.e. the actual world and it prioritised nature and being over language and culture or history. Those classical theories of truth have since been challenged and either modified by the modern or revised by both the late-modern and post-modern thinkers. With Nietzsche’s rejection of the objective reality and his perspectivalism that questioned the superior value of truth and identified our *will to truth* as questionable (Allen 1995), a possibility opened for different truths. Foucault took Nietzsche’s thought a step further and saw truth as a power that can be used in political government, understood not as institutions but as control of conduct (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the criticism against the correspondence theories of truth including both pragmatic (e.g. William James, Charles Sanders Peirce) and constructivist epistemology (starting with Giambattista Vico) or even consensus theory claimed the truth can be achieved in an ideal speech situation (Jürgen Habermas), the search for an objective truth and the idea of there existing *a reality* or *a truth* seems to be constantly present in the way we think and interact and can be seen as part of our philosophical heritage.

4. TRUTH AND RHETORIC

What the rhetorical theory finds especially relevant with regard to *truth* is the relation between the *factual situation*, "the exigence", on the one hand, and the *rhetorical act* on the other hand. Theoreticians have seen this relation in different ways. The factual situation has been described as existing objectively prior to the rhetorical act and thus determining the rhetoric (with the audience and constraints as other elements being part of the rhetorical situation). (Bitzer 1968). Other interpretations have given more influence to the rhetor who, instead of being dominated by the situation, is seen as the one who creates the situation, giving salience to the matters of his own choice and hence setting the agenda (Vatz 1973). Yet another view is more cautious as to the power of the rhetor and – being a compromise between the two views – does not see the rhetor as entirely free to invent problems "disregarding the situational parameters and particularities therein" (Consigny 1974:181). The rhetor here has the power to *determine* the situation but is *determined* and constrained by it at the same time.

One important Aristotelian distinction with bearing also on the relation between *truth* and *persuasion*, is the classical division into the different parts of rhetorical speech i.e. *deliberative*, *forensic* and *epideictic* (Aristotle, Book 1:3:5-7). The *forensic rhetoric* being preoccupied with the judicial topics and the past, two parts of the oratory – *deliberative* and *epideictic* are of interest for the present study. The *deliberative* (or "legislative") oratory with its focus on making decisions for the future is as central aspect of political speech and also pertains to the definition of what makes speech political: its ambition to legislate for the future. The third of the classical oratories, *epideictic rhetoric* focuses on the present time and is of importance for the present study as it deals with praising and blaming i.e. attributing values to things, humans and human actions.

5. TRUTH IN PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE

The currently mainstream approach of political science to parliamentary democracies sees deliberation as an important part of the way these assemblies work. This focus on deliberation, inspired by the Aristotelian thought, has obvious consequences for the parliamentary talk. Making parliamentary deliberations a central part of the democratic process sets requirements on the communicative action to be rational (Habermas 1979, 1984). As far the truth is concerned, this communicative ideal does not presuppose a singular truth. What it advocates instead is to see the communicative act as a competition of different truths, as long as all the participants are guaranteed the equal right to speak and to be heard in the common debate (Pekonen 2011:56-57; 65).

What also matters is the real role that the parliamentary talk plays in different parliamentary democracies and whether the e.g. the talk has real power of influencing politics in the Ranciere’s sense that is the possibility of changing the contemporary situation or whether it deals with what Ranciere call *the police* i.e. maintaining order (Pekonen 2011; Ranciere 1998). The question relevant to this study is thus what the parliamentary talk is preoccupied with – *the police* or with what is “truly political”.

6. SWEDISH AND POLISH PARLIAMENTARY TALK

In recent decades parliamentary talk has received a considerable amount of interest from the cross-linguistic approach (see e.g. Bayley 2004, Ilie 2010a, b). One can, of course, find even more studies on the discourses of the individual parliaments (see e.g. Kampka 2009 for an account of research on the Polish parliamentary talk).

The research that is most relevant for this study shows that Swedish parliamentary talk represents a “neutral and rather unemotional rhetorical style” (Ilie 2003) and is to a large extent consensus-oriented (Ilie 2007). Insulting, when it takes place in the Swedish Riksdag, can be described as “ethos-oriented logos” (Ilie 2003).

Polish parliamentary talk after 1989 includes procedural interruptions such as comments made from the auditorium, presence of lower style speech including insulting language and significant presence of pathos-oriented argumentation (Ornatowski 2010, Piniarski 2011, Beshai 2000, 2001).

7. DIFFERENT REALITIES

As I see it, inspired by Bralczyk (2007:176-185), even references to the word “reality” use the commonsense concept of what is and what is not true (even if philosophical discussion on the notion of *truth* see this matter more strictly). An idea of an objectively existing factual situation as encoded in the word *reality* is frequently used in political discourse. The Swedish and Polish words “verklighet” and “rzeczywistość” (both translated as “reality”) are used in parliamentary talk as a way of convincing the political opponents (and the broader public) of the correctness of what one claims to see as the factual situation. What one really wants to ascertain is rather one of the possible interpretations and evaluations of a situation, let it be an economic, social or political one, which is rather seldom admitted.

Most of the claims made by politicians as to what the factual reality looks like are rather categorical and clear-cut (see examples (1) and (2) below). In some rhetorical encounters politicians admit a possibility of there being more than one truth, as in example (3), where the leader of the Swedish Left Party is

more deliberative and talks about *describing* the reality and of the possibility of different narratives coexisting with each other.

- (1) Herr talman! Detta är den **verklighet** vi befinner oss i. Otryggheten finns där, men den kan och ska mötas. Om 2016 var ett mörkt år kommer det kommande året att bli ljusare.

Mr Speaker! That's the reality we live in. There is some insecurity here, but we can and should confront it. If 2016 was a dark year, the following year is going to be brighter.

(Annie Lööf, Center Party, 2016.01.11)

- (2) Taka jest po prostu **rzeczywistość**.

Such is simply the reality.

(Franciszek Jerzy Stefaniuk, United People's Party, 2012.01.11)

- (3) Men hur ska man då **beskriva verkligheten? Jag tror att bägge bilderna är lite sanna**. På ett sätt går det bra. Fler har arbete, och det är otroligt viktigt. Vi bygger fler bostäder än förut, och det är otroligt viktigt. Och vi måste få ordning på skolresultaten. Kanske har vi vänt detta - det är jättebra.

But how you should **describe reality**, then? **I believe that both images are somewhat true**. In a way it is ok. More people have job, and that's truly important. We build more places to live than before, and that's truly important. And we have to get right the [students'] results at schools. Maybe we've been waiting for it - that's really good.

(Jonas Sjöstedt, Left Party, 2016.01.11)

The notion of *reality* can also be used with the aim to harm the credibility of a political adversary (or his political grouping). This ethos-oriented function is visible when a politician claims that his or her opponent(s) fail to see or interpret reality as it is. In (4) below the Swedish politician Jimmie Åkesson (Swedish Democrats) accuses his opponents of being "reality resistant", evoking in this way the whole anti-Donald Trump discourse that was extensively covered by the Swedish media since the successful election of the populist US President. The Swedish politician uses this up-to-date expression aiming to harm the ethos of his opponent and at the same time, boost his own.

In the examples from the Polish Sejm ((5) and (6) below) the politicians accuse their adversaries of failing to see reality and trying to obscure it with the help of metaphors "enchanting" and "outshouting" reality (the former expression is a rather conventional metaphor in Polish, the latter has gained in use from 2010 and onward.)

- (4) För varje dag som går blir jag mer och mer bekymrad över den nuvarande regeringens totala oförmåga och den **verklighetsresistens** som präglar deras analys och politik. Sverige behöver ett nytt styre, herr talman, som kan ta sig an vårt lands problem och utmaningar utifrån vad verkligheten faktiskt kräver.

With every day I'm getting more and more worried about the present government absolute incapability and its' **reality resistance** that marks their analyses and policy.

Sweden needs new rule, Mr Speaker, that would be able to handle the country’s problems and challenges on the basis of what reality requires.

(Jimmie Åkesson, Swedish Democrats, 2017.01.11)

- (5) (...) i ponosi rządzące Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, a nie opozycja, i nie **zaczarujecie** rzeczywistości.

(...) and it is the ruling Law and Justice[’s responsibility], not the oppositions’s, and you cannot enchant reality.

(Rafał Trzaskowski, Civic Platform, 2016.01.13)

- (6) **Nie zakrzyczycie rzeczywistości**, drodzy państwo.

You’re not to going **outshout** reality, dear colleagues.

(Prime Minister Beata Szydło, Law and Justice, 13.01.2016)

Adjectives and adverbs involving the category of truth can be utilised in political discourse (although such usage is to be found in everyday speech as well) as a tool enabling the speaker to unveil the allegedly true opinions that the opponent tries to hide, does not want to bring up or that is different from one’s own interpretation of the facts (see quotations (7)-(9)). This type of criticism can be seen as accusing the opponents of fallacies, even though choosing different facts and interpretations to back one’s own ideology is, of course, what political actors are constantly involved in.

- (7) Reepalus förslag kommer inte bara att begränsa valfriheten. Det kommer också att göra att välfungerande, högkvalitativa och populära verksamheter tvingas lägga ned. Det är **faktiskt** det som förslaget innebär.

Reepalu’s proposition will not only limit the freedom of choice. It will force well-functioning and popular businesses of high quality to shut down. That is what the proposition **actually** entails.

(Annie Lööf, Center Party, 2016.01.11)

- (8) Du kan tala om de stora satsningarna, men **i verkligheten**, när polisen är i kris, är den underfinansierad.

You can talk about spending this big money, but in reality, when the police is in crisis, it is underfunded.

(Anna Kinberg Batra, Moderate Party, 2017.01.11)

- (9) Bo ja ciągle wierzę, że wczorajsze spotkanie w Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów (...) tylko było **rzeczywistą troską** o Polskę.

Because I still believe that yesterday’s meeting at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (...) was only out of **a real concern** for Poland. (...)

(Prime Minister Beata Szydło, Law and Justice, 2016.01.13)

8. THE TRUTH AND THE FACTS

The claim of this article is that referring to *the truth* in a political debate is not at all rhetorically neutral. What it does instead is to exploit the whole cultural baggage that the concept of truth has accumulated in our society. The basic part of this cultural concept is the popular belief in *a truth*, and our pursuit of the truth (recently also in *facts* (Wierzbicka 2006:45)). The first one is the belief we have in an objective truth, the second one – the positive values we attach to the concept of truth which makes *the truth* a value in itself.

Some of the expressions found in the corpora referring explicitly to *the truth* are quite authoritative statements: "this is the truth" or "these are the facts" and they are relatively frequent in the parliamentary talk both in the Riksdag and Sejm. The difference between the semantics of *the truth* and *the facts*, as it seems, is the ethical dimension of the concept of truth, which is, arguably, missing in the Swedish and Polish cognates of the latin *factum*. The corpus of this study shows that both words for *truth* and *fact* are used to strengthen different kinds of arguments including *logos* argumentation. The words for *fact*, however, are more frequently used as *presuppositions*, which make them more demanding to discern as rhetorical strategies in terms of epistemic vigilance (see example (10)). Additionally, *facts* are sometimes used as synonyms of *logos* arguments and opposed to less credible rhetoric or emotional argumentation (see example (11) below).

- (10) Jag menar att man kan koka ned allt detta till en enda sak, nämligen **det faktum att** Sverige slits isär.

I mean that everything boils down to one thing, namely the fact that Sweden is being drawn apart.

(Jimmie Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2012.01.18)

- (11) Herr talman! Förälskelsen i det höga tonläget tar över framför fakta. Man tappar kontakt med orden. Varje dag ger Håkan Juholt nya besked om att vi skänker bort saker. Ska vi ta fram bevisen för det, Håkan Juholt?

Mr Speaker! Infatuation in the strident tones win over facts. You lose contact with reality. Håkan Juholt sees new messages that we give away things.

(Fredrik Reinfeldt, Moderate Party, 2012.01.18)

9. LIES

The opposite of *truth* is normally assumed to be *falsehood*. However, from the point of view of communication *infidelity* or *insincerity* can also be treated as the opposite of truth, especially as the act of lying presupposes the aim to cheat on the part of the liar (Antas 1999:171). Rhetorically, both the notions of *falsehood* and *insincerity* can be employed in a political dispute with partly different functions.

Bringing up *falsehood* revokes and reinforces our belief in *a truth*. Politicians, arguably, rather seldom admit to the possibility of the existence of different truths and interpretations of a factual political, economic or social situation. What they do instead is to call the representations and interpretations of factual situations presented by their adversaries *untruths* and *misrepresentations*. Calling someone’s narrative *a lie* or calling someone *a liar* exploits the axiological aspect of *lying*. *To lie* is seen, as was pointed out earlier, as morally wrong. Saying to someone “You’re lying” evokes similar moral evaluations that our culture has created and additionally gives our adversary the semantic role of the agent thus holding the person “responsible” for lying and shifting the focus of the debate from the subject matter to the interpersonal play involving a direct personal assault.

9.1 UNTRUE

In both the Swedish and the Polish Parliament the MPs use the concept of *falsehood* mainly in refutations when they want to oppose the statement of a political adversary. The phrases that are used in both languages include the equivalents of “This is not true”, This is “untrue”, ” (see examples (12)-(16) below), some of the statements have adjectival and adverbial modifiers as “complete”, “utter truth” or “simply not true”.

- (12) Det är ju inte sant. Det är inte så. Det är minst lika illa nu som det var med den förra regeringen, nästan allting. Arbetslösheten är något lägre - javisst. Men vi befinner oss i högkonjunktur, och det är inte ett dugg Stefan Löfvens förtjänst.

It’s not true. That’s not the way it is. It is at least equally bad now as it was with the former government, almost everything. The unemployment rate is somewhat lower - yes. But the economy is booming and this is not at all thanks to Stefan Löfven.

(Jimmie Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2016.01.11)

- (13) **Mówienie**, że prokuratura jest niezależna, jest **całkowitą nieprawdą**.

Saying that the prosecutor’s office is independent is **utterly untrue**.

(Michał Wójcik, Law and Justice, 3.01. 2016.01.03)

- (14) Men Jan Björklund missar sällan möjligheten att ta en enkel partipolitisk poäng, även om det han säger inte **stämmer helt med sanningen**.

But Jan Björklund seldom misses a chance to win cheap points for his own party, even if what he is saying **doesn’t really match the truth**.

(Jonas Sjöstedt, Left Party 2014.06.18)

- (15) Det som Anna Kinberg Batra tar upp är **helt enkelt inte sant**.

What Anna Kinberg Batra says is **simply not true**.

(Jimmie Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2017.01.11)

- (16) När regeringen står stilla och även inom detta område uppblåst konstaterar att man är bäst, vilket sannerligen **är långt från sanningen**, vill vi gå framåt.
 When the government stands still and arrogantly states that it is the best within this field as well, which is certainly far from the truth, we want to move forward.
 (Håkan Juholt, Social Democratic Party, 2012.01.18)

9.2 PARTLY TRUE

On a number of occasions the MPs respond to their opponents by accusing them of presenting only partly true information or interpretation. This, coupled with a clarification can be seen as a strategy that has a potential of truth negotiations, although it, too, uses our desire to be told the truth as a rhetoric device. If an account of a situation receives the label half-truth, the whole utterance receives a more derogatory tone and an ethos-threatening function.

- (17) Herr talman! Vad gäller nordiskt snitt och försvarskostnader i förhållande till bnp: Ja, det kan vara en intressant jämförelsesiffra. Men den är inte allena saliggörande. Om ett land får mycket bättre bnp-tillväxt än ett annat land har det helt plötsligt sämre försvarsförmåga eftersom man räknar i procent av bnp. **Det är alltså inte hela sanningen.**
 Mr. Speaker! As regards the Scandinavian average and the defence costs in relation to GDP: Yes, it can be an interesting comparison. But it is not the be-all and end-all. If one country's GDP growth is much higher than another's, that country suddenly has much lower defence capabilities since you calculate in percentage of the GDP. **It is then not the whole truth.**
 (Stefan Löfven, Social Democratic Party, 2016.01.11)

- (18) Det är en del av sanningen, men det är inte hela sanningen.
 It's part of the truth, but not the whole truth.
 (Jimmie Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2014.10.08)

9.3 LYING, LIES AND LIARS

The concept of *lying*, as was said earlier, is axiologically meaningful and brings about moral aspects of *telling untruths* and *being insincere*. A closer look at the contexts shows that *lying* can be used as a more dramatic and semantically stronger way of saying that one's political opponents are presenting a distorted picture of reality or an interpretation that we do not agree with. MPs also resort to the word *lie* when they claim that their adversaries are committing fallacies choosing the facts so that they suit their own reasoning. Most of the examples in the corpora show, however, that employing the concept of lying is more an ethos-oriented device, especially when directed at a concrete person.

A significant difference between the various instances of using both the verb *to lie* or the noun *lie* is the degree of directness and whether the addressee is used as the semantic agent in an utterance or not. On the whole, the Swedish MPs use the word *lie* much more often in an indirect way. The word *lie* can be employed, for instance, as part of “general truths” (see (19) below). Another example of a descriptive and indirect reference to a lie is, for instance, the phrases “as close to a lie as one can get” (example (20)).

- (19) Herr talman! Man brukar säga när man sprider en oriktig bild av verkligheten att man kan göra det på olika vis. Man kan göra det genom **lögn**, en annan sorts **lögn** och genom statistik. Statsministerns anförande menar jag var ett utmärkt exempel på det sista, statistik.

Mr Speaker! It is said that spreading a distorted picture of reality can be done in different ways. You can do it through **lies**, a different kind of lies and through statistics. The Prime Minister’s speech, I would say, is a perfect example of the last mentioned, statistics.

(Jonas Sjöstedt, Left Party, 2014.06.12)

- (20) Så är budskapet, och det säljs in i samma vackra kläder som löntagarfonderna såldes in en gång, men det är faktiskt **så nära lögn man kan komma**.

That is the message, and it is presented in the same fancy clothes as employee foundations were once, but it is in fact **as close to a lie as one can get**.

(Staffan Danielsson, Center Party, 2017.01.30)

The Swedish MPs only rarely use *assertoric propositions* such as “These are lies” (example (21)) and equally seldom accuse their adversaries of lying placing the opponent as the semantic agent in an utterance (see examples (22) and (23)). In the last of the quotations below the verb *to lie* is used in imperative and this sentence “Do not lie in the Swedish Riksdag!” is probably the strongest face-threatening act involving the concept of lying in the entire Swedish corpus as besides the imperative it also uses the both pathos- and ethos-oriented “Swedish Riksdag”.

- (21) Det här är fakta och en grund för fortsatta diskussioner om vårdfrågorna. Vi har utmaningar, men ingen är betjänt av överdrifter, halvsanningar eller rena rama lögner. Fru talman, statsministern! I söndagens partiledardebatt i tv sa Stefan Löfven bland annat: Sverigedemokraterna är ett nazistiskt parti. Han sa också att jag gick med i Sverigedemokraterna när man fortfarande hade hakkors på sina möten. Detta är konstaterade lögner. Ja, det fanns tveksamheter i partiet i begynnelsen. Det har jag aldrig någonsin förnekat. Jag skulle vilja påstå att det har funnits tveksamheter i alla partier, inte minst när de var mycket unga som partier, även om bilden naturligtvis är mer komplex än vad den mediala debatten vill göra gällande. Men det betyder inte, fru talman, att man kan ljuga hur som helst, särskilt inte om man är Sveriges statsminister.

These are the facts and a basis for continued discussions on healthcare issues. We have challenges, but no one is served by excesses, half-truths, or pure-bred lies. Madam Speaker, Prime Minister! In the party leader debate on television last Sunday Stefan Löfven said among other things: The Swedish Democrats is a nazi party. He also said that I joined the Swedish Democrats when they were still carrying swastikas at their meetings. These are confirmed lies. Yes, there were ambiguities in the party at the beginning. I have never denied it. I would claim that there have been ambiguities in all parties, especially when they were very young parties, even though the picture, of course, is much more complex than the media debate would have it. But that does not mean, Madame Speaker, that you can lie any which way, especially not if you are the Prime Minister of Sweden.

(Jimmy Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2016.10.13)

- (22) Du kan säga vad du vill på torget. Du **ljög** för folk och sa att du tyckte att det var ett problem med vinstintresse för skolan. Det var samma sak om a-kassan och pensionärsskatten. Det är ett tydligt besked till väljarna: **Tro inte på vad Jimmie** Åkesson säger. Han är beredd att överge vilket vallöfte som helst.

You can say what you like in the squares. You lied to people saying you consider the profit motive a problem for schools. It was the same thing with the unemployment fund and taxes for pensioners. This is a clear message to the voters: do not believe what Jimmie Åkesson says. He is prepared to let go of any election promise.

(Jonas Sjöstedt, Left Party, 2015.06.10)

- (23) Fru talman! Min fråga är: Varför ljuger Stefan Löfven så mycket?

Madam Speaker! My question is: **Why is Stefan Löfven lying so much?**

(Jimmy Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2016.10.13)

- (24) Stå då inte här och anklaga någon annan för det, Jonas Sjöstedt! **Ljug** inte i Sveriges riksdag!

So don't stand there accusing someone else of that, Jonas Sjöstedt! Don't lie in the Swedish Riksdag!

(Anna Kinberg Batra, Moderate Party, 2015.06.15)

Swedish MPs can also accuse their opponents of not keeping to the truth and in a moralising, reproachful tone blame lies for impairing the quality of the debate (compare Ilie (2003) and her discussion on moralising replies to insults in the Swedish Riksdag) (see example (25) below).

- (25) Herr talman! Det är svårt att föra en diskussion när motparten **inte håller sig till sanningen**. Det blir inte någon särskilt givande diskussion när **motparten överdriver och hittar på saker**.

Mr. Speaker! It is difficult to have a discussion when the other party does not keep to the truth. The discussion is not very interesting when the opposing party exaggerates and makes things up.

(Jimmie Åkesson, Sweden Democrats, 2016.01.11)

The Polish transcripts, in contrast to the Swedish ones, reveal significantly more utterances involving the concept of *lying*. In some contexts quasi-proverbial expressions are found similar to the ones we saw in Swedish (example (26) below). It happens as well that the word *lie* is used rather cautiously, much alike the Swedish examples (see (27), (28) below). Many of the usages are, however, rather direct and blunt (example (29)). A large number of those utterances are unofficial commentaries made by the MPs who were not given the floor. The MPs behind these cries are, if possible, identified in the transcripts, otherwise the utterances are labelled “voice from the auditorium”. As we can see in quotation (30) the comments can even form a *polylogue* themselves (see Piniarski 2011:195-220 for a more in-depth analysis of unofficial comments in the Polish Sejm)

- (26) Panie Marszałku! Wysoka Izbo! **Kłamstwa są duże i małe. Najczęściej duże składają się z wielu małych kłamstw.**

Mr Speaker! Honourable ladies and gentlemen! Lies can be big and small. Most of the time, the big ones consist of small ones.

(Piotr Chmielowski, Palikot Movement, 2012.01.12)

- (27) Nie jest metodą na podważanie mojej wiarygodności używanie **kłamstw lub informacji, delikatnie mówiąc, nieścisłych.**

It is not a way to undermine my credibility to use **lies or information, to use a mild expression, inexact.**

(Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Civic Platform, 2012.10.12)

- (28) Dlaczego pan chrześcijan nazywa islamistami? Wprowadzacie państwo bardzo niebezpieczną sytuację. **Dezinformujecie Polaków.**

Why do you call Christians Islamists? You are creating a very dangerous situation. **You are misinforming** the Polish public.

(Jan Rzymelka, Civic Platform, 2015.10.8)

- (29) (..) to są zwykłe **cyniczne kłamstwa.** (*Oklaski*)

(..) these are simply **cynical lies.** (*Applause*)

(Arkadiusz Myrcha, Civic Platform, 2017.12.12.)

- (30) (*Głosy z sali: Kłamstwo!*)

(*Głos z sali: Prawda!*)

(*Głos z sali: Dość kłamstw!*) (*Dzwonek*)

(*Voice from the auditorium: Lie!*)

(*Voice from the auditorium: Truth!*)

(*Voice from the auditorium: Stop theses lies!*) (*Bell*)

(2017.12.12.)

What is more, in the most heated debates even the accusation “liar” or “liars” (*kłamca* and *kłamcy*) can be heard in the plenary room of the Polish Sejm

(see example (31) and (32), the latter one with the invective belonging to a childish style).

(31) (...) Polska jest bezpieczna i bezpieczni są jej obywatele. (...) **Wbrew kłamcom i donosicielom...**

Poland is safe and so are its citizens (...) despite liars and snitches.

(Ryszard Terlecki, Law and Justice, 2017.12.12)

(32) (Poseł Julia Pitera: **Kłamczuchy!**)

(MP Julia Pitera: **Liars!**)

(Julia Pitera, Civic Platform, 2012.10.12)

In the whole Swedish corpora only 13 instances of using the verb or the noun were found as compared with one single Polish debate that took place on the 20th October 2016 in which the verbs and nouns referring to *lying* were used all together as many as 56 times.

One cannot conclude that the presence of such personal insults is characteristic solely of those politicians that are regarded in their respective countries as populists (compare the analysis of truths and lies in populist talk by Burda 2012). What is more, the analysis has shown that the concepts of *truth* and *falsehood* are used by both the governing parties and those in opposition. Rather, inclination to use this type of vocabulary could be linked to the communicative style of the given MP. This would, however, require a more thorough analysis (compare Bracciale & Martella 2017).

10. CONCLUSIONS

Despite of the late-modern and post-modern criticism of the more traditional understandings of the concept of truth, they still have certain currency in the parliamentary talk and in the ways in which MPs deliberate and engage in arguments. Most of the references to the concept of *truth* and its opposite *falsehood* show that the practice of the parliamentary talk does not allow admitting to the existence of more than one truth. What the MPs do instead is to insist in their narrative on their own picture being the only true one, and accusing differing interpretations of being *false*, thus using the negative cultural baggage of *falsehood* and *the act of lying* as rhetorical devices.

The study has shown that the different traditions of political culture and political discourse in Sweden and Poland have produced divergent communication patterns in terms of how directly an accusation of lying can be voiced in the two parliaments. The difference regards first and foremost the quantity of use of the notion of *lie*, which is much more frequent in the Polish parliamentary talk. The phrases corresponding to "You're lying" are used in the Polish Sejm

both as official utterances, but even more frequently as unofficial "cries" made from the auditorium and not the podium. Another significant difference is the fact that the insults used in the Polish Sejm include calling adversaries *liars*, which never happens in the Swedish Parliament. This mostly qualitative (to a limited extent quantitative) analysis shows that cross-linguistic comparison can contribute to describing the boundaries that parliaments as *communities of practice* set themselves as unofficial rules of conduct. Rules of debate in neither of the two Parliaments state explicitly that personal assaults of this kind would be unacceptable and accusations of *lying* or *being a liar* themselves are not officially or unofficially banned. The practice, however, is different in the Swedish Riksdag and the Polish Sejm.

A question I would like to pose is whether referring to the concept of *truth* or *falsehood* can have a positive heuristic and truth-seeking purpose. I do not suppose one can get by without referring to the *truth* in case of a conflict of opinion in our culture. References to the *truth*, exploiting the *truth* as a moral value, are made on a daily basis and are used in political discourses including the debates of legislative bodies like Parliaments. In a time of fierce political conflict even using the concept of *lying* and accusing political opponents of *lies* can be a dramatic protest as well as, of course, a rhetorical device. Saying "You're lying" or "You're a liar" are first and foremost instances of *epideictic* (*ceremonial* or *demonstrative*) *oratory*. The aim of accusing one's opponents of *lying* is thus to arouse the emotions of the political opponents (and the whole audience), which critical theory would certainly say, has little to do with the ideals of Habermas' consensus or "real politics" in Ranciere's sense, whether we assume the goal of a political debate to be *consensus* or *dissensus* (the latter, according to recent theories, being more beneficial for society as a whole (Alnes 2016, Pekonen 2011)). The problem, as Polish sociologists see it, can be that a path through a conflict can result in *anomie*, which is not regarded as a desirable mode of conduct (Czyżewski et al. 2010:94).

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Magdalena Domeradzka

Uniwersytet Humanistycznospołeczny SWPS
Katedra Skandynawistyki
ul. Chodakowska 19/31
03-815 Warszawa
Poland

mdomeradzka@swps.edu.pl