KEYNOTE SPEECH

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(Anti-)immigration Discourses in the Post-2015 Poland: a proximization theoretical perspective

The present paper explores the discursive patterns of legitimization of anti-immigration policies adopted by the Polish right-wing government which ruled the country between 2015-2023. It argues that legitimization of anti-immigration policies is essentially threat-based and coercive, involving a specific selection of rhetorical tools deployed to characterize different immigrant groups, as well as individual immigrants, from mainly Middle East and East African territories. Construed as 'different', 'alien' and 'unbelonging', in a whole lot of cultural, ideological and religious terms, they were claimed to pose an emerging threat to the safety of Poland and the personal safety and well-being of Polish citizens. The paper draws on cognitive-pragmatic theories of discourse space (Chilton, 2004, 2014; Hart, 2014) and Proximization Theory (Cap, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2022) in particular, revealing how the concepts of closeness and remoteness were manipulated in the service of threat construction and the sanctioning of tough anti-immigration measures, such as the refusal to accept non-Christian refugees from war territories in Syria. Focusing on a corpus of 124 addresses, statements and comments by members of the Polish government, it demonstrates how the government manufactured and discursively perpetuated the aura of fear by conflating the issue of refugee migration into Europe with the problem of global terrorism, and how virtual threats to Polish cultural legacy and values were conceived to justify opposition to the idea of the multiethnic and multicultural state in general.

Key words: immigrants, anti-immigration discourse, threat construction, policy legitimization, proximization, cognitive critical discourse studies, Poland

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