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## Populist orality in 21st Century latin american socialism: an analysis of political discourse

### Oralidad Populista en el Socialismo Latinoamericano del Siglo XXI: Un Análisis del Discurso Político

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#### Abstract

This article offers a review and reflection on the new forms of orality and transmission of speeches in the context of 21st Century Socialism. It is highlighted that politicians use language daily through speeches in order to convince the recipient of their point of view, which has generated new forms of political organization in South American countries.

The analysis focuses on the importance of political language in creating meanings and in the main political maneuvers, as well as the competition of political actors for the favors of the people in the civic scene. The relevance of discourse theory in understanding social relations and their transformation is highlighted, as well as the influence of populism on society's perception of media systems and their relationship with the "powers that be".


Additionally, the use of political marketing, its impact on the persuasion and manipulation of public opinion, and the influence of ancient rhetoric on contemporary politics are addressed. The technological-cultural struggle between alternative ways of perceiving and arguing reality is mentioned, highlighting the importance of understanding discourse in its textual, situational, and social practice dimensions.


#### Resumen


El presente artículo ofrece una revisión y reflexión sobre las nuevas formas de oralidad y transmisión de discursos en el contexto del Socialismo del Siglo XXI. Se resalta que los políticos emplean el lenguaje a diario mediante discursos con la finalidad de convencer al receptor de su punto de vista, lo que ha generado nuevas formas de organización política en países sudamericanos.


El análisis se centra en el lenguaje político en la creación de significados y en las principales maniobras políticas, así como en la competencia de los actores políticos por los favores del pueblo. La relevancia de la teoría del discurso en la comprensión de las relaciones sociales y en la transformación de las mismas, así como la influencia del populismo en la percepción de la sociedad sobre los sistemas de medios y su relación con los "poderes fácticos".

El uso del marketing político y su impacto en la persuasión y manipulación de la opinión pública, así como la influencia de la retórica antigua en la política contemporánea. Se menciona la lucha tecnológico-cultural entre modos alternativos de percibir y argumentar la realidad, destacando la importancia de comprender el discurso en sus dimensiones textuales, situacionales y prácticas sociales.

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The article offers a comprehensive vision of populist orality in the context of 21st Century Socialism, highlighting its influence on politics, society, and the perception of reality in Latin America.

**Keywords:** Political ideologies, 21st century democracies, political speeches, good government.

El artículo ofrece una visión integral de la oralidad populista en el contexto del Socialismo del Siglo XXI, destacando su influencia en la política, la sociedad y la percepción de la realidad en América Latina.

**Palabras clave:** Ideologías políticas, democracias del siglo XXI, discursos políticos, buen gobierno.

## Introduction

The permanent tension to which the unity of the polis is subjected is metabolized in the ancient republics, organized around civic equality (but not social equality), as a competition of the political actors in the civic scene for the favors of the people. The discursive universe of the ancient republic is filled with concepts that articulate the visibility of civic competition: the virtue of the great man, glory as a republican prize, the dignity conferred by the people, the ceremonies of triumph staged as the victor's entrance to the city, the massive representation of sacrifice to the gods (Bell, 2004).

In this way and concerning the theory of discourse, it becomes relevant in the theory and practice of politics when "it grants political processes (conceived as conflicts and struggles between antagonistic forces that seek to structure the meaning of society) a fundamental place in the understanding of social relations and how they are transformed" (Howarth, 2005).

In this way, political language gives meaning to the social situation, and the main political maneuvers create these meanings. "People experience language about political events, not events in any other sense; even developments close to us take their meaning from the language that describes them. So political language is political reality; there is no other as far as the meaning of events for actors and spectators is concerned" (Edelman, 1991).

Political discourse is the communicative act with a political representative as the sender and citizens as the receiver. This type of text usually deals with public problems and issues of social interest. There are two types of speech: the purely political, which can be made at any period, and the electoral, which is made during the electoral campaign.

In this way, we can observe how populism raises the need for state interventionism. The i «inclusions that indicate that populism represents the "return" of politics and the State reflect this vision that conceives politics as a transformation tool and uses state mechanisms to implement changes. The State is the essential mechanism for regulating media systems. Populism uses constitutional mechanisms and actions controlled by the Executive Branch to carry out reforms, specifically, restructuring the relations between the State and the market.

The President and his word are indivisible as a political entity. The journalist or biographer can separate them, wondering how and why the Head of State referred to a specific topic. However, the discourse analyst will address the phenomenon in its entirety: the President is in himself a signifier, a condensation of representations in which his word is a central element (Armony, 2021).

As can be seen according to the research proposal, populism and its central phenomena in the history of some countries and their most emblematic governments were characterized as populist: Peronism in Argentina, Vargasism in Brazil, Democratic Action in Venezuela, and Cardenismo in Mexico. During the 20th century, Latin American sociology assumed this characterization and gave it a sociological consistency. Populisms were social movements and national governments that contributed to the modernization and formation of nation-states during the first years of the 20th century.

With new information and communication technologies, we can observe how new relationships are built with the visible, which turns perception into a logistical issue. Given the image of the spectacle performed and typical of the audiovisual technologies of the 18th and 19th centuries, the interactive simulation changes the constitutive relationships of the classical image with the real and forces us to review the problems of representation. Instead of consisting of another layer in the cumulative development of history, electronic space implies an abrupt break in the already differentiated psychic framework of human thought.

This article will address the analysis of the development and evolution of "Political Discourse", with the new trends of orality and the political campaigns that began in ancient Greece with the orality of the philosophers, however, and Hamburger Fernández (2014) nowadays we know that there are technological tools, as well as new trends in Political Marketing, that have changed the styles, but not the nature of attracting followers, which was used by 21st Century Socialism.

### Methodology

The content analysis method uses techniques that allow interpreting documents from any type of communication. Its use has been consolidated in the social sciences, as well as the facts described by history about the use, development and new trends of Political Discourse. The objectives of the method vary according to needs.

Hamburger Fernández (2014) describes some intentions such as: recognizing trends, determining psychological states and forms of communication, measuring clarity of communication, describing trends, similarities or differences; identify attitudes, beliefs and interests; and analyze, compare and evaluate content.

The article's main objective is to systematically review the use of orality in 21st Century Socialism and political discourse as a new brand for the Latin American public and its impact. This objective was specified in the following specific objectives: Know the new trends and tools used by orality and the political media towards a new society based on a "competitive market of ideas and new political brands." from the point of view, according to several authors. Many authors mention the benefits of using political marketing for social organizations (particularly political parties) and democracy (Arce & Munch, 1998; Sánchez Murillo, 2005).

No less important, perhaps, is the manipulation that political marketing can exert, in particular, through media political advertising, since if it is assumed that political advertising does not seek to inform but rather to persuade or seduce the voter, that in the advertising messages, the candidate is privileged over the proposals (since even these serve to form or strengthen the candidate's image).

Thus, for example, Plato's systematic attack against oral forms of transmission of knowledge inaugurated a technological-cultural struggle between alternative ways of perceiving and arguing reality, which achieved its most significant development with the printing press, which was the great homogenizer in this slow and irreversible process of cognitive metamorphosis. However, orality and writing do not exhaust the spectrum of communication technologies and machines.

As we have established, the concept of discourse is used in diverse disciplines and approaches: linguistic, philosophical, literary, and others. From a very generic perspective, in discourse analysis, we can consider three dimensions: the text as an oral or written product, the determined social situation in which it is inserted as a discursive practice, and the social practice that structures areas of knowledge. Moreover, in a more technical sense, discourse analysis "refers to a neutral set of methodological resources that are used to analyze speeches, writings, interviews, conversations, among others" (Howarth, 2005).

Chester & Montgomery (2017) mentions that Political Marketing began in the United States in the mid-20th century as a consequence of the lack of political elites, the generalization of ideology, constitutional changes, the close connection between business and politics, the use of public resources, power, and the absence of differentiated ideology.

Herrero-Nieto (2023) indicates that the growth of Political Marketing is due to the use of mass media to reach the largest possible audience and have the necessary attention so that they receive its messages. Political marketing has evolved with technology; since 1952, 40% of North American homes have had television to inform themselves about significant events. Another factor that favored the growth of political marketing was freedom in commercial advertising, which allowed a more significant advantage in creating or producing campaigns favoring a political party.

In the case of Argentina, we can observe how orality was replicated by Kirchner's speech, reconstructing a political horizon that Alfonsín's speech had weakened in his fight against the aggressive and intolerant nationalism of the military and that Menem had practically evacuated from his enunciation: the

representation of an extra-national negativity that allows a common identity to be strengthened. Such negativity is not embodied in the clearly defined instances of the past (imperialists, foreign ideologies, among others) but instead assumes the diffuse form of the model (globalization, savage capitalism, corruption, among others) and is connected to the subjectivity of citizens (Armony, 2005). This direct result of the mobilization of 2001 and 2002 has evident echoes in the presidential speech through references to the “people” collective and its national identity.

## Results and Discussion

Disputes around the conceptualization of so-called populist phenomena maintain a privileged place for understanding the dynamics of the history of ideas in Latin America. We can observe that, in the case of Latin America, at the end of the 70s the discursive dimension was put at the center of the scene to explain the emergence of Latin American populisms. Ardití (2022), Retamozo (2017), and Waugh et al. (2016), who mention that the controversies within discourse theory are varied, Laclau's definition became the axis of the discussion, for whom populism is a type of political discourse that articulates popular-democratic interpellations as antagonistic to a dominant ideology. As a result, two points that encompass the systemic analysis of the object to be treated and to meet the objective will be analyzed.

### *Political Discourse as a Source of Orality*

Weber (2007) differentiates bureaucratic domination (linked to legal rules and norms) from traditional domination (related to the precepts of the past) and from charismatic domination, which is “oblivious to any type of rules, repudiates the past.” and in that sense, it has a revolutionary character” (Weber, 2007).

We can observe what has been pointed out: “Societies are increasingly more dialogic” due to the desire to be open to new, more egalitarian, and inclusive forms of coexistence (Flecha, 2009).

In the dialogic model, the public space is first defined by its content, more precisely, by a principle of selection of the content of the statements that circulate in it: the general interest (or common good). Regarding the dialogic model, the idea of general interest plays, in effect, a discriminatory role in political communication in that it constitutes the requirement for all exchanged statements, referring only to what interests everyone to the same extent: the common interest. The general interest does not designate a specific content everyone agrees on, a minimal common denominator of all political community members. Instead, it is about the definitive idea of a possible agreement in law, towards which an understanding is not reached.

Each community (family, company) is defined by its relative autonomy and its distinction from others. From the point of view of its positive definition in the dialogic model, public space as a communication space is characterized by two supportive features: homogeneity and continuity. Homogeneity means that, in principle, the meaning of what is exchanged in Political communication is the same for everyone. We could not imagine, in this case, particular communications whose meaning would be required for their particular grammatical understanding.

According to what was cited, the critical sociologist Bauman (2005) defines modern society as a liquid. A society where the conditions of action of its members change before the forms can consolidate into habits and a specific routine. Therefore, the winners in this society are the agile, light, and volatile people like commerce and finance. Hedonistic and selfish people who see novelty as good news, precariousness as a value, instability as an impetus, and hybridity as richness.

In such a way, we can analyze that politics and communication are two elements of human life that go hand in hand.

Considering that new technologies, as spaces of socialization, have extended the public sphere, becoming a not inconsiderable support for the social production of meaning from the private to various public spheres, from the local to the global, from media unidirectional mass communication to multiple and increasingly convergent and multimodal technologies).

It is not just a technological transformation (from old to new technologies or their digital convergence), but it occurs in the context of specific trends in complex interaction:

Technocognitive transformations of contemporary culture, in a process of solid individualization of subjectivity (Beck et al., 1997), which implies both the disintegration of certainties of traditional institutions that shape identity and new expressions of subjectivity, of agency in assembly networks of machinic exchanges that create multiple and differentiated interdependencies (Tirado Serrano, 2001).

A widespread political vacuity of institutions and their respective crisis of legitimacy in most countries in the world, as well as the non-institutional emergence of the political and “minor” forms of politics, or subpolitics (Lazzarato & Rodríguez, 2006).

The emergence of a new form of communication-related to culture and online technology, supported by horizontal communication networks and the emergence of what Castells has called “mass self-communication” (referring to spaces such as blogs wikis)

Unidirectional mass communication and “mass self-communication” in the relationship between power and counterpower in formal politics, insurgent politics, and demonstrations and social movements (Castells, 2007).

### ***The Orality of 21st Century Socialism in Latin America***

Auyero (2001) maintains that from the “affective exchange model”, political mediators “offer incentives in exchange for votes, but these are of a different type (Auyero, 2001), asserting that “the incentives that party members offer in exchange for votes that are supportive rather than material.

Likewise, Hinkelammert (1998), cited by Illanes (2000), points out that Karl Marx himself already had severe suspicions about capitalism, as he perceived it as a form of wealth creation that threatens entire life, given that it not only intervenes and destroys nature, but it dehumanizes people by forcing them to sell their labor power (the only property they possess) in such a way that, being formally free, it makes them materially enslaved people.

In everyday life, oral communication occupies 80% of human activity time. During this time, we spent 45% listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading, and only 9% writing (Rivers & Temperley, 1978).

However, according to the question referring to the definition or foundation of the term-ideology of “socialism of the 21st century”, the sociologist mentioned above (Harnecker, 2010) points out that “Hugo Chávez coined the term to differentiate it from the errors and deviations from the so-called “real socialism” of the 20th century in the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. The main lesson of the Chavista project is the need and importance of combining socialism with democracy, not a liberal democracy. However, a participatory and direct democracy” (Harnecker, 2011) and Hamburger Fernández (2014) agree with Harnecker that the expression “socialism of the 21st century” has been used more than anything concerning the process that has been taking place in recent years in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. These authors maintain, “In Venezuela, some things are being demonstrated that refute most of the commonplaces from which the relationships between socialism and democracy were thought in the 20th century.”

Following the philosophy of democracy, following Locke, Russell, Stuart Mill, and Popper, a study of how democracy is produced in societies of communicational opulence as a democracy of parties and political marketing; an analysis of rhetoric and sophistry, which involves a critical exposition of political language and simulation; and an epistemological proposal, which includes a model for the analysis of political communication.

The populist mirror and the neoliberal crisis, the ideological project of neoliberalism based on the idea of the rational individual, is in apparent decline (Macas-Acosta et al., 2022; Salvador-Guerra et al., 2023). The most recent experience in Latin America indicates the presence of a set of new social actors with demands that go beyond the idea of the individual and assume positions that rescue collective ideas of participation and political-social organization. In the majority of these movements, the presence of popular social groups is the impulse that has marked their rise and strength, all seeking to reclaim the best of their national past and to find in it an inspiration for a new national project against the predominance of small economic elites and the globalized neoliberal economy. These conditions underlie the crisis of neoliberalism's hegemony.



In this sense, the conceptualization of populism as antidemocratic is erroneous, given that it is more of a space of democracy, powerfully articulated to the so-called “popular-democratic interpellation” (Laclau, 1978). That is a fight to expand the participation space prevalent in official politics. In this sense, we consider that populism, as Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) points out, can well be considered a type of democratic corrective that gives voice to those groups that do not feel represented by political elites and that forces them to react and change. Political agendas.

In the Venezuelan case, Chávez uses popular mobilization (large concentrations of followers dressed in red) as the symbolic element that is inclusive of the people mobilized for the cause and, therefore, exclusive of those who do not share that self-proclaimed popular identification from which it results in a polarization of society that raises the levels of conflict, denying the possibilities of deliberation and democratic negotiation. Furthermore, if it is about revolutionary potentialities, they are absent in the personalist and voluntarist emphasis of the famous call of the plebiscitary leader, on the one hand, and in the manipulation of citizen expectations from the heights of neo-populist power, on the other. Chávez has known how to handle the legitimate fears of a middle class threatened from all sides, from environmental insecurity to high levels of unemployment, which encourage the growth of an informal economy.

With the two elements raised, it is possible to maintain that the so-called “populism” has become the mirror in which all the pending issues and havoc that neoliberalism has caused in recent years in Latin America are reflected. From our perspective, this explains the fierce attack and disqualification of the movements described in this way.

Germani (1965) distinguishes three moments of populist emergence: the “classical populism” of Perón, Vargas, and Cárdenas, which emerged with the crisis of the agro-export model and industrialization by import substitution. The “neoliberal neopopulism” of Menem, Fujimori, and Collor, a product of the crisis of industrialization due to import substitution, and the rebirth of the “radical populism” of Chávez, Morales, and Correa, which appears together with the crisis of neoliberal models and the resurgence of nationalism and state control in the economy.

Indeed, the institutionalization of democracy needed to forge its myth, its own political culture, essentially built on three elements (Dávila, 2006; Ochoa-Rico et al., 2022): first, the construction of the people as a political subject through the institution of universal suffrage; second, economic nationalism as the foundation of an ultimate rentier vision of the economy; and third, “national unity”, democratic consensus, as a necessary condition for defense against tyranny.

For De la Torre (2008), populism is a form of political incorporation (of excluded sectors) that has shown, at the same time, democratizing and authoritarian features.

Remember that this phenomenon constitutes how traditionally excluded sectors access participation. “It is based on speeches and rituals that antagonize society and on a vision of democracy as the plebiscitary acclamation of redeemers rather than on the idealized models of liberal democracy” (De la Torre, 2014)

A central point in the Citizen Revolution project is the use of political communication as an articulating axis and generator of meaning for the actions of the National Government and its political movement.

This aspect, however, according to former minister Costales (2014), has allowed many victories to be achieved at a tactical level but has undermined the political organization in strategic terms.

He explains that political marketing helped him win seven consecutive elections, but this caused the organization to be at the mercy of public opinion polls and the popularity levels of President Rafael Correa. Scholars of 21st-century socialism, understood as the most appropriate and effective path to transform the reality of underdevelopment and dependency in which Latin America lives, agree that it is necessary to build an “authentic democracy” in the region and each of them. Their countries. This democracy would have to be a post-neoliberal democracy.

In her study, full of suggestions for research on charismatic leadership in popular and revolutionary movements in Latin America, Professor Diane Raby has observed how “to understand both Fidel and Chávez, it is necessary to recognize that the historical and ideological roots They are not found in the

orthodoxy of the left, but in the Latin American populist tradition. This thought is reflected in leaders' speech, style, and content" (Raby, 2006).

## Conclusions

The "narratives of power" that coexist in the country's political culture pose serious challenges not only to the effective exercise of modern democracy but also to the criteria for evaluating the democratic quality of governments.

In political communication, the topics discussed increasingly revolve around the candidates' charisma, increasingly banal issues, and increasingly simple arguments. Thus, the effect (and problem) of using political marketing is relative to the proximity between political actors' discourse and society's real problems.

In politics, 21st Century Socialism has used the media's most powerful tools and the reach of solid, consistent discourse with great social acceptance.

It is essential to recognize that some manifestations (not only in Latin America) of this spectacular logic, such as the displacement or substitution of political institutions by mass media or digital media, appear as an effect of the massification of specific technologies.

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