

Асоціативність в питанні лівих та правих – значення ідеології в угорському контексті

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Значення і саме існування політичної ідеології неодноразово ставало дискусійним питанням. Постійно точились суперечки стосовно того, чи існують ідеології (Конверс, 1964; Джост, 2006) і якщо існують, то яке вони мають значення. Ми вважаємо, що – через особливу політичну спадщину колишньої комуністичної системи – країни Центральної та Східної Європи надають унікальну можливість для вивчення цього явища.

Крім того, ми припускаємо, що використання методу вільних асоціацій – яким досі доволі нехтували – може внести значний вклад в розвиток політології та політичної психології, представляючи нам значення та зміст ідеологічних величин. Для того, щоб зрозуміти що уявляють угорці, коли вони думають про ліве та праве крило політичного спектру, ми зробили репрезентативну угорську вибірку.

У таблицях 1-5 представлені результат обробки усіх даних. Ось деякі з найцікавіших висновків: асоціація консерватизму з лівими крилом політичного спектру (замість правого); висока частота емоційності стосовно обох політичних крил; дуже високий відсоток некласифікованих відповідей і величезні відмінності між двома крилами (наприклад, процес зміни і ідеології) у деяких основних категоріях.

Результати дослідження доводять, що 1. Ідеології дійсно існують і вони мають послідовне значення, яке 2. можна виміряти, використовуючи методи, що відрізняються від традиційних методів.

Нашою метою є продовження у результатах дослідження покращеної версії методу вільних асоціацій. Вважаємо, що хоч цей метод є досить простий, але ми отримали декілька цікавих висновків; це забезпечує прекрасну можливість для міжкультурних порівнянь і наукових досліджень.

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Associating Left and Right – The Meaning of Ideology in a Hungarian Context

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In the last decades of political ideological research, the existence and meaning of the Left-Right dimension has been questioned. In our study we employed a free associations method to determine the meaning of these categories.

Our results prove that Hungarians do use these categories and they contain a distinct meaning that is diverse but interpretable. Many features emerge that cannot be found in Western European countries such as: conservatism associated with the political Left and wanting change with the political Right. The absence of economical factors is also notable.

We believe that the data obtained by the free associations method provides an excellent ground for international comparisons, especially among countries with a post-communist heritage.

Keywords – political ideology, Left-wing, Right-wing, free associations, social representation

Introduction

Ideologies constitute one of the most studied, but also the most divisive and controversial areas of Political Psychology. Although during the past 100 years several political and psychological research tried to define the content and essential cores of distinct ideological views, still numerous questions are waiting to be answered, because as the historical context changes and the social sciences develop, new perspectives arise regarding the characteristics of ideologies.

The most important source of research is the debate launched by Converse (1964) that questioned the existence of ideologies. According to him, people cannot formulate their views and thoughts in a consistent system of theories without any contradictions. By contrast, Jost (2006) reported that people can use and understand abstract concepts and they are able to take a distinct position regarding political issues. Ideology as a driving force plays an important role in human behavior. The association between ideological view and behavior is supported by research. Jost (2006) reported that US citizens' decision on parliamentary elections was in a 0,9 correlation with their ideological commitment.

According to some skeptics, ideologies do not constitute a meaningful, existent construct, because there is no difference between their contents. In our view, the distinction between the ideologies has not disappeared, but their concrete manifestation has changed over years (Hellwig, 2008). Thus,

it is necessary to examine their meaning and content from a different approach, which is capable of integrating conflicting views of ideological research.

Based on the tradition by researchers in the US and Western Europe, the vast majority of research has focused on the conservatism-liberalism distinction; while neglecting the Left-Right division. Most of the studies simply associated conservatism with the Right-wing and liberalism with the Left-wing. However, these results have limited validity, because they are mostly based on assumptions. Examining the Left-Right ideological content Jost (2009) found that there is no relation between liberalism and Left-wing ideology as there is between conservatism and Right-wing orientation. From some of the authors' point of view, "Left" and "Right" are nothing more than labels of our intrinsic political opinion-system (Butler & Stokes, 1969; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976).

In an association-based research on a representative German sample Züll, Scholz and Schmitt (2010) found that people associated to the political Left and Right some kind of classic, fundamental values and principles. According to the social representations theory (Moscovici, 1984), these concepts may constitute the central core of the two wings' representations.

In the research of ideologies we can never ignore contextual and time factors, because they are continuously shaping and defining the content and meaning of political dimensions, and they identify the reference points the light of ideologies can understand and interpret. Post-communist countries offer a unique ground for research in order to examine the factors on transformation of ideological contents. Several findings support the theory that the communist era fundamentally realigned the political scene and the relationship between the ideological contents. For example, Golec (2001) revealed the association between economic conservatism and Left-wing orientation in Poland. In Hungary, socialism is rather associated with conservatism than liberalism (Hunyady, 2008).

According to the mentioned studies, the contents of Left- and Right orientation and their relationship with other ideological dimensions is currently unclear. We suppose that Hungary is an ideal ground to examine post-communist conservatism, the Left-Right ideological content and their relation to each other.

Sample and Data¹

Our aim was to find out what associations people have when asked about the political Left and Right². For this purpose we used a sample (altogether 3968 responses)

¹ The pre-election survey containing the questions for this study took place in the frames of the project Participation and Representation by the Hungarian Election Studies Program of the Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies Foundation under the aegis of the EGT/Norway Fund 0089/NA/2008-3/ÖP-9, the field works of which were implemented by the survey institutes Ipsos Szonda and Median.

² The questions under study were formulated as: „Talking of someone as being 'Left-wing' or 'Right-wing', what do you think these expressions mean nowadays? How would you describe what it means these days if someone is Left-wing?(...) And Right-wing?"

collected by Political Ideology Research Group providing 1923 associations for the Left and 2045 associations for the Right. These data were collected in March, 2010, which was right before the parliamentary elections. The associations came from the answers to two questions regarding what secondary students think when they learn that someone is Left- or (in the second question) Right-oriented.

When interpreting the data, it is important to note the shift towards the Right which was reflected in the subsequent parliamentary elections, where the Right-wing FIDESZ won the vast majority of the votes (52,73%), and the Right-wing extremist JOBBIK got 16,67%; which together sum up to 69,40%. The only 'real' Left-wing party in the parliament, MSZP, received only 19,30% (the fourth party, LMP (Politics Can Be Different) won 7,48%). That shows a very significant difference between the two ends of the spectrum which almost certainly had an impact on the analyzed associations as well (as we will see from the frequencies and percentages of affective content, see Tables 3 and 5).

The number of analyzed associations summed up to 3968. In the case of the Left, 618 of those were unclassifiable (don't know, no meaning), which made up 41,20% of all the answers. In the case of the Right the respective numbers were: 692; 46,13%. Thus, the numbers of processed (meaningful) associations were: 1305 to the Left, 1353 to the Right; altogether: 2658 .

Method

For analyzing the data we used the content analysis method introduced by Züll et al. (2010) on a German sample, with a small modification for the country-specific elements. According to this, we first classified all the associations into 8 main categories which were: Ideology, General Social Values, Specific Social Values, Processes of Societal Change, Social Groups, Political Actors, Concrete Aspects and Affective Content. As already suggested, we introduced a ninth category for the country-specific associations and any others that did not fit into the eight main categories. In addition to that, we labeled the 'unclassifiable' answers as well.

We classified each answer twice, by two independent researchers in order to eliminate error deriving from subjective judgments. In cases of difference between the classifications a third researcher was included in deciding which the best fitting category was. After defining the main categories of each association, we used the same method for defining the subcategories, still according to the classification of Züll et al. (2010); expanded with country-specific subcategories..

Results

The following table shows the summary of results based on the main categories.

Main Category	Left-wing	Right-wing	Average frequency of the category
1. Unclassifiable answers	41,20%	46,13%	43,67%

2. Ideology	20,07%	9,33%	14,70%
3. Political Actors	16,47%	20,60%	18,54%
4. Processes of Change	4,07%	16,27%	10,17%
5. Social Groups	9,47%	8,93%	9,02%
6. Affective Contents	10,07%	6,53%	8,03%
7. General Values	9,67%	5,33%	8%
8. New categories	8,27%	13,40%	10,84%
9. Concrete Aspects	7,33%	5,53%	6,43%
10. Specific values	1,60%	4,27%	2,94%

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF RESULTS BASED ON THE MAIN CATEGORIES

Right-wing associations

The six most frequent subcategories associated with the political Right can be found in the first half of the following Table 2. The second half (separated from the first with the ellipsis) shows some subcategories that might very well prove to be region-specific; or otherwise worthy of the researchers' special interest.

Subcategories - Right

Category	N	% of answers
Empty	652	31,88%
Hungarian Civic Union (FIDESZ)	152	7,43%
National Sentiment	66	3,23%
Positive Affective Content	58	2,84%
Conservatism	54	2,64%
Bourgeoisie	49	2,40%
...		
Protecting the Indigenous	35	1,71%
Democracy	31	1,52%
Religion	31	1,52%
Innovative	29	1,42%
Demand Change	25	1,22%
Demand Progress	21	1,03%
Against the Old Communist System	11	0,54%

TABLE II. SOME SUBCATEGORIES TO THE RIGHT

Regarding the affective contents: 43,16 % of them were positive, 54,74 % were negative and 2,11 % of them expressed neutral emotions (Table 3.). The discrepancy between the ratio of negative/positive affective content is remarkable when compared with the associations to the

Left. Note, however, that the majority were still negative and that the affective contents altogether had a relatively very high frequency (4,65% of all answers), especially compared with results derived from other studies (the number is 1,99% in Züll et al.'s [2010] study).

Affective content - Right

	N	%	% of all
Affective Contents	98	41,35%	4,79%
Positive	58	24,47%	2,84%
Negative	35	14,77%	1,71%
Other Affective Content	41	17,30%	2,00%
Neutral	5	2,11%	0,24%

TABLE III. AFFECTIVE CONTENTS TO THE RIGHT

Left-wing associations

Similarly to Table 2. in the case of the Right, Table 4. contains the most frequent associations to the Left; along with some specific and other interesting findings.

Subcategories - Left

Category	N	% of answers
Empty	563	29,28%
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	157	8,16%
Socialism	147	7,64%
Negative Affective Content	138	7,18%
Communism	87	4,52%
Old Communist System	68	3,54%
...		
Social Sensitivity	65	3,38%
Theft	27	1,40%
Social Support	25	1,30%
Belonging to the Past	22	1,14%
The Poor	21	1,09%
Liberalism	19	0,99%
Conservatism	17	0,88%

TABLE IV. SOME SUBCATEGORIES TO THE LEFT

Regarding the affective contents: 8,33 % of them were positive, 89,58 % were negative (!) and 2,08 % of them expressed neutral emotions. As mentioned above, a remarkable number of all associations fell into this category (7,26% of all answers as opposed to 1,68% in a German sample in Züll et al. [2010]).

Affective content - Left

	N	%	% of all
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Affective Content	151	42,18%	7,85%
Negative	138	38,55%	7,18%
Other Affective Content	56	15,64%	2,91%
Positive	12	3,35%	0,62%
Neutral	1	0,28%	0,05%

TABLE V. AFFECTIVE CONTENT TO THE LEFT

Discussion and Implications for Further Research

The Tables (1-5) we attached provide a good insight to the nature of associations. As it can be seen from Table 1, there are several differences between associations given to the two wings, not only regarding their main categories, but the frequented subcategories as well. This shows that there are both subtle and remarkable differences between the nature of the two wings. It is not that people necessarily associate the two ends of one spectrum (such as: high/low taxes, for/against state intervention, religiousness and against religion, etc.); but in some cases they associate fundamentally different issues and concepts to them (religion only occurs in the case of the Right wing; whereas social sensibility only in the Left for example).

When analyzing the results, the first thing to note is the diversity of associations. So many things come to mind when people are asked about their associations regarding political Left and Right. Still as can be seen from our results, these associations are far from being random: the majority of them are centered around some key areas and issues. When explaining the results one should take several factors into account.

An important one of these is the time when the data were taken: right before the elections in 2010 when the then-current governing party was very unpopular. That may explain the distortions regarding the affective content (see Table 3 and 5.) Another important feature is the political context. According to the results we may assume that in Hungary the most frequent associations are influenced by political parties connected to the Left-Right distinction (see also: Enyedi, 2004), but we must maintain that ideology also plays an important role. Still, it is apt to assume that the study of party positions could add another dimension to studying the Left-Right ideological spectrum.

Regarding implications for future research above all we should mention the repetition of the study using the (open-ended) association technique, with special regard to the change of political contexts. We also plan to make international comparisons with both other post-communist countries and others. We have recently acquired data from a German representative sample courtesy of Mr. Hermann Schmitt; and planning on presenting some of the results in comparison with their Hungarian counterparts at the Conference.

Furthermore, we suggest the use of a more sophisticated and subtle, but yet still simple version of the method, the 'five words' association technique: for better insight on the central and peripheral aspects of Left and Right ideological content (see our work with high-school students). In addition to these, we believe that a better grasp on ideology can only be reached by the application of different methods. To achieve that, we are in the process of developing a Left-Right Scale. We believe that the productive path for the future must include the inclusion of various psychological, political and sociological factors in an attempt to find the reasons behind political orientation. The emphasis falls on the so far rather neglected psychological variables. These issues raise the question: What variables can be used to explain political orientation? The free associations method might not alone give a satisfying answer, however, we believe that the use of it can greatly contribute to this area of political ideological research.

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