

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

Hejer Abidi

Language instructor

Faculty of Letters & Humanities, University of Sfax
(Sfax, Tunisia)

В данной статье представлены результаты анализа твитов президента США Дональда Трампа в 2019 году. Базовой в нашем исследовании послужила концепция deixisa, понимаемая в русле социально-когнитивного подхода Т. ван Дейка.

Ключевые слова: дискурс, социально-когнитивный, политический, идеологический, установки, местоименный.

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 [6]. 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 [5]. 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.

As a new platform used for communication, Twitter has, undeniably, been infused into daily life independently from geographical locations allowing millions of users to filter messages as one can notice. In view of this, Murthy [4, 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 backgrounding of information, etc.

Critical discourse Analysis and political discourse

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 [2, p. 187] In addition, CDA makes explicit ideologies and discursively enacted dominance whereby issues of manipulation and legitimation are also tackled [6, p. 17–18]. 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 prone to be investigated.

Politics which is critically investigated, is for van Dijk associated with society whose practices are discursive which implies that cognition is ideologically based and from this standpoint ideologies are socially based [7, p. 728]. Thus, “politics cannot be conducted without language” [1, 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 element [2, p. 17].

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 and invest a variety of strategies. Interestingly, some of the 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 [7, p. 374].

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 [3, p. 313]. In the same connection, Rauh claims that deixis is that part of grammar where indexical meaning is a matter of use [5, 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 [5, p. 30].

T. van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach [6]

T. 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 cover 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 (personal pronouns).

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).

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**. After that, a word file has been created under the extension ‘.txt’. When tweets (2018) appear on the ‘antconc’ software, which is invested in the quantitative analysis, the corresponding dates of each one will figure straightforwardly. By recourse to this analytic tool, frequencies are going to be displayed.

Findings and interpretation

It transpires from the numerical provided 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

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 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.

Inclusive versus exclusive 'we'

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 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/her. In most cases, as mentioned in the literature, the plural pronoun 'they' is generally negatively represented.

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, 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.

Conclusion

The paper has proffered four different personal pronouns: ‘I, you, we, and they’. The discourse level of van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach [6] 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.

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