

## **Ambivalent Discourse in Non-Democratic Regimes**

**Abstract:** Is there any other form of alternative public sphere apart from that created by underground activities in regimes where the public sphere is controlled by political censorship? Partially contradicting those studies, which claim that oppositional activities make their appearance under more relaxed political control (e.g. the post-totalitarian period of Communist regimes), I argue in this paper that the potential of resisting totalitarian control over the public sphere exist in periods of complete repression too, in the form of ambivalent discourse. *Ambivalent discourse*, or as it is more commonly known “double speech”, means that different practices (texts, performances) formally meet the official standards, nevertheless, the frames of reference used for their interpretation might differ from the official one. Since it is a *sui generis* public phenomenon, one can argue that the practice of ambivalent discourse has the potential to generate an alternative public sphere. My aim with this research is to identify the influencing factors to the practice of ambivalent discourse and to disentangle the variances and changes in its structure. The research is designed in a way to include a critical case study: Romania in the Communist period. The rationale for selecting Romania is that it provides a least-likely case for the occurrence of an alternative public sphere, as censorship and political terror are brought to the extreme. If even under such circumstances an alternative public sphere develops, then we have good reasons to believe that under more favorable conditions the practice of ambivalent discourse would manifest itself too. However, it will be more than a single-case study, as the ambivalent discourse of both the Hungarian and the Romanian language public sphere in Romania will be analyzed. The case selection allows for a synchronic as well as for a diachronic analysis. In terms of methods, the research uses the methodological framework of discourse analysis.