

Constructing Polish identity in the discourse of *The Economist*

Agnieszka Sowińska (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń)

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Poland and *Polishness* are construed in *The Economist*, a weekly news and international affairs magazine. The semiotic unfolding of the reality created in the media discourse will be manifested in the language through the illustration and analysis of various discursive devices and strategies, such as topicalisation, negative lexicalization or metaphor, through, in other words, discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use, and will also be realized within the broader social and political context. The concept of identity, understood as context-dependent and dynamic, will be discussed with respect to three main subjects of the articles: the Polish government, especially within the context of the vetting law, the Polish Church and Polish migration. The research is based on over twenty articles from *The Economist* print edition, published in the period from September 2004, after Poland's parliamentary and presidential elections, to April 2007.

As stated on its advertising information page (<http://printmediakit.economist.com/>), "*The Economist* is written for a global audience of senior business, political and financial decision-makers that value *The Economist* for the accuracy of its incisive writing, its international outlook and lack of partisanship." However innocent and neutral media discourse pretends to be, it is actually permeated with hidden relations of power and biases cumulatively imposed on readers, implicit assumptions, attitudes and judgments of privileged groups which design our social reality. The process of construction, reproduction and legitimation of social identities and stereotypes, for example, exerts a strong impact on the conception of the people in a wide scale. In the paper it will be demonstrated how ideologically loaded discursive strategies are used to impose certain beliefs, values or goals.

Drawing much of its theoretical inspiration from critical discourse analysis, the present paper aims at answering the following questions: (1) what discursive strategies are employed in the construction of Polish identity?, (2) to what extent is the image of Poland, its government and people fairly portrayed in the magazine?, and (3) at which point does negative stereotyping begin?