

THE 'VEHICLE' OF DEIXIS IN TRUMP'S TWEETS: DOES IT HOLD THE LOAD?

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ABSTRACT: *Politicians, through political discourse, filter messages laden with ideologies and political agendas. The fact that this discourse type portrays political thinking through deploying different strategies of communication renders the current paper's main foci manifold. For instance, it studies tweets of the US President Donald Trump in the year 2019. The tool adopted in this small-scale study is deixis precisely the pronominal system (I, you, we and they). The latter helps uncover cognitive mechanisms, ideological drives, attitudes etc, in the president's discourse. These objectives are approached through both quantitative and qualitative analyses, while implementing van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach's discourse stage of analysis [1995]. Interestingly, results show that the highest frequency of occurrence is linked to the first pronoun singular 'I', the pronouns 'we' and 'you' are rated second. The last one in the list is the pronoun 'they'. Results also show that the writer relates 'non-ego' to his ego in Rauh's words [1983]. Moreover, the pronoun 'we' has been used both inclusively and exclusively depending on the president's agenda and aims. The pronoun 'you' has been proven to have 'a dual use as in the previous case. As for the pronoun 'they' it has been used to talk not only about those in the periphery zone but also about those who are appreciated.*

KEYWORDS: Discourse, socio-cognitive, political, ideological, attitudes, pronominal.

INTRODUCTION

As a new genre displaying political thinking, twitter whose characters do not exceed 140, was developed in 2006. Twitter content, then, is public unless the person is unwilling to make it so. It is accessed via many methods like web, email, SMS etc. In this regard, twitter consists of a database that can store tweets that users posted [Zappavigna, 2012, p. 3]. As a new platform used for communication, it has, undeniably, been infused into daily life independently from geographical locations allowing millions of users to filter messages as discernible. In this connection, Murthy (2018, p. 675) contends that it is an ideal environment for the dissemination of breaking-news whereby information is rated valuable and is propagated actively if it is from an official source. This claim needs to be reconsidered as many of the official sources, inherently, incarnate in ideological drives and serve their political agenda, in the case of politicians of course. Incongruence in discourse, then, oscillates between the impetus to implement the political agenda and other objectives related to many overarching issues be they economic, social, racial or political.

Being an unconventional president, Trump tweets a lot. Interestingly, he fluctuates between positive self-representation and negative other-presentation; blaming the other and presenting oneself as a victim, foregrounding and back-grounding of information, and so forth. These strategies are going to be exhausted in a coming stage after implementing one of the levels of analysis of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1995), precisely the discourse level. At this level

of analysis pronouns are going to be invested as tools of analysis to uncover the writer's ideological drives attitudes towards opponents, immigrants, allies and rivals. The same tool is going to be utile in unveiling Trump's opinions and beliefs regarding the other and how they shape public opinion. Cognitive mechanisms are, also, going to be accounted for in relation to ideology and knowledge. In the next section, the procedure and the tool of analysis is going to be elaborated, in addition to the level of analysis selected. After that, one has to embark on the description of the corpus and methods implemented. The last section presents the findings and discussion; where focus will go to ideology, attitudes, mental representations and how they are linked to pronouns to shape public opinion.

Critical discourse Analysis (CDA, henceforth)

CDA was first introduced by Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew in the book *Language and Control* [1979]. Then, it was developed by Fairclough and Wodak [1989] and van Dijk (1993) [van Dijk, 2007, p. 22]. Many other scholars studied CDA like Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C. (2000), Huckin, T. N. (1997) Bayram, F. (2010) Wang, J. (2010). Its major aims are related to issues of power, domination, inequality, race and class in text and talk [van Dijk, p. 23]. Interestingly, principles of CDA are distinctive as they are problem-oriented and eclectic [Wodak, Fairclough, 2013, p. 186]. In this connection, van Dijk links discrimination, reproduction, race, gender, and social order to CDA [2015, p. 468]. Although CDA has different theories and methodologies, it, for Wodak, has common goals like enlightening and emancipating human action whereby power as a central condition is linked to language [2013, p. 187] In addition, CDA makes explicit ideologies and discursively enacted dominance whereby issues of manipulation and legitimation are also tackled [van Dijk, 1995, p. 17-18]. Among the other aims of CDA is its focus on social problems like adopting multi-disciplinary methods of research, and thus, it goes beyond the mere description to attain explanatory purposes [van Dijk, 2001]. Interestingly, language is deemed a real manifestation of power, and this is a fair reason lying behind the choice of tweets. As language carries thoughts and whole belief systems, political discourse might be claimed to be one of the facets of the aforementioned notions which are intriguing for researchers.

Political Discourse (PD, henceforth)

Akin to CDA, political discourse has been defined by many researchers each from his/her school of thought or perspective. Among the scholars that have carried out research in this filed one might mention Chilton. The author has peculiar views though affinities with many others are remarkable. PD is, then, viewed as the struggle for power between those who want to maintain it and those who show resistance [Chilton, 2004, p. 3]. However, van Dijk has a different definition which associates politics with society whose practices are discursive in nature. This implies that cognition is ideologically based and from this standpoint ideologies are socially based [2006, p. 728]. Thus, "politics cannot be conducted without language" [Chilton & Shaffner, 1997, p. 206]. This implies, among other things, that language is a terrain which lends itself to thoughts, beliefs, opinions, etc, to appear. Notwithstanding this view, Fairclough emphasizes the role of argumentation in the political arena while reflecting a context of decision making in "contexts of uncertainty" where risks of disagreement are a central [2013, p. 17]. In conjunction with that, participants, goals, settings, ideologies, cognition, institutions, etc, are all included [van Dijk, 1997, p. 17-18]. Interestingly, political language is assumed to reflect fears, threats, problems and so forth. This might be used strategically by politicians to control people's minds and direct their

attention towards specific issues at the expense of others [Endelmean, 2013, p. 3-4; Weber, 2013, p. 414].

Among the strategies politicians opt for during persuasion one can mention rhetoric. Charteris Black observes that “telling the right story” means providing an explanation that fits the audience’s previous experiences and assumptions about how the world works (2011, p. 15). In the same connection, language can be a means that accentuates anxiety by reflecting fears, problems threats etc, and release them in other occasions (Endelman, 2013, p. 3-4; Weber, 2013, p. 414).

Manipulation

Central to the domain of politics is manipulation. Politicians resort to manipulation, as it might be claimed to be endemic in PD, for a number of reasons which makes use of a number of strategies. van Dijk, in this sense, contends that when people are manipulated beliefs, knowledge, opinions, etc, undergo the same process. Many strategies are used efficiently to shape opinions while processing discourse in Short Term Memory whereby quick guesses are allocated the role of comprehension instead of efficient analyses. In this case, forms of manipulation might include blaming the victim, re-attributing them responsibility of action, activating the preferred model so that in Short Term Memory they do the same [2006, p. 365].

Interestingly, other strategies might include positive self-presentation, negative other presentation, local meaning: OUR/THEIR positive /negative actions (give many/few details; be general/ specific; be vague/ precise; be implicit/ explicit), local syntax: active versus passive, etc. In this regard, lack of knowledge from the part of participants and recipients makes the act of manipulation work well for the dominant groups, and thus, create social inequality [van Dijk, 2006, p. 374]. In tandem with this, stereotyping is tightly linked to manipulation. It is, thus, defined as representations of group relations as these are not ideology-free which do not merely mirror individuals but rather social groups [Augustinos &Walker, 1998, p. 629] so as to generate behavioral expectancies [Augustinos &Walker, 1998, p. 631-632].

As van Dijk puts it, ideology is “some kind of system of ideas” which is not expressed independently from notions like legitimation, concealment and manipulation. Being shared by group members, ideologies define what is right and what is wrong which make social actors act accordingly, and these are detrimental in how groups understand and conceive the world [van Dijk, 1998, p. 8]. Being a category of beliefs which are the product of thought, knowledge is also evaluative [van Dijk, 1998, p. 20-21]. Hence, manipulative discourse, as one can remark, is not free neither from ideologies nor knowledge.

Cognitive pragmatics

As it has been mentioned above, CDA is interdisciplinary in nature. It comes a no surprise that there is a connection between cognitive pragmatics and CDA. For instance, as cognitive pragmatic studies people’s mental states in communicative situations, it goes without saying that people’s individual motivations, beliefs, goals, desires, etc, are, also, to be taken into account [Bara, 2010, p. 1; Bosco, 2006, p. 2] which, again, implies that for communication to be cooperative, some mental states have to be shared among social actors [Bara, 2011, p. 1]. In a similar vein, he assumes that [2011, p. 44] knowledge and beliefs are tightly linked in the literature to pragmatics whereby the properties of beliefs are defined by “a set of axioms from the

theory to logic” [Jakko, Hintikka, 1996, p. 2]. In addition, an interesting view by Levinson states that, whereas Chomsky distinguishes between competence and performance, pragmatics revolves solely around “performance principles of language use”, a view to be taken with caution as some other elements pertaining to pragmatics are missing.

Despite the differences in views, the previous claim does not contradict the general principles of pragmatics whereby meaning is studied in relation to the way it is communicated by speakers and writers and interpreted by listeners [Yule, 1996, p. 3]. In sum, pragmatics is connected to other disciplines as it is not studied independently from them like philosophy and cognitive science [Cummings, 2013, p. 1] and this is irreversible.

Deixis

The pronominal system can be used as an analytic tool in text analysis like tweets, technically known in pragmatics as deixis. At a first level, it should be noted that there is a clear-cut distinction between social, person, discourse and temporal deixis [Hanks, 2011, p. 313]. In the same connection, Rauh claims that deixis is that part of grammar where indexical meaning is a matter of use [1983, p. 11]. Interestingly, he assumes that “deixis is involved whenever an encoder by means of language relates something called “non-ego” to his ego. Hence, the notion of ego refers to the individual with sensory, emotional and cognitive capacities [1983, p. 30].

As discernible, Lyons does almost have the same conception as Rauh in how the speaker casts himself the role of ego and relates everything to his viewpoint whereby the speaker and the addressee are the only ones who ‘participate in this drama’. In such a case third person is negatively represented as the author contends [1977, p. 683], a view that needs to be taken with caution, indeed. A lucid and intriguing leap is presented by Chilton visualizing the notion of deixis. The latter is going to be displayed in the figure that comes next:

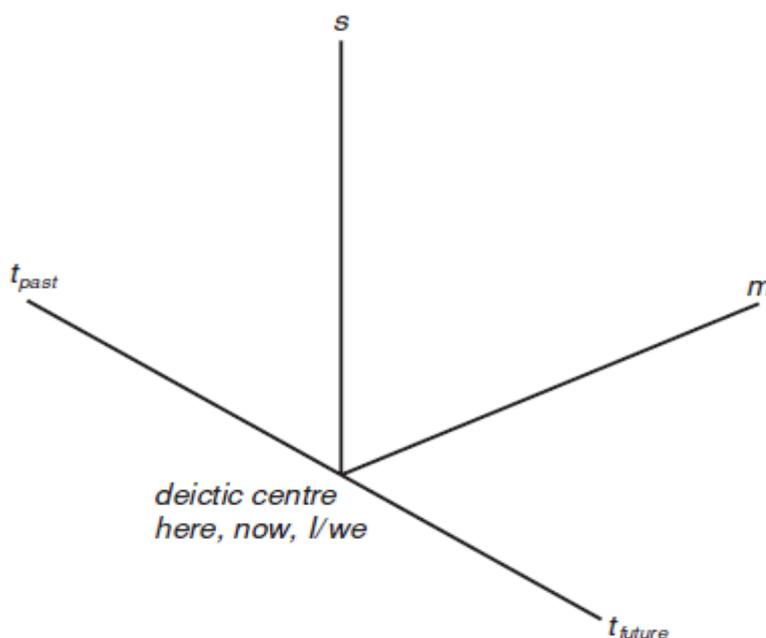


Figure 1. Dimensions of deixis adopted from Chilton (2004, p. 58).

The *Self*, as it is shown is not only here and now but it is also the epistemic *true* and deontic *right*. Therefore, the polysemy of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ supports the idea that epistemic and deontic scales are closely related. This means that what is right is both truth-conditionally ‘right’ and legally or even morally ‘right’, and correspondingly for ‘wrong’. In the following diagram ‘*Self*’ is always right, the other however is always wrong which for the author stands for a universal conceptual pattern [2004, p. 59]. This representation fits political actors and is to a large extent true basically in reference to the *Self*.

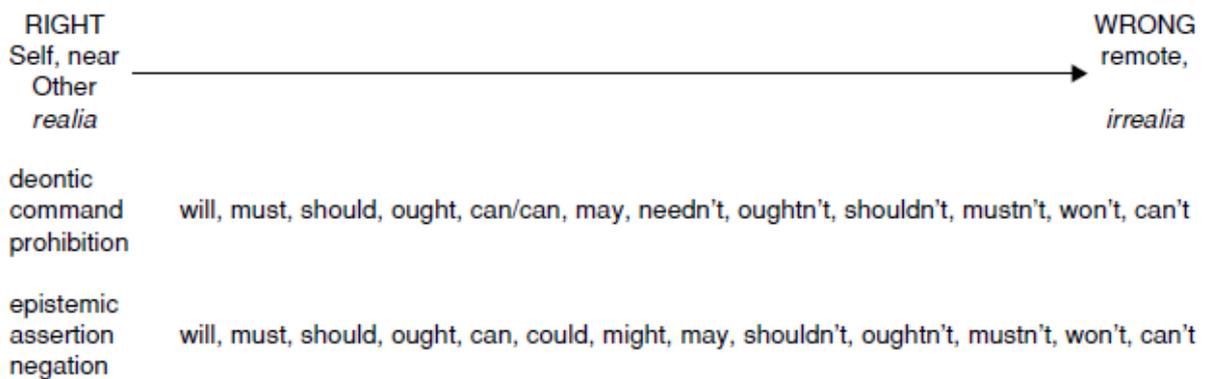


Figure 2. The rightness-wrongness scale [Chilton, 2004, p. 59]

It transpires from the above figure that the ‘self’ is placed at the right scale. The closer to the ‘self’ the more right one might be. Whereas the self is associated with what has to be done as in the case of decision taking (must, will, should, ought to, etc), those who are remote to the ‘self’ are anchored in negative terms by attributing them negative action whose meaning pertains to negation and prohibition.

van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach [1995]

van Dijk’ s theoretical approach consists in three major levels of analysis. The first stage is entitled social analysis whereby several key elements have to be analyzed to meet the objectives of this very level. The second stage is entitled cognitive analysis whereby some key distinctive elements have to be covered to meet the requirements of the stage. The last stage deals with discourse analysis and this stage is going to be applied whereby structures of text and talk refer to analytic tools deployed in the analysis, in the case of this research paper, deixis (person pronouns). The choice of the third level of analysis, however, does neither exclude nor deny the interference of other components of stage one and two. This implies that there is a dialectical relation between the different parts of the theoretical approach though they appear to be separate and distinct.

In what follows a table that gives a clear account of the three-dimensional approach:

. Social Analysis

- *Overall societal structures, e.g., parliamentary democracy, capitalism*
- *Institutional \ Organizational structures, e.g., racist political parties*
- *Group relations, e.g., discrimination, racism, sexism*
- *Group structures: identity, tasks, goals, norms, position, resources*

. Cognitive Analysis***a-Social cognition***

- *Sociocultural values, e.g., intelligence, honesty, solidarity, equality*
- *Ideologies, e.g., racist, sexist, anti-racist, feminist, ecological ...*
- *Systems of attitudes, e.g., about affirmative action, multiculturalism ...*
- *Sociocultural knowledge, e.g., about society, groups, language, ...*

b-Personal cognition***i.General (context free)***

- *Personal values: personal selections from social values*
- *Personal ideologies: personal interpretations of group ideologies*
- *Personal attitudes: systems of personal opinions*
- *Personal knowledge: biographical information, past experiences*

ii. Particular (context-bound)

- *Models: ad hoc representations of specific current actions, events*
- *Context models: ad hoc representations of the speech context*
- *Mental plans and representation of (speech) acts, discourse*
- *Mental construction of text meaning from models: the 'text base'*
- *Mental (strategic) selection of discourse structures (style, etc.)*

. Discourse Analysis

- *The various structures of text and talk*

Table 1. levels of analysis, van Dijk [1995, p. 20]**METHODOLOGY**

The current section gives an account of the corpus that is going to be investigated and describes the instruments that will support the analyst (year 2018).

Corpus and selection criteria

In this small-scale study, as it may appear, tweets are going to be analyzed. Actually, tweets constitute a new genre that has been subject of research since it has been common among political actors. Tweets to be analyzed are written by Donald Trump in the year 2018. No tweets have been deleted. These have been retrieved from the following address <http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive/@whitehouse> whereby the number of tweets equals **3557**.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are going to be adopted. Combining both methods has been subject to controversy. Notwithstanding this controversy, several authors advocated both research methods (Denniss, 1994, Steckler, 1992, Lund 2012, Brannen, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODS

This part describes the file that has been created, presents the research instruments and describes the data.

Creating a text file

A word file has been created under the extension ‘.text’. When tweets (2018) appear on the ‘antconc’ software, the corresponding dates of each one will figure straightforwardly. A thorough overview about the tool is going to be conveyed in what follows.

Tools

The corpus analysis toolkit to be considered in this paper is the 3.5.8 for concordancing and text analysis. This software has the advantage of allowing users to both load and process many texts and documents at a time. As for standard document text formats including TEXTs, HTMLs and XMLs it is compatible with them. So, once the file is loaded, the user has a wide range of tools at his/her disposal. Indeed, ‘antconc’ 3.5.8 version is utile as it can calculate the frequency of occurrence of lexical items searched and provide key words in contexts with their exact dates. In what follows a screenshot that visualizes the previously mentioned claim:

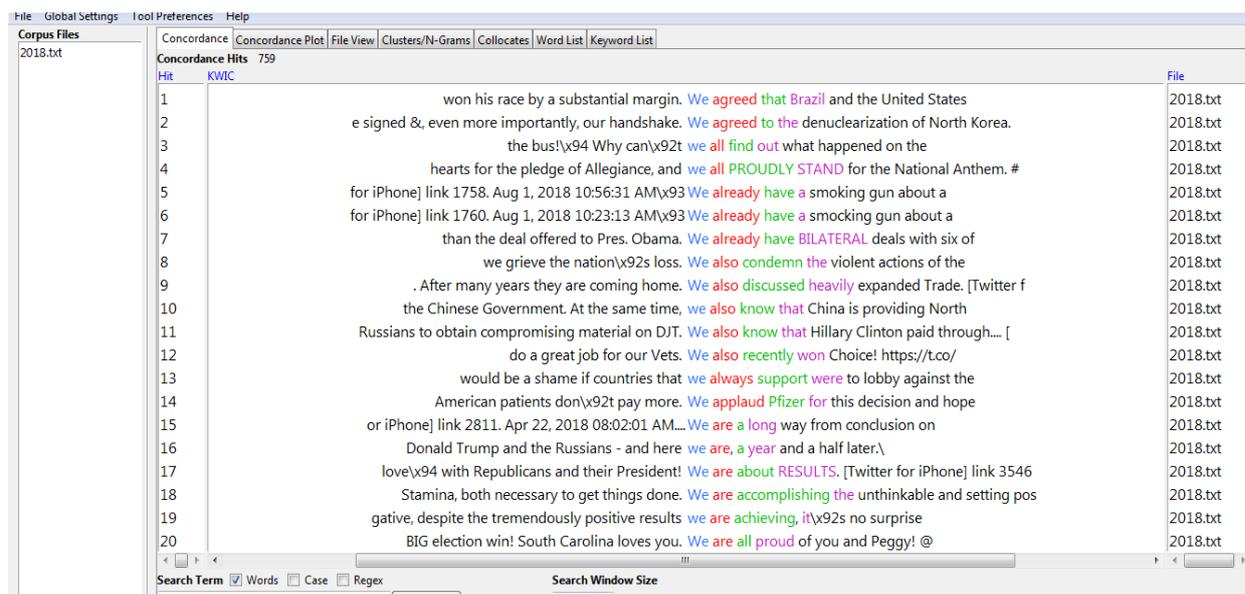


Figure.3 A screenshot of ‘antconc’ software 3.5.8 of the first plural pronoun ‘we’ in the corpus

As seen above, this tool is efficient in dealing with texts with considerable length and word frequency though it does not organize tweets in a thematic fashion. In such a case, the analyst has to carry out this task manually.

Data collection

The discourse level of the triangular approach is going to be applied. To meet the general objectives of the research paper, person deixis is going to be gauged quantitatively so as to

pave the way for discussion and analysis on the basis of the results obtained and this is going to be supported with examples with dates.

van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach [1995]

As it has been mentioned above, the discourse level of this approach is going to be applied whereby structures of text and talk are meant to be studied. The choice of the discourse level is not totally independent from the other stages for the mere reason that they do interact at the level of interpretation (example while talking about cognition, ideology, racism, etc).

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

At a first level a quantitative avenue is sought in an attempt to have a comprehensive view about the frequency of distribution of person pronouns in the corpus. In a next stage, numbers are going to be visualized in the table that follows:

Table. 2 The frequency of distribution of person pronouns in the corpus

Pronouns and their variants	Frequency of distribution
I (500); my (367); mine (06)	Total: 873
You (454); your (158); yours (02)	Total: 614
We (759); our (914); ours (07)	Total: 1680
They (500); their (265)	Total:765

This table is going to be visualized in the figure that follows:



Figure: The frequency of distribution of person deictics in the corpus

It transpires from the above figure that the most frequently used person pronoun in the corpus is the pronoun ‘we’ (43%) and its variants. The pronouns ‘I’ is rated second (22%), then comes the pronoun ‘they’ (19%) and last the pronoun ‘you’ (16%) which is classified at the end of the list.

The 'I' and 'you' incongruity

It has been mentioned above that the first person singular pronoun 'I' comes second in terms of frequency, whereas the pronoun 'you' comes last after the plural pronoun 'they'. The dissimilitude displayed has, yet, some meaning implications, though if compared to the pronoun 'we' the pronoun 'I' comes second in the list. The discrepancy also finds its source in the nature of the pronoun 'I' whose reference goes to the speaker who has a complex background and this renders the task of the reader or hearer strenuous. As for the addressee, it is perhaps less complex to be identified as it is context dependent and as some cues do interfere to relieve the complexity (example: setting, time, place, action, participants etc). Interestingly, the first pronoun singular, once used frequently, as mentioned in the literature, refers to the speaker who generally casts himself the role of ego and relates everything to his view point. The 'self' in this case is always considered right in contrast to the pronoun 'they'. The tweets that will follow are presumably instances of manipulative and strategic uses in this type of political discourse.

November 30, 2018: I am a very good developer, happily living my life, when I see our country going on the wrong direction (to put it mildly). Against all odds, I decide to run for president & continue to run my business very- legal & very cool, talked about it in the campaign trail.

The first person pronoun 'I' identifies the speaker's competence, mastery of work, social and family life. The US President, while playing the role of the father, the protector, the one who sets discipline, boundaries, and so forth, announces that he decided to run for presidency and this should be accepted and received as good news by members of the large community or this is at least what he expects. Running for presidency, however, does not seem to inhibit him from running business and trade. The first, for him, does not contradict the second and this presupposes a denunciation for any future allegations. Although Trump gave some cues about who he is, the reader has to make more effort in decoding the message and uncovering the hidden meaning. This blatantly presupposes, as well, that not all the public understanding of discourse is inherently large in relation to political discourse and political actors. In this connection, not all followers can decode the message or even have a vested interest in changing the status quo. As such, manipulation seems to take a different route and without mitigation as the speaker represents himself positively and identifies himself with achievement and success to remind the public of his state, and thus, he links power and success to money and good management. The role of the reader, then, is strenuous and needs a considerable understanding of politics as well as strategies deployed to control opinions. This reality is not applicable to all receivers or followers. Actually, many of them do not resist manipulation and might not be knowledgeable about politics as a whole. Hence, the pronoun's 'I' use seems to, as one can assume, dismantle some of the strategies deployed for persuasive and manipulative purposes.

The tweets that follow are instances of the interplay between both pronouns 'I' and 'you'

A- January 9, 2018: On behalf of the American people, THANKYOU to our incredible enforcement officers. As president of the United States I will fight for you and I will never ever let you down, now more than ever, we must support the men and women in blue! LawEnforcementAppreciationDay.

B- October 30, 2018: The stock market is up massively since the election, but now is taking a little pause-people want to see what happens with the midterms. If you want your stock market to go down, I strongly suggest voting Democrat. They like the Venezuela financial model, High Taxes & Open Borders!

Within the same complexity magnitude of the pronoun 'I', the president in (A) and in a straightforward fashion announces good intentions and support for enforcement officers while addressing them. In (B) the use of 'I' is blatantly ironic, arouses fear and anxiety. This play on emotions renders the reader in a passive position. It is true that Democrats are blamed and represented as responsible for negative outcomes but what is more attention drawing is the way this mental representation is going to be processed by readers and followers. As can be discernible, the pronoun, 'you' in (B) stands for all Americans, whereas the pronouns 'I' refers to the president. Both pronouns in their reference gauge their value from one another. For instance, the president without the manipulation of the audience or followers be they supporters or opponents cannot gain ground. On the other hand, the audience, in case it has been subject to this kind of manipulation, loses its active and resistant status and becomes subordinate and guidable.

Inclusive versus exclusive 'we'

The first person plural pronoun 'we' holds the first position in terms of frequency. The first thing that has to be highlighted is its dual usage as mentioned in the literature. Central to the persuasive and manipulative usages, the latter pronoun can be used to include both the speaker and the hearers or followers as it can be used to include a portion of these hearers or followers with the intention to exclude others who are not considered as in-groups. Such quibbles are reflective of the US President's knowledge of discourse use. What is implied, from the outset, is the existence of out-groups. Thus, before embarking on the analysis, it is of paramount importance to consider the deliberate use of this discourse type for it does not happen in vacuum.

To start with, the pronoun 'we' when used inclusively presupposes the inclusiveness of Trump and his supporters (Republicans), in which case the message pertains to this portion of readers or followers (tweets). In what follows, an account is conveyed through a tweet with the corresponding date:

December 18, 2018: The Democrats are saying loud and clear that they do not want to build a Concrete Wall- but we are not building a Concrete Wall, we are building artistically designed steel slats, so that you can easily see through it.

The US President backgrounds the impetus behind building the wall and foregrounds strategically the wall's design which is reminiscent of prison gates. For instance, an inclusive usage of the pronoun 'we' for Republicans and exclusive for Democrats is modeled on Immigrants' exclusion which is deliberate. Stamped with an ironic lexis, the tweet above ridicules Democrats and renders their position weak, bearing in mind that they are viewed as opponents whose major affiliations do not converge with Republicans, while inflicting a positive-self presentation. The interplay between ridiculing the other and the intrinsic usage of 'we' inclusive and 'we' exclusive are merely used in a strategic and manipulative fashion which is understood through context, in this case. In a similar vein, Trump taps on a 'significant' point connected to 'understanding' the meaning of 'Wall'. Thus, Democrats are explicitly, exclusively and ironically represented as lacking a clear and meticulous

comprehension of what it means to build a wall. Therefore, opponents via the exclusive ‘we’ are cognitively less apt to understand a statement, and this is one of the worst diminishing representations which nonetheless might yield an entrenched categorization of the ‘other’. Similarly, these same descriptions might also be understood as mere quibbles whose viability is weak and resistible from the part of political opponents. In what follows more emphasis will be put again on the pronoun ‘we’:

December 25, 2018: I hope everyone, even the Fake News Media, is having a great Christmas! Our Country is doing very well. We are securing our borders, making great new Trade Deals, and bringing our troops back home. We are finally putting America first! MERRY CHRISTMAS!

During Christmas, a message via this tweet is disseminated by the US President. First and foremost the variant ‘our’ is to refer to all Americans whereby positive achievements are highlighted. Before that, an overt attack to News Media by classifying them as fake has been deployed in the statement at an initial level in the sentence (tweet) showing the president’s knowledge about media and ironically wishing them ‘merry Christmas’ though, as inferred, they are out-groups, negatively represented, and by means of foregrounding back-grounded. Second, the use of ‘we’ in connection to securing borders, (Trade Deals as a case in point) is inclusive for Republicans and exclusive for Democrats. Even the last statement implies that the choice of ‘putting America First’ is typically Republican.

Hence, achievements have been fore-grounded while associated with positive self-presentation, in contrast to overt versus negative other-presentation in relation to ‘News Media’ and Democrats. This is going to be digested by readers and followers in dissimilar ways. Such claim is inextricably linked to their ideological backgrounds and beliefs, depending on the content of the message itself. As noticeable, a message that fuels public opinions creates separation, division, hatred and so forth, though succinctly in almost fourteen characters. This might be seen as an obsolete way of politicizing matters, but perhaps Trump opts for gearing his discourse with hatred to seek conviviality and support among followers while getting prepared for the forthcoming elections.

As such, ad hoc uses of the pronominal system basically if one might refer back to the high level of frequency of the pronoun ‘we’, is actually to unravel a erudite attitude on the part of the president of the state of the country, and a good understanding of what discourse type he can use in an attempt to gain support. The US President seems to be dissident from his predecessors in how he wants to adapt to the grapple of the shifting needs of the future. But, what is intriguing or even endemic in discourse is his choice of lexis which fuels public opinion and destabilizes the country in the precarious situation it is already in. Trump, in his attempt to win the battle of the ‘wall’ for example, attacks those whom he classifies as enemies, rivals, opponents, an attitude which is, actually, unconventional. This evokes the premise that, in a discourse laden with hatred, public opinion might take an opposite exacerbating action against this system, albeit in a long term fashion.

The pronoun ‘they’ ‘their’ closeness to/distance from the speaker

The pronoun ‘they’ generally refers to those who are indirectly addressed, most of the time. Their closeness and distance from the speaker depend on their allegiance to him and/or her.

In most cases, as mentioned in the literature, the plural pronoun ‘they’ is generally negatively represented. The tweets that come next give an account of this claim:

July 27, 2018: Democrats who want open borders and care little about crime, are incompetent, but they have the Fake News Media almost totally on their side!

In the above tweet, ‘they’ is negatively represented and put in the periphery zone. And thus, those referred as they are distant from the speaker in terms of beliefs, attitudes and agenda. A mental image about these ‘out-groups’ in van Dijk’s words is associated with Democrats. They, for instance, allow open borders, and thus, crime. The president, in order to collect support, uses a victimization strategy which itself is tightly linked to blaming the other and attributing him/her all negative outcomes of actions. This has been common and remarkable in Trump’s discourse. Preserving Republican government and power not only needs plans, new policies, etc, but also propaganda and accusations by means of discourse as can be discernible from the consistent and frequent attacks against those who do not comply with the Republican views and policies. The attacks of the ‘other’ stretched to include News Media whose reporting has covertly been assumed to be partial and biased as they stand by Democrats side. Hence, what is noticeable is that Trump’s criticism to News Media and Democrats via different rhetorical strategies seems at times to fail as repetitive negative representation may have a reverse effect.

Trump seems to indoctrinate the public new attitudes about two distinct powerful groups: Democrats and News Media. This is prone to render his position weak as oscillating between negative representations of many groups, setting them in the periphery, criticizing them, condensing allegations through inflammatory discourse, etc, might gear the public with hatred, racism, fear, discomfort, and so forth. And this contradicts American ideals of liberty, freedom of expression, basically when it comes to media. The inflammatory discourse that exacerbates reality can be seen as well in what follows in the next tweet via the use of the pronoun ‘they’:

November 18, 2018: The Meyer of Tijuana, Mexico, just stated that /x93 the city is ill-prepared to handle this many migrants, the backlog could last 6 months. Likewise, the US is ill-prepared for this invasion and will not stand for it. They are causing crime and big problems in Mexico. Go Home!

In this linguistically destitute tweet, Trump refers to immigrants as causing crime and problems to coerce the public and Democrats to take action and thereby put an end to immigration. This attitude, which views the US as ‘ill-prepared’ for the ‘invasion’ (a conceptual metaphor: source domain/target domain), is based on overgeneralization and lack of evidence. However, the US President seems to be aware of the linguistic choice he opts for like the choice of ‘invasion’ to refer to people seeking new opportunities and looking for employment. His mastery of ad hoc lexis is apparent via racist attacks which might generate violent actions as no mitigation has been observed, precisely when he wrote ‘go home!’ This statement is perhaps no longer surprising for the public (supporters, opponents, followers etc). On the other hand, it could take a grand magnitude by News Media especially the ones Trump categorizes as fake. And thus, instead of gaining support, he might gather resentment and rejection.

It has been noticeable, then, that the pronominal system can satisfy the needs of political actors to a large extent while adopting a number of strategies like victimization, negative other-presentation, positive-self presentation, attributing negative outcomes to the other, self-glorification, etc. Other strategies might include irony, metaphor, foregrounding and backgrounding, etc. Hence, deictics, manifested in pronouns, help uncover the attitudes mentioned above which are driven by ideological mechanisms. Mental representations about particular groups are overt. This is observable in connection to those who are considered as in-groups and out-groups. The reverberating effect of these representations is by all means efficient as it they have a role in anchoring the Republican new agenda regarding many issues, whether economic, political, social or even those relative to foreign affairs.

Interestingly, Trump has been proven to be a media master as he manipulatively manages to disseminate beliefs, thoughts and attitudes regarding many overarching issues. Twitter, as known, reaches a large audience worldwide and this is prone to work for his interest while he is in power. However, forging relations after the divide and after truth distortion, in so many cases, needs a strong leadership; be it Republican or Democrat.

CONCLUSION

A critical discourse framework has been invested to analyze tweets by recourse to the 'antconc' software tool in conjunction with pragmatics. The combined frameworks are effective in how they can unveil different rhetorical strategies and persuasive ends of the US president while in power. To meet the research's objectives a qualitative analysis has been adopted in addition to the frequencies provided by the software selected for analysis. Indeed, the paper has proffered four different person pronouns: 'I, you, we, and they'. The discourse level of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach [1995] has been implemented to see how deictics (person pronouns selected for analysis) can be effective analytic tools to study political thinking, ideological backgrounds and mental representations deployed for 'self' and 'other' categorization. A variety of strategies, in tandem with this, have been deployed among them, victimization, negative-other presentation, attacking the victim, and so forth, to distort the truth at different occasions, fuel public opinion. A disarray that has stamped Trumpism, as one might claim. In sum, the discourse communicated has most of the time proven to be inflammatory which could create division rather than rally Americans in a significant competitive era basically at an international scale.

Limitations and directions

This research might have been all-encompassing if it adopted the three dimensions of the socio-cognitive approach of van Dijk (1995), more precisely discourse, cognition and society. Although in this small-scale corpus it is possible to implement the model fully, the intention was to study one level in depth so as to measure and interpret the frequencies and implications of the tool of analysis (deixis). Akin to the previous shortcoming, other discourse tools of analysis could have been more effective if combined with deixis like evidentiality or modality.

As for future directions, the implementation of Fairclough's model (1989) is presumably of a great effect in a similar research within a combined framework (pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis). Other pragmatic tools may also be operative like presupposition and politeness theory. Many more strategies of communication can be utilized to dismantle

Trump's rhetoric like lexicalization, self-glorification, counterfactuals, disclaimers, consensus, generalization, hyperbole, illustration, and many more. These strategies are adopted by van Dijk (2004). A deep understanding and application of these elements yields a better understanding of political discourse. In conjunction with what has been mentioned earlier, a qualitative analysis method alone can be utile and supports the analyst to attain the research objectives.

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