'AND WE ARE STUCK IN ONE PLACE, MINISTER.' A STUDY OF EVASIVENESS IN REPLIES TO FACE-THREATENING QUESTIONS IN SLOVAK POLITICAL INTERVIEWS ON SCANDALS (A COMBINED APPROACH)

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Abstract: The phenomenon of political evasiveness in the genre of a political interview has been the focus of several discourse studies employing conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and the social psychology approach. Most of the above-mentioned studies focus on a detailed qualitative analysis of political discourse identifying a wide range of communication strategies that permit politicians to ambiguate their agency and at the same time boost their positive face. Since these strategies may change over time and also be subject to a culture specific environment, the aim of this paper is to discover a) which evasive communicative strategies were employed by Slovak politicians in 2012–2016, b) which lexical substitutions were most frequently used by them to avoid negative connotations of face-threatening questions, and finally, c) which cognitive frames formed a frequent conceptual background of their evasive political argumentation. The paper will draw on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach to the analysis of non-replies devised by Bull and Mayer (1993) and critical discourse analysis in the sample of five Slovak radio interviews aired on the Rádio Express. The selection of interviews was not random- in each interview the politician was asked highly conflictual questions about bribery, embezzlement or disputes in the coalition. Based on qualitative research of Russian-Slovak political discourse (2009) by Dulebová it is hypothesized that a) the evasive strategy of 'attack' on the opposition and 'attack on the interviewer' would occur in our sample with the highest prominence in the speech of the former Prime Minister Fico, and b) the politicians accused of direct involvement in scandals would be the most evasive ones.

Keywords: attack, CDA, corruption, evasiveness, face-threat, hedging, interview, media, metaphor, muzhik, scandals, social psychology, political discoure

1   INTRODUCTION

In social psychology, the ambuiguity of political replies to interviewers' questions has been extensively studied by Bull and Mayer who devised a classification of eleven non-replies based on 18 televised interviews with British politicians from the 1987

General Election. The main contribution of their research lies in their innovative approach to 'evasiveness' which allowed for quantitative description of an otherwise intuitive impression of indirectness in political communication and thus permitted a stylistic comparison of politicians' idiolects. In their analysis of evasive 'non-replies', the turns of politicians were divided into a selection of topical shifts which presented an overt or covert way of political manouevering from the information scope of a question. The socio-psychologic research of the UK political discourse of 1980s discovered that the most prominent strategy of political evading of the question was to 'make a political point' or 'attacking' the question in order to minimise the damage done to the positive face of politicians [1]. The questions of interviewers were viewed as jeopardizing only the positive image ('face') of the politician since it was assumed that by giving a consent to be interviewed, the politician already accepted a certain degree of infringement of his freedom of action [2]. The concept of face introduced into the analysis of social interaction by Goffman [3], later developed in pragmatic linguistics by Brown and Levinson [4] was also adopted by Bull and Elliott in a later research and a classification of face-threats in questions of a political interview was provided [5]. In the present paper, their typology of face-threatening questions (FTA) will not be drawn on; the concept of a face-threat will be looked at from the point of view of its interactional consequences, i.e. the types of evasive arguments employed by politicians in their response to questions (cf. 3.1), and from a linguistic point of view (cf. 3.3), so a number of different strategies of an FTA lexeme replacement will be pointed out.

As in critical discourse analysis (CDA) evasiveness is viewed as one of misrepresentational strategies whereby the events of extralinguistic world are defocused through the usage of euphemisms, or implicit meanings [6], the political language in our paper will be examined also through the findings of cognitive semantic research of metaphorical language pioneered by Lakoff & Johnson [7]. It is assumed that a qualitative analysis of evasive replies of Slovak politicians might reveal analogies with the findings on the metaphorical language of the Russian political discourse, especially expressive forms of attacks on the media [8] or the employment of the image of 'muzhik' which was found as an effective means to model 'us' versus 'them' opposition [9].

2   METHOD

The five one-to-one broadcast radio interviews with Slovak politicians of the social-democratic government of 2012–2016 were chosen as a sample for the analysis of political evasiveness. The interviewees were questioned by the same interviewer, Braňo Závodský, who is known for giving his guests a hard time. The interviews revolved around many scandalous topics including a bribery case ('Bašternák') with an alleged involvement of the former Minister of Interior (R.K.), party nepotism in Regional State Bodies (R.F.), an unexpected coalition formation

involving both the Slovak National Party (A.D.) and the Hungarian party MOST-Híd, insider trading (B.B.), and the collapse of the bridge in Kurimany suggesting the wrong choice of contractor in the public tender (J.P.). The five interviews were transcribed from the youtube channel using Sonix software set up for the Slovak language. The timing of the interviews, the names of interviewees and the date of televised radio broadcastings are specified in Fig. 1[1]:

Interviewer / Politician	Braňo Závodský (Rádio Expres NAŽIVO)		
Róbert Kaliňák (R.K.)- Minister vnútra	Timing:	21.28 min.	17.11. 2016
Róbert Fico (R.F.)- Premiér	Timing:	23.21 min.	25.10. 2016
Andrej Danko (A.D.)- Líder strany SNS	Timing:	20.48 min.	5.9. 2016
Béla Bugár (B.B)- Líder strany MOST-Híd	Timing:	16.27 min.	20.6. 2016
Ján Počiatek (J.P.)- Minister dopravy	Timing:	12.01 min.	6.11. 2012

Fig. 1. Discourse event details

The computer aided transcription was subsequently manually cleared of any lexical or syntactic mistakes which were detected in turn-taking with rapid conversational exchanges and overlapping speech. As the goal of this paper was not to provide a detailed examination of evasive strategies in relation to their face threatening potential, the method chosen as the most suitable for our research was the combination of social-psychologic classification of non-replies with the CDA approach. Due to this, a chosen transcription method was not that of a detailed conversational analysis as adopted by Heritage or Jefferson [10].

In the first step, all 337 turns of the politicians were coded either as a) direct replies, b) intermediate replies or c) non- replies based on the method adopted by Bull and Mayer (1993) drawing on the definition of a question and reply by Quirk [11]. Direct replies were replies where the turn of a politician filled the missing information gap introduced by the question.

(1)

IR: bude tu summit šéfov predsedníctva Únie

A.D.:. a to vzniklo znova z mojej iniciatívy a z udobrenia pána Schulza tak ako tu budú prvý krát premiéri budú tu prvý krát predsedovia parlamentov a Bratislavu dnes hľadá Európa na mape....

Intermediate replies were such answers of politicians which a) filled the missing information from the question in an indirect way, or b) provided incomplete information, or c) were interrupted and unfinished.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9D_gab4rgE&t=1s, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDYDF8_6rhk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eo8wXycHxUc, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnT4tIpNjQg&t=271s.

(2)
> IR: dobre tá moja otázka, upriamoval som to na učiteľov,
> ale môžeme to kľudne rozšíriť aj na sestry, alebo aj na
> štátnych úradníkov...viac sa tam nedá?...lebo aj posledné
> sú signály také rozporuplné Minister financií hovorí
> nech si to rieši Minister školstva Minister školstva či zas
> má na to peniaze. ..je možné že od nového roka dostanú
> pridané alebo nie pán predseda?
>
> R.F.: pán redaktor jediní učitelia majú v programovom
> vyhlásení vlády zakotvené zvyšovanie platov aj
> o konkrétne percentá

In the example above, the politician failed to provide a reply to a 'yes-no' question directed at nurses and employees in the public sector and instead continued to present a policy of the party related to a pay-rise of a different group of state employees, the teachers whom the interviewer excluded from the topical agenda of the question. Thus, the turn of a politician was tagged as an 'intermediate' and 'incomplete' reply, which was included as one of the eleven categories in Bull and Mayer methodology.

In 4.6% of cases, the distinction between a 'direct' and 'intermediate' reply of politicians was not clear-cut as the interviewer invited a politician to present his political view by a series of open-ended declarative questions. In those cases, an ethnomethodology had to be employed to resolve the fuzziness of the distinction, so that if in the upcoming turn the interviewer explicitly stated that the politician was evasive, twisted the events of the factual world, the previous turn of a politician was tagged as an 'intermediate' reply. In a 'non-reply' the policitian strayed from the agenda of the question to a full extent, e.g. by 'acknowledging the question', 'questioning the question', 'attacking the question' or 'declining to answer' (cf. Fig. 3).

(3)
> IR: ...a toto nie je prepojenie?
> R.K.: no to je váš subjektívny názor [attacking the
> interviewer] na to vám už fakt nemám čo povedať [declines]

Thus, after all the intermediate and non-replies were identified in turns, they were segmented following the Bull and Mayer social-psychologic classification. However, as these categories were originally devised based on interviews from 1987, the original methodology was fine-tuned to include newly emerging strategies detected in our sample, e.g. a segment of 'expressing support' to colleagues, or the segment of 'referring to law'. All of these new strategies are discussed in section 3.2.

Finally, the five interviews were analysed using the CDA method focusing on a number of linguistic tools used by politicians to evade the questions asked, i.e. the

near-synonymical expressions substituting the face-threatening lexeme of the question (cf. 3.3) and the cognitive frames observed in the language of interviewed Slovak politicians when evading the questions (cf. 3.4).

3 RESEARCH

3.1 Frequency of evasive replies and their typology

Based on the methodology specified above, all 337 turns of politicians to questions asked were divided into direct, intermediate replies and non-replies and the percentage of evasiveness of each politician was calculated. The percentual distribution of evasive replies is specified below with the number of occurrences marked by (x).

POLITICIAN TYPE OF REPLY	R.K. (SMER) Minister of Interior 2016-2018	R.F. (SMER) Prime Minister 2016-2020	A.D. (SNS) Speaker of Slovak Parliament 2016-2020	J.P. (SMER) Minister of Transport 2012-2016	B.B. (MOST-HÍD) Coalition partner 2016-2020
DIRECT REPLIES	37x	27x	13x	15x	21x
INTERMEDIATE REPLIES	46x	7x	7x	2x	16x
NON-REPLIES	54x	47x	18x	10x	17x
TOTAL NO OF RESPONSES (incl.non-replies)	137x (100%)	81x (100%)	38x (100%)	27x (100%)	54x (100%)
TOTAL NO OF EVASIVE REPLIES	100x	54x	25x	12x	33x
PERCENTAGE OF DIRECT REPLIES	27%	33,3%	34%	55.5%	38.8%
PERCENTAGE OF EVASIVENESS	73%	66.7%	66%	44.5%	61.2%

Fig. 5. Distribution of direct replies as opposed to evasive replies (intermediate replies and non-replies) to questions asked in five interviews

A quantitative analysis of intermediate replies and non-replies in our sample revealed that not all the politicians accused of scandalous affairs were equally evasive despite facing a possible vote of no confidence in the Parliament. The Minister of Interior (R.K.) accused of marring a criminal investigation in his own department was the most evasive one in his answers (73%) using an incomplete reply of 'starting but not finishing' indicating an adversarial style of an interview, along with the strategy of 'attacking' the opposition, 'attacking the interviewer', 'repeating the answer' and 'referring to law' which was a new strategy identified in the Slovak context (cf. 3.2).

The Leader of the Hungarian Party (B.B.) accused of making a fortune upon learning confidential information on the highway construction plans, was discovered to provide less evasive replies employing the same strategy of 'attack' and most importantly, a new strategy of 'referring' to religion', 'charity' or 'family' as possible excuses to accusations of FTA questions made by the interviewer (cf. 3.2)

The Minister of Transport (J.P.) proved to be the least evasive politician in our sample (44.5%) despite being accused of political responsibility for the deaths of workers in the construction project under a technical supervision of his Party nominees, using the strategy of 'declining to reply', or 'attacking the previous government'. A high number of replies provided in his interview resulted from the fact that from the middle of the interview the politician's argumentation started to be accepted by the interviewer as a clear, logical and satisfactory explanation of his decision not to give up on his office.

As illustrated in Fig. 3 below, in the superordinate category of 'making a political point' it was the category of 'giving reassurance' (8.75%), and 'attack on the opposition' (7.83%) which reached the highest frequency in the interviews. In the 2016 interview with a former Prime Minister Fico, the strategy of 'attacks on the opposition' was found with a lower frequency than expected; however, it was extensively used by Mr. Danko (10%) and Mr. Kaliňák (8.02%), both of whom used figurative language in delegitimation of their opponents, e.g. *obliať blatom* ('mud-sling'). In case of Mr. Bugár and Mr. Kaliňák, attacks on the opposition combined with those on the media suggesting the media collaborated with the opposition on discreditation of politicians or that the interviewer himself was involved in *mediálny lynč* ('media lynch') of politicians.

(4)

R.K.: pretože toto má byť tá téma [impo not tackled] a pokračovanie toho <u>mediálneho lynču</u>…čiže [attacks interviewer]
IR: …ale no tak, zasa!

IR: ja viem ale tu sa na <u>opozíciu</u> vôbec nepýtam pán predseda
B.B.: ja viem [acknowledges] ale ja musím povedať kto vytvára takýto tlak? [returns Q] Kto hovorí občanom že fakticky všetci <u>sú namočení</u> do nejakých <u>káuz</u>? [attack]
IR: to občania si sami hovoria
B.B.: no no no. to tak nie je [Q based on a false premise] <u>čítajú to čo niektorí tu podsúvajú</u> [attack]

POLITICIAN Evasive reply	R.K. (I.)	R.F. (II.)	A.D. (III.)	B.B. (IV.)	J.P. (V.)	PERCENTAGE (n=434)
2. Acknowledges the Q	4.94	3.36	1.66	1.42	-	3.22%
3. Questions the Q						5.06 %
a. Asks for clarification	1.24	2.52		1.42		
b. Reflects the question	3.70	2.52	3.33	7.14		
4. Attacking the Q						12.67%
Important Q not tackled	3.09	2.52	1.66	2.85	2x	
Q based on a false premise	4.94	5.04		5.71	1x	
Q hypothetical	1.24	3.36	6.6	5.71	2x	
Q objectionable	0.62	-		-		
Corrects the Q	2.47	-		1.42		
5. Attacks the IR	5.55	-	-	-	-	2.3%
6. Declines to answer	1.85	6.72	8.33	7.81	3x	5.52%
7. Makes a pol. point						45.62 %
Attacks	8.02	6.72	10	7.14	2x	(7.83%)
Presents a policy	-	6.72	6.6	2.85		
Gives reassurance	8.02	10.08	13.33	4.28	2x	(8.75%)
Appeal to nationalism	-	0.08	1.66	1.42		
Offers analysis	1.85	2.52		7.14	2x	
Self-justifies	11.73	5.88	18.33	2.87	2x	
Talks up	1.85	5.04	5	1.42	2x	
Justifies		4.20	1.66		1x	
i. Expresses support	2.46	5.88	5	1.42	-	
j. Refers to law	4.93	1.68	1.66	4.28	-	
k. Refers to religion	-	-	-	2.85		
l. Refers to charity	-	-	-	1.42		
m. Refers to family				1.42	2x	
8. Incomplete reply						13.82 %
Starts but does not finish	14.81	5.04	3.33	8.57		
Partial reply						
Half reply	1.24	1.68		2.85		
Negative reply	3.09	5.04	1.66	2.85		
e. Positive reply	0.62	0.08				
9. Repeats the answer	8.02	7.56	6.6	7.14	2x	7.6 %
10. States that Q has already been answered	3.7	3.36	3.33	4.28		3.45%
11. Apologizes		0.08		1.42		0.46%
12. Thanks		0.08				0.23%
TOTAL	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %		100 %

Fig. 3. Distribution of evasive strategies (%) in five Slovak interviews adapted from Bull and Mayer (1993). The percentage of each strategy in each I–IV column reflects its frequency with respect to the total number of strategies in each interview; the percentage in the VI column reflects the percentage of each strategy with respect to the total number of strategies in all five interviews. In the first interview the total number of evasive strategies was n=162 (100%), in the second interview n=119 (100%), in the third one n=60 (100%), the fourth one n=70 (100%). Due to a low number of evasive replies in the fifth interview (n=23), the distribution of strategies in the V column was not stated in the percentage but in the number of occurrences (x)

The strategy of 'reassuring' the public was employed the most by Mr. Danko who as a new member of the government was given many questions on the future course of action and also by Mr. Fico who employed this strategy to boost the positive image of the party while at the same time attacking the negatively valued other- members criticising nepotism and calling for a change in 'autocratic' practices in the party.

(5)   R.F.: no samozrejme tak potom je úplne normálne že môže dôjsť k takémuto prepojeniu budeme sa brániť ak bude niekto na Smer takýmto spôsobom útočiť bodka [reassures]

3.2 New evasive strategies

A close examination of five interviews with Slovak politicians revealed the occurrence of seven new evasive strategies (cf. Fig. 3). Five of them were subsumed under Bull and Mayer's 'making a political point' due to politicians' justification of political acts by reference to law (7j), religion (7k), charity (7l), family (7m) or by expressing a friendly support (7i) for the members states of the EU, or governmental colleagues. Other two strategies included a speech act of 'thanking' (12) and a 'positive reply' (8e). The highest number of references to law was noticed in the speech of Mr. Kaliňák and Mr. Bugár. Both of these politicians employed legalese language and resorted to quoting definitions based on the wording of the Constitution or the Commercial Code. In their answers, the argument about the autonomous ruling of judiciary, executive, and legal power was used when asked about the possible conflict of interest in their exercising of political function. Their resignation from a political office based on existing scandals was dismissed as premature or irrelevant.

(6)   R.K.:..chráni...je to právo, ktoré máte z ústavy... [refers to law] to sú v podstate súkromné veci, ktoré robíte... čiže ja som neporušil nič....
....
IR: s tým čo teraz kedy kedy to urobíte?
B.B.: to však samozrejme musí prejsť jednak koaličnou radou
IR: koaličnou radou
B.B.: a samozrejme musí byť aj aj v zákone to zabezpečené legislatívne [refers to law]

The benefit of legal argumentation was twofold- not only did it demonstrate the speakers' detailed knowledge of Slovak laws which were claimed to prove the business deals of politicians legal, but it also made the politicians appear as law-abiding citizens.

In the answers of Mr. Bugár, the strategies of 'referring to religion' and 'charity' were observed in the context of questions that implied that a politician took advantage of confidential information known to members of a government before a new highway project plan was oficially disclosed to the public. The politician was accused of a fraudulent way of obtaining money, an argument he dismissed by saying he was forced to sell the land near highway to the state and the only authority he should listen to is God.

(7)   IR: pretože sa o tom rozprávame
         B.B.: pán redaktor viete čo v Biblii sa hovorí aby
         pravá ruka nevedela čo robí ľavá alebo naopak
         [religion] prepáčte prečo by som mal toto hovoriť
         [declines] je to moja vnútorná vec pred Bohom
         [religion] ja budem musieť zodpovedať a nie pred
         povedzme Matovičom

The money gained from selling the land was also indicated to be given to a non-profit organisation, such as the Church using the hedging of the conditional mood (*mohol by som povedať*) and the politician stated that he had formerly bought it from a family friend who was in need of money.

(8)   B.B.: nehovoriac o tom viete že na jednej strane sa
         zisťujú taketo blbosti [attack]
         na druhej strane kľudne by som mohol povedať že
         polovicu som rozdal napríklad
         neziskovej organizácii [charity] napríklad cirkvi
         [religion]
         B.B. ...tomu aj ja rozumiem ale vtedy pred
         desiatimi rokmi od príbuzného ktorý sa dostal do
         ťažkej situácie potreboval peniaze [family]. Tak
         som kúpil pôdu.

In evasive replies of Mr. Fico, the 'support' of the governmental collegues accused of bribery and conflict of interest was stated and the members of Regional Administrative Bodies who expressed criticism of the party were attacked. The attack on the opposition merged with that on the media too, followed by a prefixed expressive verb *vykrikovať*.

(9)
     IR: ale to je také...
     R.F.: no počkajte nie je to celkom pravda nie nie
     nie nie nie bolo to presne tak ako hovorím
     [reassures] preto treba byť absolútne opatrný pri
     vyšetrovaní akýchkoľvek káuz Robert Kaliňák má
     moju plnú dôveru je to jeden z najlepších ministrov
     vnútra [expresses support] aké kedy Slovensko
     malo [appeals to nationalism] ja nevidím dôvod
     teraz len pretože médiá opozícia vykrikuje konal
     [attacks]

A speech act of 'thanking' for the work done by governmental colleagues was also identified in the speech of Mr. Fico, who apart from using the strategy of 'negative reply' also employed a new strategy of a 'positive reply'.

(10)
     R.F. táto vládna koalícia je stabilná koalícia
     a chcem poďakovať koaličným partnerom za
     spoluprácu [thanks] to je moja odpoveď a nie je
     iná ako vy očakávate [repeats]

Unlike the 'negative reply' where the politician stated what he would not do instead of what he would do, in a 'positive' reply, the plan to undertake a certain course of action was described by a politician following a declarative question with the verb in negative form.

(11)
     IR: dobre vysvetľujem si to tak že tie zmeny sa
     nebudú týkať pána podpredsedu Kaliňáka
     R.F.: nie, ja som povedal [implies Q asnwered] že
     budú zmeny na úrovni podpredsedov alebo
     v predsedníctve [positive reply] ale predsa len je to
     predovšetkým úloha na delegátov a nie pre nás
     dvoch teraz to riešiť [declines]

3.3 Linguistic substitution of FTA lexemes (CDA approach)

In our sample, a different representation of concepts was detected in hedged answers of politicians along with cognitive reframing suggesting coercion of the public and delegitimation of an opponent or media to boost a positive image of politicians. An FTA lexeme of the question taking the form of a) verbal and b) nominal phrases was replaced either by a) euphemisms to attenuate the impact of a face-threat by providing a more neutral equivalent, or on the contrary, b) sub-stitution of a neutral lexeme from the question through figurative and dysphemic

language. As may be seen from the Fig. 4, the politician was depicted as a victim unjustly 'lynched'(R.K.) or 'slapped' (R.F.) by the media (*fackovanie*).

	FTA LEXEME	SUBSTITUTION	EUPH.	FIG.
NOMINAL PHRASES	kritika→	mediálny lynč (R.K.) fackovanie (R.F.)		+ +
	obvinenia→	vyhlásenia (R.K.)	+	
	prepojenie→	vzťah (R.K.)	+	
VERBAL PHRASES	odložiť→ vydržať→ volať+ [IND. OBJ.]→	vyriešiť (B.B) byť pripravený na turbulencie (A.D.) byť (+adverb) v Bruseli (R.K.)		
	vyšetriť→ zamlčať→ povedať→ zostávať→ odovzdať→ odvolať [IND. OBJ] ozvať sa [IND. OBJ.]+ adv [time] →	prešetriť (R.K.) pomlčať (R.K.) potvrdiť (R.K.) posúvať sa (R.K.) vziať (R.F.) (ne) rezať hlavy (R.F.) telefonovať (J.P.)	+ +	+

Fig. 4. Substitution of FTA lexemes with noun and verbal phrases in the form of euphemisms (+) or dysphemic (figurative) language (+)

Although the figurative language was most frequently employed by the Leader of the Slovak National Party SNS (Fig. 5), it was also used by the former Prime Minister Fico in negative replies to evade the question on a possible removal of his Minister of Interior from the Government suggesting no guillotining of the ministers would take place (*nerezať hlavy*).

The highest number of verbal substitutions of FTA lexemes was made by Mr. Kaliňák who also produced the most evasive answers in our sample. Linguistic evasiveness of his non-replies lay in replacing the verbal prefix *vy-*, or *za-* by a different set of prefixes *pre-* and *po-*, which reduced the negative connotations of lexemes denoting his criminal inquiry (*vyšetrovanie)* or 'suppression' of the truth (*zamlčať*). The legalese meaning of 'investigation' was broadened and its neutral redefinition was amplified through a microprocedural narrative provided by the minister who included a story-telling description of individual speaking acts made by each 'accused' party during an alleged *vyšetrovanie*. A negatively valued meaning of an 'investigation' was thus substituted by verba dicendi (*povedať-porozprávať*).

Lexemes with positive connotations operating within the co-text of a politician's reply were also substituted; the interviewer uncovered and reframed only verbal predications of politicianswhich gave rise to unwanted implicatures depicting themas the ones who only postponed the solution of the problem (*odložiť*) instead of fixing it (*vyriešiť*), or implying unwillingness of the politician to cooperate as in *zostať na mieste* ('be stuck').

Although an implication that a co-partner in an interview misunderstood the provided argumentation presents a common rhetorical strategy of language manipulation [12] and evasiveness from the topic of the question might be hard to detect for interviewers [13], in the excerpt below praising of the interviewer, e.g. *posúvate sa o kúsok ďalej* ('you are gradually making progress') was dismissed by the journalist. The implicature that he was in fact slow in understanding the politician's argumentation was successfully decoded and challenged through a critical counter-argument of the interviewer claiming 'we are stuck in one place' (*zostávame na jednom mieste*).

(12)
R.K. ja som nezamlčal…akože
tu sa presne posúvate opäť o kúsok ďalej…
IR: zostávame na jednom mieste
R.K.: ja som nikdy neklamal
IR: no ale ani ste nehovorili pravdu

3.4 Cognitive frames of evasive replies

In line with modern cognitive approaches to political discourse where a metaphor occupies the central position due to its persuasive character [14], the evasive replies of Slovak politicians were carefully analyzed looking for hidden conceptual frames enabling to reduce the political accountability through delegitimation or reference to certain practices as social norms (epistemic modality). Apart from generic clichés on politics as 'an art of a compromise', two main types of cognitive metaphors revolving around the concept of politics were identified in their speech, one of them anthropomorphic related to human activities (coffee-drinking) and the other one social (crime, fear, otherness) following the classification of Chudinov [15].

Politics as coffee-drinking and confidential business-making

In the discourse of the Slovak National Party Leader, politics was described as a serious deal happening over the cup of coffee, making it possible for certain politicians to have more personal discussion, which bound them to keep their word.

(13)
A.D.: ale podstata celej tej nenahraditeľnosti
spočíva v tom, že si nemáte s kým dať serióznu
kávu…ako predseda politickej strany SAS si s vami
dá kávu, povie vám niečo medzi štyrmi očami,
vyjde pred médiá a bude klamať…

In contrast to Habermasian perception of the 17th and 18th century coffee-house as a new public sphere where critical discussions on state affairs were held among intellectuals [16], the metaphor of 'coffee-drinking' in the speech of the SNS party leader gained a private, secret-code meaning symbolizing the forging of a strong kinship. The confidentiality of political business deals was depicted as a standard practice through an implicature linked to the lexeme *predsa* ('in fact') used as an argument by the former Minister of Interior to evade the question on his not disclosing the information on a business made with Bašternák. The Minister stated 'in fact no Member of the Parliament speaks about his own things'.

(14)

R.K: že práve <u>kúpou vzťah končí a nie začína</u>...
<u>to</u> je základný rozdiel a keď som na to dostal otázku, tak som na to jednoducho odpovedal..
<u>proste</u> <u>vyložil som všetky karty na stôl</u>...
R.K.: žiaden <u>poslanec,</u> ktorý príde do parlamentu predsa <u>nehovorí o svojich veciach</u>...to je jeho vec.
tu je Igor Matovič...
IR: ale nemá problém s Bašternákom... na rozdiel od vás..

Otherness of political opposition as homosexuality

The most figurative language expressions in our sample were discovered in the discourse of the leader of the Slovak National Party. In the 'us' versus 'them' ideological squaring [17] the political opponents were not only depicted in a visually emotive way using the metaphor of 'crime' inciting fear by an idiom *bodnúť do chrbta* ('backstabbing'), but also in a discriminatory way. They were tacitly attributed a homosexual identity by voice-qualifiers, e.g. *preskakuje hlas* ('trembling voice') or a 'woman-like' character (*zženštilosť*), which helped emphasise a stereotypical perception of queer men not acting as real men. The narrative of a strong alpha-male politician protecting the people from chaos thus points at similarities between the Russian national political discourse and Slovak national discourse where attribution of a homosexual label may be used as a form of delegitimation of the 'other' [18].

4   CONCLUSION

A combined social-psychologic and CDA analysis of the phenomenon of political evasiveness to questions in five selected one-to-one Slovak radio interviews revealed that the strategy of 'attacking' the opposition was a common technique of a topical shift in the Slovak context of 2012–2016. Although its frequency reached the second highest ranking (7.83%) of 'making a political point', it was not

associated most commonly with the political discourse of Mr. Fico as expected (6.72%), but with the Slovak National Party Leader who also used the most expressive language to delegitimise his political opponents (10%). Attacks on the interviewer were only made by Mr. Kaliňák. The hypothesis that politicians directly involved in scandalous accusations would be the most evasive ones was confirmed – the Minister of Interior accused of marring the investigation of his own case was the most evasive one of all interviewed politicians (73%) and the Minister of Transport accused of responsibility for deaths of workmen on a construction project delivered more satisfactory replies (44.5%). Apart from discovering new strategies of evading the questions, e.g. 'referring to law', 'religion', 'charity' or 'family', a cognitive frame of real 'manhood' was detected in the discourse of Slovak National Party Leader, A. Danko who implicitly depicted political opponents as homosexual, which indicates a similarity between Slovak and Russian national political discourse of recent years.
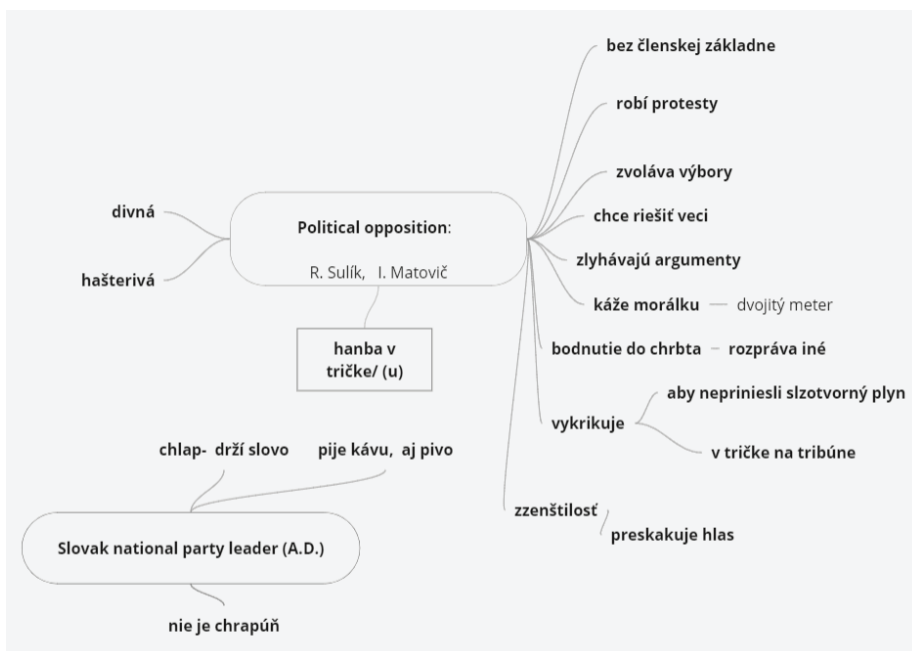

Fig. 5. Delegitimising the political opposition in the SNS Party Leader discourse

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