

Corpus-Linguistic Analysis of Speech Communities on Anti-Gender Discourse in Slovene

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Abstract: This paper deals with a corpus-linguistic analysis of different text/media types in Slovene with the aim of finding out whether or not any of the communication channels covered by the corpora employed in our analysis serve as a means of unification against the concept of gender, thereby serving as a catalyst for creating and maintaining (new) speech communities. We aim to determine this by extracting the two most commonly misused concepts (terms) in Slovene, i.e. *gender theory* and *gender ideology*, and analysing their use in three different corpora of contemporary Slovene: the reference corpus Gigafida 2.0, the corpus of user-generated communication JANES, and the ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020 corpus. Thus, we confirm that the media for user-generated communication, Twitter in particular, serve as a medium on which speech communities are being built, with their members sharing common views, activities, and beliefs. Hence, Twitter is used as a medium for maintaining and reproducing mutual ideology.

Keywords: speech community, gender theory, gender ideology, Twitter, corpus linguistics

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In sociolinguistics, a speech community is observed in terms of its shared norms in order to evaluate different discourse variables. Discourse interactions in a speech community reveal shared norms that constitute different social identities. In this study we use corpus-linguistic methodology to analyse how gender and anti-gender discourses reveal the formation of speech communities with shared norms and beliefs in Slovene. The focus of the analysis is on the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender*

theory, two umbrella terms used by the opponents of gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights in Slovenia. We compare the use of the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender theory* in three different corpora: the reference corpus of Standard Slovene Gigafida 2.0, the most recent collection of Slovenian texts on the Web ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020, and the corpus of Slovenian user-generated communication JANES. The analysis is quantitative as well as qualitative, the latter focusing on a content analysis. Our hypothesis is that both concepts will be abundant in the selected datasets, especially *gender theory*, which is proving to be the buzzword of choice in Slovenian anti-gender discourse. In addition, given the difference in discourse in the reference and user-generated communication, we expect that both concepts will be far more prevalent in user-generated content, especially on Twitter, as we believe that anti-gender-minded communities will find it easier to express their negative attitudes when using Twitter, as we may reasonably expect the users to have no inhibitions given that they are using an online medium and may feel comfortable expressing their negative views in the company of like-minded users.

Background

Speech communities

In early definitions *speech communities* were described in structural linguistics as groups of people who share the same language and use the same system of linguistic signals (Bloomfield 1933). In the structuralist definition, therefore, the emphasis was on language as a system of linguistic signs, and speech communities were observed as communities sharing a common linguistic system in use. Later, sociolinguistics stepped away from descriptive and structural linguistics and began to view speech communities as the linguistic practices of groups of people in mutual interaction who share more than just a linguistic system. A speech community is a part of a community in which members share at least one language variant and a normative system of language use/usage (Fishman 1971), with special emphasis on the shared social as well as linguistic norms (Labov 1972).

This understanding of speech communities is closely linked to the understanding of a community as having members who 'share a common view, activity, belief, etc.' (Morgan 2014: 2). This definition includes digital communication, which radically altered communication patterns and behaviours and created entirely new communities:

Communities can be defined and identified in terms of space, place, affiliation, practices and any combination of these terms. For example, while the term 'community' is generally used in reference to a social unit larger than a household,

it can also refer to a national and international group. Online communities can exist where members are in the thousands and there may be no physical, visual or auditory contact among members (Morgan 2014: 2).

In this new reality of communication, it is of vital importance for the language as well as the community that with this interaction the members of a particular community share a common system of views, activities, and values. Their common language ideology is thereby constructed as well as reproduced, and this is true for the social identities of the community as well (Morgan 2014: 2).

Modern analyses of linguistic communities focus on the characteristics of language, meaning, and conversation (Morgan 2014: 3), or they focus on discourse as a reflection of the social life of a community, in which discourse is understood in the sense of language that is used to describe something (Halle 1996), so that language is at the forefront of the analysis of speech communities as an ideology vehicle, i.e. a means of maintaining mutual relationships and shared identities (Morgan 2014: 3). The present paper falls within the purview of such a framework, since, when it comes to language and gender, speech communities are also formed around shared linguistic ideologies that primarily advocate linguistic change in terms of gender visibility or advocate the non-acceptance of gendered language.

Our research focuses on corpus analysis and aims to determine to what extent different sets of data from different corpora can be used to determine how communities are formed when the issue of gender is at stake. Our interest is in the difference between the language in general reference corpora and the language in user-generated communication on social media, where new social practices are continually formed. In these, the traditional meanings and the established balance of power are maintained and continually reproduced (Baiden, Kopytowska 2018). This is a very significant feature of Twitter, as it can help the dominant discourse to quickly reproduce and thus reinforce a certain normative model, including one pertaining to sexual identities and sexuality (Gorjanc, Fišer 2020). In addition, Twitter is proving to be an environment that enables communities to come together in being against something or someone, such as homosexuals, using a single hashtag that can mobilise a community (Onanuga 2021). Research also shows that it can help build communities with retweets, and these are often communities that spread hate speech, since socially unacceptable discourse is retweeted much more often than socially acceptable discourse: 'Retweets play an important role in revealing social ties between the Twitter users. They allow for the detection of communities of like-minded users and super-communities linked by the retweet influence links' (Evkoski et al. 2022: 16). Because of this and due to the accessibility of data, Twitter is very well suited for examining people's attitudes, both towards language use and otherwise: 'Twitter

represents an untapped resource for the investigation of *perceptions* of language use' (LaFave 2016: 609; Popič, Fišer 2017).

Gender and sexuality are important aspects of societies and their normative models and value systems, whereas heteronormativity as a social construct is based on strictly entrenched social norms that dominate Western societies and discourses (Coates 2013). In Western societies, the discourse of heteronormative values, imagery, and behaviour is part of the historical discourse that governed sexuality and also served to shape national identity (Motschenbacher 2013) and maintain national cohesion. In places where national identity is closely linked to language, such as Slovenia, this makes for standard-language ideology. The standard-language ideological circle in Slovenia is also one of nationalism (Gorjanc 2019: 248) and is explicitly linked to the traditional heteronormative view of gender and sexuality (Gorjanc, Fišer 2018). National and nationalist discourses are thus united in the Slovenian cultural environment, much as they are also in several other cultural environments (Baider 2018; Baiden, Kopytowska 2018).

Anti-gender discourse in Slovenia

Anti-gender discourse in Slovenia is analysed within the framework of research on gender. In the 1990s research was initially centred mainly on women's studies. While prior to that gender research was present mainly in sociology, it was strengthened with the creation of a study programme in Women's Studies and Feminist Theory, which systematically shaped research on issues connected to women's unequal position in relation to men in Slovenian society (Antić Gaber 2012: 349). The introduction of Women's Studies gave rise to the study of different theoretical approaches to the study of gender and sexuality in Slovenia. At around the same time, in the mid-1990s, a discussion on language and gender opened up in Slovenia that also focused on the concept of sexism and especially on questions about the (in)culpability of the female gender (Kozmik, Jeram 1995). Recently, there has been an increase in research on anti-gender discourse, which has been especially intense during and after periods that hinted at (potential) societal change, such as the referendum on the rights of same-sex couples (Gorjanc, Fišer 2018; Gorjanc, Fišer 2020) and, very recently, around the issue of gender-inclusive language (Popič, Gorjanc 2020; Kern, Vičar 2019). The prime mover for this increase in research has largely been the spread of user-generated content online and the possibility of analysing large quantities of data.

As already mentioned, speech communities, especially with the use of modern means of communication, can be quickly formed simply by applying one or two key concepts that motivate community members to unite around a shared system of values. A significant part of the discourse on gender in Slovenia is linked to

the concepts¹ of *gender theory* and *gender ideology* (Kuhar, Zobec 2017) and much less so also to *genderisation* (genderizacija; Kuhar 2018: 222), thereby positioning itself within the framework of the discourses of several right-wing movements in Europe that are trying to embellish the signifier *gender theory* with a specific meaning that suits their respective sociocultural environment. In Slovenia, the two terms are used almost interchangeably, with *gender theory* becoming the most efficient and salient umbrella term.

When the expression 'gender theory' emerged for the first time during the debate on marriage equality in Slovenia in 2012, it sounded like an unfortunate and accidental combination of two words without a specific meaning. However, the continuous repetition of the expression, the ambiguity of its meaning, combined with a clear negative connotation, hinted that something more structured was in the making. What looked like a linguistic lapsus at first soon turned out to be a well-thought-out strategy, a new populist buzz-word that came to represent 'the enemy' (Kuhar 2018: 215).

The onset and omnipresence of movements addressing the 'issue' of gender in various ways showcase the common roots of these movements and a number of similarities between them in different environments (Kuhar, Paternotte 2018) and not just in Europe (Gregis Estivalet, Dvoskin 2021). Thus, we are interested in determining how the signifiers *gender theory* and *gender ideology* are beginning to acquire a discursive meaning in Slovene, which defines the Slovenian speech community as one that is coming out 'against gender'.

Comprehensive insight into European anti-gender movements viewed from a sociological perspective is provided by an edited volume on anti-gender campaigns (Kuhar, Paternotte 2018) that presents a chronological overview of such movements in Europe as well as their specifics in individual cultural environments (countries). These movements share core theoretical and ideological underpinnings, but, in spite of this transnationality, they are very much focused on their own environments, which accordingly shape what specific form they take (Kuhar, Paternotte 2018: 4).

Anti-gender discourse is characterised by its construction of a common enemy or threat, which mobilises the community, and its use of 'gender ideology', 'gender theory', or 'anti(genderism)' with different discursive meanings (Kuhar, Paternotte 2018: 2). Anti-gender movements against gender equality and LGBT rights in different settings were originally organised around a common enemy, which could be conceived

¹ We treat them as distinct concepts, although research seems to suggest that they both serve the same purpose.

of in very broad terms. This is generally true of anti-gender discourse in the countries of the Visegrád Group, where right-wing anti-gender discourse is expressed as part of a resistance to both real and symbolic inequalities between the East and West in Europe (Kováts 2021: 76), as well as in countries with more specific focuses, such as Austrian, where 'anti-gender discourse is linked to right wing populist strategies of re-articulating Islam in European societies in terms of ethicized and culturalized conflicts' (Mayer, Sauer 2018: 36).

Studies on anti-gender discourse show that this discourse often grows stronger in response to specific social events organised in support of social change, and the anti-gender discourse is then mobilised against social changes. In Poland, for example, anti-gender discourse became radicalised as part of the campaign to introduce stricter legislation on abortion (Žuk, Žuk 2020). Similarly, it played a part in the Hungarian campaign to limit the reproductive rights of women through a change in the constitution made in 2012 that protects the rights of the foetus from the time of conception (Vida 2019). The reproductive rights of women are at the very forefront of anti-gender discourse in other countries as well, such as Croatia (Hodžić, Štulhofer 2018) and Italy (Garbagnoli 2018: 157), while the most prominent example is, of course, the recent shift in the United States following the landmark Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe vs Wade*. Naturally, this discourse remains distinctly directed against gender equality and LGBT rights (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, Tricou 2018: 94), especially in response to normative changes, such as changes to the legislation on LGBT rights. This has been very characteristic of the anti-gender discourse in France (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, Tricou 2018) and Slovenia (Kuhar 2018; Gorjanc, Fišer 2020).

Anti-gender discourse is becoming important in politics. It is becoming a part of right-wing political programmes and political discourse (Kováts, Poim 2015) and the political campaigns of both individuals and parties. In Italy, it was a significant part of the political discourse against feminist politics and gender justice of the far-right party Fratelli d'Italia (Colella 2021), while in Brazil Bolsonaro employed anti-gender discourse in his election campaign and after taking power. In his narrative, he normalised this discourse as a 'moral discourse of values', which he uses to appeal to conservative religious communities (Guazina, Guerreiro, Santos 2021: 45–46). This appeal to conservatives is a general feature of anti-gender discourse.

Analysis

In this section, we present the results of our case study. First, we describe the corpora we used in our analysis and explain why we chose these particular corpora. We then focus on the data we obtained from our corpus-linguistic analysis.

Methodology and dataset

For our topic we chose three different corpora to investigate in what contexts the concept of gender appears in Slovenian texts. In order to study the use of the phrases *gender ideology* and *gender theory* and their underlying concepts in Standard Slovene, we used the Gigafida 2.0 reference corpus (Krek et al. 2020).² To contrast this with the (mainly) standard and most contemporary Slovene found online, we used the ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020 corpus,³ and to obtain insight into attitudes towards gender in the Slovenian cultural environment, we used the JANES corpus of user-generated communication (Fišer, Ljubičić, Erjavec 2018).⁴ It is of course necessary to point out that user-generated communication and standard language are often not mutually exclusive, as a significant subset of JANES is written in the standard language. Hence, we use these two terms merely to indicate the nature of the analysed texts.

As the corpora differ in terms of their construction and metadata, our analysis is multifaceted. First, we analyse the most common modifiers of *spol* ('gender') in Slovene and compare the results across the three corpora. We do this to establish the overall picture of the use of gender-related lexemes in Slovene. The construction, platform, and metadata of the corpora have no bearing on this segment of the analysis, as every organised corpus affords the possibility of looking up concordances. Thus, we will try to determine how prevalent – or not – the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender theory* are in the three selected domains.

The next point of interest in our analysis will be to isolate the two concepts in both Standard Slovene and user-generated communication. Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the three corpora.

Table 1: Basic characteristics of the corpora used in the analysis

	Gigafida 2.0	ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020	JANES
Size (tokens/ words)	1,333,360,653/ 1.105.200.611	1,218,262,261/ 1,007,206,400	268,455,549/ 226,259,611
Timespan covered	1991–2018	–2020	2002–2017 ¹
Type	Reference	Web	Specialised (user-generated communication)

¹ Depending on text type (see Figure 3).

Source: Authors.

² <https://viri.cjvt.si/gigafida/>

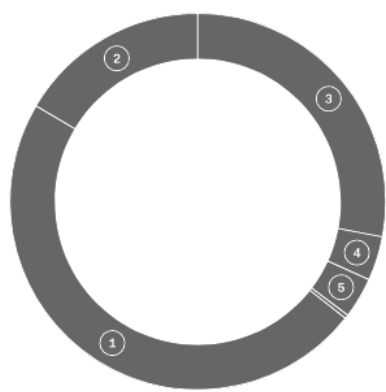
³ <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>

⁴ <https://www.clarin.si/noske/index.html>

As Table 1 demonstrates, all three corpora are fairly large and relatively up to date. However, the corpora differ greatly in terms of available metadata, and this difference will largely influence the outline of our analysis. For instance, we will use the ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020 corpus of online Slovene to get an insight into the frequency of use of the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender ideology* in recent online texts in Slovene. However, the corpus does not include metadata of any kind, so it will be suitable merely for the first stage of our analysis.

Gigafida 2.0 (Standard Slovene) and JANES (user-generated communication) both include metadata, which we will be able to use to our advantage in the second part of our analysis. The reference corpus Gigafida 2.0 thus includes the metadata on text type, media, author, and year of publication.

Figure 1: Gigafida 2.0 text types



Gigafida 2.0

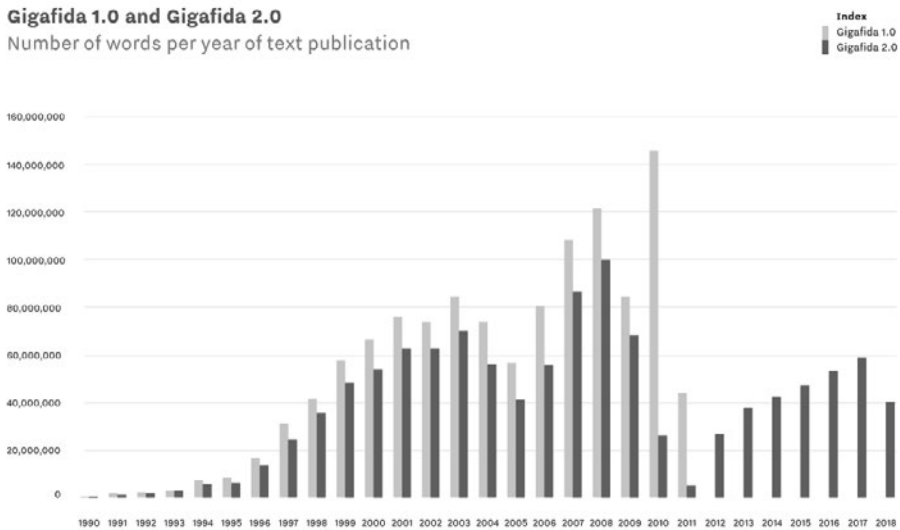
Percentage of words
per text type

1	Newspapers	47.8%
2	Magazines	16.5%
3	Internet	28.0%
4	Non-Fiction	3.8%
5	Fiction	3.5%
	Other	0.3%

Source: CJVT.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of texts in the reference corpus Gigafida 2.0 per text type, with newspapers and the Internet being the primary sources. The following figure presents the distribution of texts in Gigafida (2.0) by year of publication.

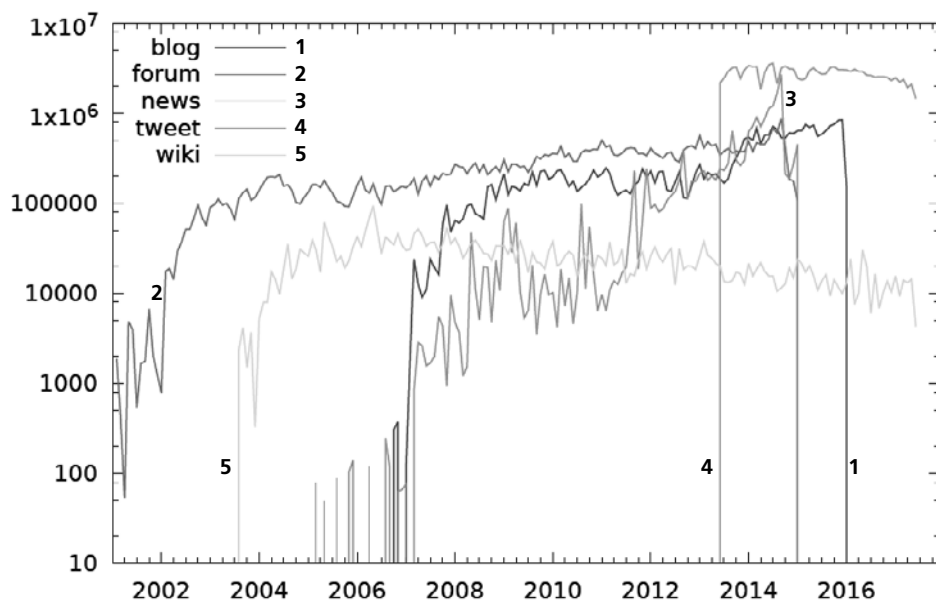
Figure 2: Distribution of texts by year in Gigafida and Gigafida 2.0



Source: CJVT.

The JANES corpus of user-generated communication, on the other hand, contains exceedingly heterogenous text types, as several of the online types of text have existed much longer than others. In spite of this discrepancy, we decided to use the whole corpus and not focus just on tweets, as we wanted to determine whether there are discernible differences between different text types (blogs, tweets, forums, etc.). Figure 3 shows the discrepancies and overlaps between the text types in JANES by their publishing date.

Figure 3: Distribution of posts/texts in the JANES corpus by year and text type



Source: Erjavec, Ljubešić, Fišer 2018.

As Figure 3 shows, there is a distinct difference between different text types in terms of publishing date, as online forums and Wikipedia have been around for much longer than other text types, especially Twitter. While this may not seem very important, it is significant for our analysis as we are dealing with a very recent concept in Slovene.

In addition to the publishing date, the JANES corpus of user-generated communication contains a plethora of metadata and was built to enable sociolinguistic research: 'An important feature of the Janes corpus is the wealth of metadata it contains, enabling much richer linguistic or sociological analyses of its language than would otherwise be possible' (Fišer, Ljubešić, Erjavec 2018: 228). The JANES corpus thus contains the following sets of metadata:

- Post date
- Author
- Gender of the author
- Author type (corporate vs private)
- Post language (Slovene, English, etc.)
- Text standardness
- Text sentiment

By using these data, we can try to better understand the use of language pertaining to gender in Slovene and, what is more, place the findings in a broader socio-political context.

Results

First, we analyse the most common modifiers of *gender* ('*spol*') in Slovene and then move on to analyse the selected phrases in the three corpora. We are, in this respect, limited to the analysis of Standard Slovene and user-generated communication in Slovene, as the corpus of the most current online Slovene, ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020, does not contain the relevant metadata that would yield a meaningful analysis.

The most common modifiers of *gender* ('*spol*') in Slovene

We analyse the most common modifiers of the term *gender* ('*spol*') in Slovene in the three selected corpora, as this is a very indicative way of determining the general attitude towards gender in Slovene. We looked for the most common phrases containing a common noun and the lemma *spol*.⁵ In this way we wish to showcase the general attitude towards gender⁶ in the Slovenian cultural environment, and by contrasting three different corpora we wish to demonstrate a potential bias, especially the one mirrored in the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender theory*. We present 20 of the most frequent modifiers in Table 2 with their respective frequencies in the selected corpora. All non-unique items (i.e. those that appear in all three datasets) in the table are written in bold, whereas the terms of interest are written in underlined. We decided to analyse the 20 most frequent modifiers to preserve a relatively high frequency count in all three corpora and thus ensure the modifiers are relevant in terms of their relative frequency.⁷

⁵ Due to the nature of the topic, we searched for the construction[tag="So.*"] [lemma="spol"], i.e. the co-occurrence of a common noun and the noun *spol* in any case and number (in addition to the ubiquitous phrase *teorija spola*, the plural *teorija spolov* is also sometimes used). We omitted the common adjective + noun modification pattern for Slovene, as this would not yield any relevant results for our analysis. For instance, the phrase *spolna teorija* only appears once in the entire Gigafida 2.0 corpus.

⁶ It is of vital importance to note that in Slovene, the term *spol* can refer either to *gender* or *sex*, which, of course, cannot be differentiated during automated corpus-linguistic analysis. This is visible in some common modifiers, e.g. *sprememba/spreminjanje spola* ('sex change'). As for the correct term *potrditev spola* ('gender affirmation/confirmation'), we can only find 7 occurrences in the Gigafida 2.0 corpus and 23 in the ELEXIS Slovenian Web corpus.

⁷ The English equivalents in square brackets are direct translations, which would most often be part of a prepositional phrase (*vloga spola* 'role of gender', *vprašanje spola* 'issue of gender') or a compound (*enakost spolov* 'gender equality').

Table 2: The most common modifiers of ‚gender‘ in the selected corpora

Rank	Gigafida 2.0	Freq.	Exelis Slovenian Web 2020	Freq.	JANES	Freq.
1	enakost [equality]	1322	podlaga [basis, i.e. <i>on the basis of gender</i>]	1103	teorija [theory]	551
2	enakopravnost [equality]	600	sprememba [change]	484	enakost [equality]	324
3	sprememba [change]	564	teorija [theory]	407	sprememba [change]	137
4	zastopanost [representation]	207	vidik [aspect]	366	enakopravnost [equality]	117
5	podlaga [basis i.e. <i>on the basis of gender</i>]	204	vprašanje [issue]	164	moški [masculine]	56
6	vloga [role]	173	priznanje [recognition]	85	ideologija [ideology]	54
7	vprašanje [issue]	105	razsežnost [dimension]	80	enačenje [equating]	48
8	teorija [theory]	92	izbira [choice]	72	podlaga [basis]	42
9	študija [study]	88	določanje [determination]	68	sociologija [sociology]	29
10	možnost [opportunity]	59	ideologija [ideology]	61	zastopanost [representation]	22
11	neenakost [inequality]	56	študija [study]	59	ukinitve [cancellation]	21
12	vojna [war]	50	operacija [operation]	58	vloga [role]	19
13	študij [study]	43	osnova [basis i.e. <i>on the basis of gender</i>]	53	različnost [difference]	17
14	izbira [choice]	42	spreminjanje [changing]	44	spreminjanje [changing]	16
15	operacija [operation]	39	vpliv [impact]	43	priznanje [recognition]	15
16	kategorija [category]	38	vloga [role]	41	m [m]	15
17	osnova [basis, i.e. <i>on the basis of gender</i>]	38	tema [topic]	37	izbira [choice]	15
18	določanje [determination]	37	kategorija [category]	36	študija [study]	13
19	določitev [determination]	36	moški [masculine]	34	izenačevanje [equalisation]	12
20	antropologija [anthropology]	34	določitev [determination]	32	enakovrednost [equality]	11

Source: Authors.

As Table 2 demonstrates, there are major differences between the three corpora (and, in turn, between the different domains of text production in Slovene). Thus, the concordances from the reference corpus deal mostly with the issues of gender (in)equality,⁸ the determination/categorisation of gender, and its study, whereas the ELEXIS corpus of online Slovene paints a very different picture. *Gender theory* is very well represented, as it is the third most common phrase with *gender* in Slovene, along with *gender ideology* (10th place).

What is more, if one were to look for *gender equality* or, alas, *gender inequality* in online Slovene, one would be disappointed, as the most common modifiers of gender in Slovene deal mostly with the impact/role, categorisation, and issue of gender, in addition to the usual modifiers dealing with sex change and gender studies. What may be somewhat surprising is the fact that the corpus of user-generated communication in Slovene is full of references to gender equality, all the while containing, of course, numerous references to *gender theory* and *gender ideology*, which we discuss in the following section. In addition to revealing the overlying attitudes and topics related to gender in the three corpora, Table 2 also shows an example of a medium-specific modifier, i.e. the initialism *m* for *moški* ('masculine').

Gender ideology and gender theory in Standard Slovene

As Table 2 demonstrates, there is a distinct difference in how gender is dealt with in the selected corpora and, by extension, in how it is dealt with in the different domains of Slovenian text production. By this we are referring to the absence of *gender ideology* in the list of the 20 most common modifiers of gender in the reference corpus Gigafida 2.0. What is more, the phrase *gender ideology* appears only 26 times in the entire reference corpus,⁹ which shows that this is a fairly recent concept and is primarily linked to online sources. *Gender ideology* is, interestingly, somewhat more prominent in the corpus and also in online texts. Table 3 demonstrates the use of *gender ideology* and *gender theory* in the reference corpus Gigafida 2.0 by text type.

⁸ Equality is, in our view, the most suitable translation for as many as three different expressions found on the list of the most common modifiers: *enakost*, *enakopravnost*, *enakovrednost*.

⁹ The results of the query are available at <https://viri.cjvt.si/gigafida/Concordance/Search?Query=ideologija%20spola>.

Table 3: Gender ideology and gender theory per text type in Gigafida 2.0

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
Web	18	70
Newspapers	3	5
Fiction	/	5
Non-fiction	3	8
Magazines	2	4
Total	26	92

Source: Authors.

As Table 3 demonstrates, both *gender ideology* and *gender theory* appear most often in online texts, whereas the small number of occurrences in other text types are virtually irrelevant. Upon closer inspection and after a content analysis, we can see that in Standard Slovene the references to gender ideology and gender theory are descriptive/informative and in no way oppose the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in Slovenia or in general. This means that the concordances pertaining to the two phrases are, for the most part, either reporting about the concept of gender or discussing it scientifically, but not with the aim of attacking its validity.

Table 4 demonstrates the distribution of *gender ideology* and *gender theory* in the reference corpus.

Table 4: Gender ideology and gender theory by year in Gigafida 2.0

Year	Gender ideology	Gender theory	Year total
2018	10	20	30
2017	3	11	14
2016	/	8	8
2015	5	26	31
2014	/	6	6
2013	/	1	1
2012	/	2	2
2010	/	1	1
2009	1	1	2

2008	/	1	1
2007	1	3	4
2006	2	1	3
2003	/	1	1
2002	1	1	2
2021	1	2	3
1998	1	/	1
1995	1	7	8
Total	26	92	

Source: Authors.

As Table 4 demonstrates, both concepts entered the domain of Standard Slovene fairly late, but there is a slight spike in occurrences in 2015. There is a political reason for this, as December 2015 was when the second referendum was held on the rights of same-sex couples, ‘which sought to equate the rights of homosexual partnerships with heterosexual ones simply by replacing the words *moški* [Eng. Man] and *ženska* [Eng. woman] with the word *oseba* [Eng. Person]’ (Gorjanc, Fišer 2020: 37). This simple replacement would thus instantly make the rights of all partnerships, same-sex or otherwise, equal, and it was thus an attempt to redefine marriage with a simple change in legislation. The Slovenian government had adopted this amendment earlier that same year, but the bone of contention that incited the referendum proved to be the possibility of allowing same-sex partners to adopt children.

Thus, the referendum ultimately did not bring about any legislative changes as some 63% of the voters decided against granting equal rights to same-sex partnerships. As the months leading up to the referendum saw a vicious and vitriolic campaign, especially on Twitter (Gorjanc, Fišer 2020), a much more significant spike in 2015 is to be expected in the corpus of user-generated communication, which we analyse in the following section. As previously stated, most of the references to *gender theory* and *gender ideology* in the corpus Gigafida 2.0 are reporting on and analysing the public discourse in which these two phrases occur frequently, especially during the referendum campaign.

Gender theory and gender ideology in Slovenian user-generated communication

In this section, we analyse the use of *gender theory* and *gender ideology* in the corpus of user-generated communication in Slovene in the JANES corpus. Table 5 demonstrates the frequency and distribution across the subcorpora.

Table 5: Gender ideology and gender theory by text type in Slovene user-generated communication

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
Tweet	22	378
Blog	32	168
News*	/	5
Total	54	551

* It may be worth noting that the subcorpus Janes-News contains comments on the news and not actual news.

Source: Authors.

As Table 5 demonstrates, both concepts are much more prevalent in the Slovenian user-generated communication than in the reference corpus, especially on Twitter. The uneven distribution between the two corpora can be attributed to the fact that the battle for the 2015 referendum was fought mainly on Twitter as there were also two official campaigns, one for the amendment (*Čas je ZA* – ‘It’s Time for YES’) and the other against it (*Za otroke gre* – ‘It’s All about the Children’). Next to tweets and blog posts, there are almost no other mentions of either keyword, except for the sole five references to *gender theory* in the news comments.

Table 6 shows the distribution of the two phrases in private and corporate posts.

Table 6: Gender ideology and gender theory by account type in Slovenian user-generated communication

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
Private	20	420
Corporate	34	131
Total	54	551

Source: Authors.

As we can see in Table 6, the majority of posts dealing with *gender theory* were in private accounts, whereas exactly the opposite is true for *gender ideology*. The reason for this is that most posts about *gender theory* were tweets, and these were, for the most part, private. The majority of corporate posts, dealing with any of the concepts, were posted by a number of institutions on their websites, many of them affiliated with the Catholic Church or the Catholic faith.

The following table demonstrates the distribution of posts by gender.

Table 7: Gender ideology and gender theory by gender in Slovenian user-generated communication

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
Male	29	316
Female	4	123
Neutral	21	112
Total	54	551

Source: Authors.

As Table 7 shows, there are three categories when it comes to gender in the JANES corpus; the neutral one signifies either that the system could not automatically assign a gender to the author with sufficient probability or that a particular post was written by a corporate entity. It is clear from Table 7 that posts containing references to *gender ideology* or *gender theory* are written much more often by male authors.

The following segment is of special interest for us as it provides insight into the sentiment of posts containing *gender ideology* or *gender theory*, albeit the sentiment is automatically assigned and thus not entirely accurate. Sentiment analysis is used to discern a general or prevailing *attitude* in a text and consequently in a large body of (user-generated) texts. As sentiment is assigned automatically, the system is of course limited to the cues at hand: the use of lexis (positive/negative), emojis, etc.

Table 8 presents a number of examples taken from the JANES corpus and to which different types of sentiment were assigned. In all categories and for both queries, we selected the very first hit in the corpus to thus try and provide randomised results. The search query can easily be reproduced with the same hitlist; however, we include the basic metadata for all six texts.

Table 8: Examples of different texts with an assigned sentiment in the corpus

	Gender ideology	Metadata	Gender theory	Metadata
Neutral	<p>Zelo neznatna manjšina, finančno in politično močna želi odločat o večini. V šole se pospešeno uvaja ideologija spola.</p> <p>A very small but financially and politically strong minority want to decide on behalf of the majority. Gender ideology is being introduced into schools.</p>	<p>type: blog post platform: publishwall type: post source: corporate sex: neutral lang: slv sentiment: neutral Technical standardness: T2 Linguistic standardness: L2 date: 2015-12-04</p>	<p>Združena levica je na seji Odbora v Državnem zboru 10. 2. 2015 javno napovedala , da bodo morale zasebne šole učiti » <i>Teorijo spola</i> « , sicer bodo izgubili financiranje.</p> <p>The United Left [party] publicly announced at a committee meeting in Parliament on 2 February 2015 that private schools will have to teach 'gender theory' or lose funding.</p>	<p>type: blog post source: private sex: male language slv text. sentiment: neutral Technical standardness: T2 Linguistic standardness: L2 text.date: 2015-02-27</p>
Negative	<p>Zagovorniki t. i. <i>ideologije spola</i> hočejo na zakonodajni in jezikovni ravni omalovaževati razliko med moškim in ženskim spolom, odpraviti pomen različne vloge očeta in matere pri vzgoji otrok, postaviti interese odraslih nad koristi otrok ter uvesti sporni koncept socialno izraženega spola, ki si ga človek poljubno izbira, določa in spreminja .</p> <p>The proponents of so-called gender ideology want, on the legislative and language levels, to do away with the difference between the male and female sex, do away with the different roles of the father and mother in raising children, put the interests of grownups above the interests of children, and implement the controversial concept of gender that may be chosen, assigned, or changed.</p>	<p>type: blog post platform: publishwall source: corporate sex: neutral language: slv sentiment: negative Technical standardness: T1 Linguistic standardness: L2 date: 2015-12-07</p>	<p>Spet trapasta teorija spola in neumen feminizem ki uničuje svet . Super članek, končno se je začelo o tem govoriti! Again with the stupid gender theory and the stupid feminism ruining the world. A great article, we're finally starting to talk about this.</p>	<p>type: news comment platform: rtvslo source: private sex: male lang: slv sentiment: negative Technical standardness: T1 Linguistic standardness: L1 date: 2014-06-19</p>

Positive	<p>Levica bo še dolgo potrebna, <i>ideologija spola</i>, pa ni levica, ampak deviacija levice , ki ni potrebna in upam, da bo čimprej propadla.</p> <p>We will need the Left [political option] for a long time to come, but gender ideology is not a thing of the Left, but a deviation of the Left that is not necessary, and I hope it crumbles soon.</p>	<p>type: blog post platform: publishwall source: corporate sex: neutral lang: slv sentiment: positive Technical standardness: T1 Linguistic standardness: L1 date: 2015-11-26</p>	<p>Oglejte si zanimiv dokumentarni film, ki govori o <i>teoriji spola</i> na Norveškem. Rezultat raziskovanja je prenehanje financiranja (56 milijonov €) Nordijskega inštituta za spol in posledično njegova ukinitve! Watch the interesting documentary on gender theory in Norway. The result of the research is the cessation of funding (56 million euros) for the Nordic Gender Institute and its consequent dismantling.</p>	<p>type: blog post platform: publishwall source: private sex: male lang: slv sentiment: positive Technical standardness: T1 Linguistic standardness: L2 date: 2015-02-13</p>
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Source: Authors.

As Table 8 demonstrates, sentiment is not always assigned correctly. In reality, there is only a single genuinely positive post in the table, which was marked as negative:

Again with the stupid gender theory and the stupid feminism ruining the world. A great article, we're finally starting to talk about this.

The author of this post is being sarcastic about the incessant use of *gender theory* in relation to anything related to gender, but used the word stupid two times, which caused the sentiment analysis tool to classify the post as negative. All the other posts in the table are negative but may use the guise of neutrality (as the 'neutral' example for *gender theory* demonstrates) or not bother with it at all in most cases.

However, sentiment may on the whole serve as a very useful indicator of the *prevailing* attitude in a large body of texts. This means that, when we look at particular texts from the corpus, it is fairly easy to find examples of mis-assigned sentiment, but in a large body of texts these examples are cancelled out by the majority of sentiment that is correctly assigned. The distribution of texts by sentiment in the JANES corpus is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Gender ideology and gender theory by sentiment in Slovenian user-generated communication

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
Neutral	13	251
Negative	35	248
Positive	6	52
Total	54	551

Source: Authors.

As Table 9 shows, the posts pertaining to *gender theory* are most often neutral or negative in sentiment and very rarely positive. On the other hand, the posts containing *gender ideology* are overwhelmingly negative, with the percentage of positive posts being roughly identical for both concepts (~10%).

The following segment shows the distribution of these posts in terms of their *standardness*, i.e. their normative value: ‘T’ stands for technical standardness and ‘L’ for linguistic standardness, with 1 being the most and 3 the least standard. Technical standardness refers to the use of spaces, capitalisation, periods, etc., whereas linguistic standardness pertains to spelling, comma use, etc.

Table 10: Gender ideology and gender theory by linguistic and technical standardness in Slovenian user-generated communication

	Gender ideology	Gender theory
T1	38	372
T2	15	165
T3	1	14
L1	38	393
L2	16	155
L3	/	3
Total	54	551

Source: Authors.

As Table 9 demonstrates, the majority of all posts containing either of the phrases are both technically and linguistically standard, which shows (and this is confirmed

by a content analysis) that these texts are not emotional tirades and outbursts, but are instead a series of thought-out posts. There is, however, a slight difference in the standardness of the original posts and the comments on them, with the latter, of course, often being less standard. We could possibly attribute this to people being more emotional when they are replying to a topic that is close to their heart.

The following table shows the distribution of posts by year.

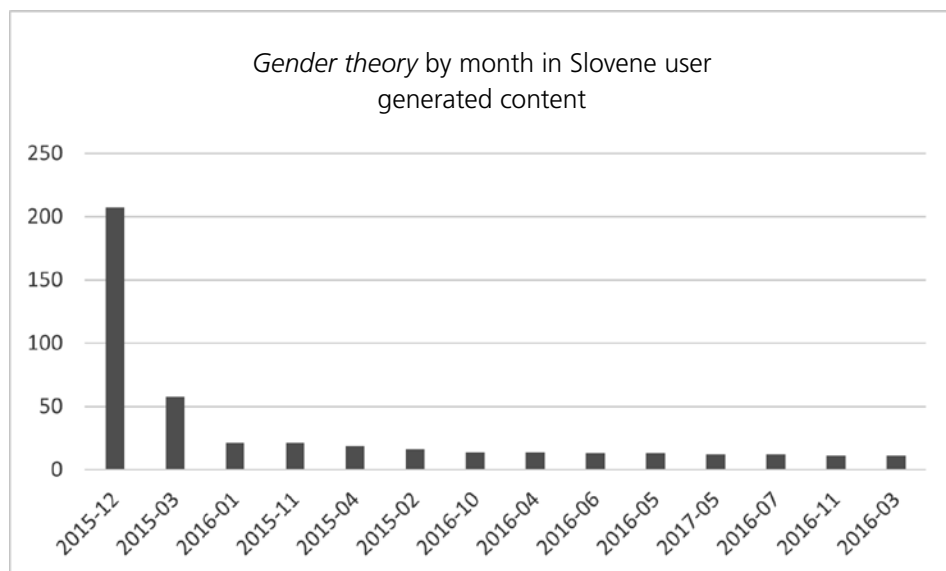
Table 11: Gender ideology and gender theory by year in Slovenian user-generated communication

Year	Gender ideology	Gender theory
2015	22	359
2016	8	130
2014	5	30
2017	5	28
2013	1	3
2012	5	/
2011	1	/
2009	1	1
2008	6	/
Total	54	551

Source: Authors.

As Table 10 shows and as expected, there was a very discernible spike in the use of both concepts in 2015 that extended somewhat into 2016 as well. As noted above, this is due to the referendum on the rights of same-sex couples, which was marked by a vicious campaign, and this is clearly visible in the distribution. Figure 1 demonstrates this unevenness in the use of the phrase *gender theory* by month.

Figure 4: Gender theory by month in the JANES corpus



Source: authors' analysis based on JANES corpus

As Figure 4 clearly shows, December 2015 saw a huge rise in the use of the concept of *gender theory* in an effort to sway voters before the referendum. Upon closer inspection, we can see that 207 such posts were published in that month (131 tweets and 76 blog posts or comments).

Conclusion

In this paper, we sought to use current corpora available in the Slovene language to determine whether or not any of the text types served as a catalyst for the construction and preservation of a new speech community, in which a certain anti-LGBTQ+ ideology is then perpetually reinforced, serving as a sort of echo chamber for its members. In order to perform this analysis, we decided to compare the concepts of *gender ideology* and *gender theory* in three different corpora: the reference corpus of Standard Slovene Gigafida 2.0, the most recent collection of Slovenian texts on the Web ELEXIS Slovenian Web 2020, and the corpus of Slovenian user-generated communication JANES.

We first extracted the most common modifiers of *spol* ('gender') from the three corpora and determined that *gender ideology* and *gender theory* are indeed suitable

keywords for our analysis, as they are prominently featured. A content analysis revealed, however, that these concepts are hardly ever used in the reference corpus, and when they are, they are used in the context of journalistic reports on the discourse on gender or in non-ideological contexts. On the other hand, both concepts are very common in online Slovene, and in terms of frequency they are among the most frequent modifiers of *gender* in Slovene.

Therefore, we extracted both keywords from the reference corpus and the corpus of user-generated communication, as they are furnished with ample metadata for further analysis. The results showed that *gender theory* is the weapon of choice when it comes to disarming the proponents of LGBTQ+ rights in Slovenia, as this keyword is much more common than *gender ideology*. Perhaps this could be explained by the very nature of the LGBTQ+-rights struggle in Slovenia, which is marked by the issue of same-sex adoption. As mentioned before, the anti-LGBTQ+ movement, aptly named 'It's All about the Children', framed this as the core issue of the 2015 referendum on same-sex partnership rights and used *gender theory* as the umbrella term and straw man for anything to do with same-sex partnership rights. This is also the reason why the corpus data show an extraordinary increase in the volume and frequency of posts in December 2015, when the referendum took place, for *gender ideology* as well. This keyword seems to be used reservedly, but as metadata show, the majority of posts dealing with *gender ideology* are laced with negative sentiment.

In terms of the type of texts, the Internet is the main source of references to both keywords in the reference corpus, whereas there are almost no other means of user-generated communication that reference the selected keywords than Twitter and blogposts, with merely a handful of references to *gender theory* in news comments. However, there is a distinct difference between the two media: the Twittersphere discussions are based on a number of users having a heated discussion, whereas the blog posts are more akin to official outlets for several institutions, which are more often than not connected to the church in some capacity or at least to the Christian denomination.

In addition to being negative in sentiment and dismissive of LGBTQ+ rights (though superficially appearing to be 'merely' against *gender theory* and adoption by same-sex couples), the distinct features of user-generated communication is that it is linguistically sound and thus premeditated and reasoned, which is consistent with our findings that it is institutions that are keeping the echo chamber sealed through the incessant repetition of the same signifiers serving as umbrella terms.

Thus, we can confirm that social media and Twitter in particular serve as media on which new speech communities are being constructed, the members of which share common views, activities, and beliefs in a never-ending loop and with almost instant

feedback. We can therefore claim that Twitter serves as a medium for maintaining and reproducing shared ideology in the Slovenian cultural environment, which in this case is one of being anti-LGBTQ+ rights.

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